An Investigation of Support for Community Bands:

A Sample First Draft Assignment Response for

ENGL 135 at DeVry University in San Antonio

Geoffrey B. Elliott

DeVry University
Prewriting

What is your narrowed topic? Be detailed in your answer. You can use any of the versions you’ve developed for prior assignments.
I mean to investigate the best means for supporting local community bands and the best means for securing such support.

Who is your primary audience or reader? Why? Be detailed in your answer about your audience.
The expected primary readers are members of my local community who are in position to offer support to community bands. City and county leaders, as well as leaders within community non-profits and local schools, are among such.

In a sentence or short paragraph, what is your thesis statement, including your angle?
Write what will appear in your essay.
My point is that soliciting small-scale grants from local non-profit agencies and individual donors, as well as support from local governmental agencies, is likely to offer the best chance of support for community bands.

What topic sentences will you use as the foundation of your communication? (If necessary, add more points.)
- For rebuttal: There are other means of securing support for community bands, to be sure.
- For refutation: Such methods for securing community band support have problems, however.
- For entry back into the main argument: Far more tenable is the idea of soliciting grants and donations from local non-profits, government agencies, and individual donors.
- For further main-argument paragraphs: Other examples speak to how solicitation might best be employed.
- Other paragraphs’ topic sentences to follow

What method of organization and development will you use to develop your paragraphs?
My writing typically works with a variation of emphatic order, moving away from the traditional put-the-strongest-point-last to put the second-strongest first and take advantage of the primacy effect—after I handle rebuttal and refutation. That altered pattern will work within a broader setup of an introduction laying out the need I mean to address and a conclusion that tries to take my idea out into the world.

Introduction:
Personal involvement will transition into a brief literature review. That will feed into the idea that community bands are well worth supporting—and then to the thesis, that soliciting small-scale grants from local non-profit agencies and individual donors, as well as support from local governmental agencies, is likely to offer the best chance of support for community bands.

Body:
Rebuttal and Refutation: Working from Mantie (2009) and perhaps Caslor (2013), I’ll rebut with the idea that community band support should be couched within local schools’ budgets. The
refutation will be that 1) such schools are already supported from local donors, so eliminating a pass-through step will be to advantage; and 2) the communities giving rise to and served by community bands are not necessarily contiguous with school district divisions, so yoking band support to those divisions effectively splits the very communities that would be developed by those bands.

Entry back into Main Argument: Use Hebert (208) as an example of a successful program funded as described.

Later Arguments: Use Winton & Evans (2016) as an example of how things might be done. Others to follow.

**Conclusion:**
Yet to be written, my conclusion will return to my thesis and move forward with something of a call to action. If my essay does as it ought, it will make a sound case for looking to the local, and I will write my conclusion such that readers can take up that mantra for themselves.
An Investigation of Support for Community Bands:

A Sample First Draft Assignment Response for
ENGL 135 at DeVry University in San Antonio

From sixth grade through my second year as an undergraduate, I was a bandsman, and I loved playing saxophone—especially the baritone sax—for quite some time. I had to put my horn aside, though, in favor of other pursuits, and I left it alone for years until the summer of 2018. At that time, one of the non-profit organizations in my hometown put out a call for musicians to join a new community jazz band. I answered the call, asking if the group had need for a bari sax, and the band’s founders—a non-profit music teacher and the local high school band director—told me they did. The ensemble accepted me, and I have been happy to sit in rehearsals and perform once again in the months since.

I am not the only person to value such ensembles as I am now in. Indeed, they have given rise to an independent journal—the *International Journal of Community Music*—and no few other studies. While it may be the case that the definition of community music is somewhat nebulous and tenuous (Veblen, 2008), it is certain that community music—including community bands—supports the formation of community identities (Ibarra, 2017), even amid strain on those communities (Hebert, 2008). Additionally, as community bands endure, they begin to help bridge generational divides (Caslor, 2013), offering not only an in-the-moment sense of community and belonging, but one that produces a sense of continuity of community. Too, the ongoing outlet for musicianship allows for refinement and enhancement of local schools’ music programs (Mantie, 2009), as well as for the community musicians themselves (Augustin, 2010), making possible a cycle of continuous improvement and a potentially ever-growing point of community pride.
With the benefits they offer, community bands can be among the most worthwhile endeavors; they help found and maintain communities, and they can serve to bring others into those communities across years. It makes sense, then, that they should be supported from the communities that they serve and from which they derive their players. The presence of musicians in such bands is the most obvious and intimate form of support, and players can be expected to provide their own instruments and accoutrements, certainly. But for things like rehearsal and performance space, as well as chairs, stands, and charts to play, more is required, moving beyond what passing a hat around a bandstand can reasonably expect to bring in. Being local and often tenuous, however, a community band in need of support cannot always or often go to larger, national organizations, particularly as it gets started. Instead, soliciting small-scale grants from local non-profit agencies and individual donors, as well as support from local governmental agencies, is likely to offer the best chance of support for community bands.

There are other means of securing support for community bands, to be sure. For example, Mantie (2009) motions toward an idea of using current school music programs as the source of support for community band programs. There is some sense to the idea, admittedly. For one, schools and their programs are already in place; they are known quantities in their communities, and they already enjoy support from the public tax base. They also tend to have facilities and equipment in place—rehearsal space, chairs, music stands, and even pieces of music to play—that go unused for large swaths of time. Putting those to work when they would otherwise be idle suggests itself as a good use of resources.

There is also already precedent for non-profit community groups and others to use school facilities when classes are not in session. In Stillwater, Oklahoma, to offer one example, several the public schools rent space to local churches for Sunday services. For a more civic example,
many of the polling places in New York City are public schools. If Mantie (2009) is correct in noting that community bands are already strongly associated with local school music programs—and my own community band is such an ensemble, founded in part by the local high school band director; I doubt it is the only such band—then it would be a relatively small step to take to set community bands up as extensions of and community outreach for the local schools’ music programs.

Such methods for securing community band support have problems, however. Supporting community bands from school music programs would strain the already-often-strained resources available to those programs. Schools perennially report having budget shortfalls, and so-called peripheral programs such as music programs are among the first to have their funds cut when budget problems must be addressed. Adding to their duties while not affording them enough funding to perform their regular and expected work seems counterproductive. Additionally, support for the school programs already comes from the kinds of sources that could be asked for direct donation to community bands; eliminating a pass-through step would promote greater efficiency with the funds and materials provided, suggesting that another means of support than yoking community bands to local schools is desirable.

Further, local school divisions are not necessarily contiguous with the communities that community bands would emerge from and serve. My own ensemble brings in people from the local school district, yes, but also from at least three neighboring districts—and my ensemble is in a relatively rural area with few surrounding communities. The problem would be more overt in more urban areas, where more schools and school districts cluster more closely together. And it is possible that inter-school rivalries would emerge within the contexts of yoked-to-schools community bands, resulting in people who would otherwise work well together being separated
by geographical distinctions not of their own making—or necessarily sensible, given the way some divisions are made. Some other means of support suggests itself as needed, therefore.

Far more tenable is the idea of soliciting grants and donations from local non-profits, government agencies, and individual donors…
References

Augustin, C. (2010). A descriptive study to determine the opinions of community band members regarding the effectiveness of comprehensive musicianship. *International Journal of Community Music, 3*(2), 175-183. doi: 10.1386/ijcm.3.2.175_1


