The set of experiences which I see to be most reflective of my values not only as a person, but also as a leader, took place when I was the Section Leader of the clarinet section at Oak Hills High School. In the Marching Band at Oak Hills, there are positions of leadership known as Section Leaders. The Section Leaders were the musicians in each instrument section that were in charge of making decisions within the section. One characteristic of being the Section Leader that was key, but often misunderstood, was that the Section Leader did not have to be the best musician in the section. The most important part was being able to efficiently lead the section.

I was the Section Leader my last year of high school, and in this year, freshmen comprised half of the section in total. On one hand, I was excited because more freshmen meant a bigger section, something that was important in the face of the loss of a substantial number of clarinets from the previous class. On the other hand, I was terrified because that meant that my job as a teacher within the section would be put to the test because all of the freshmen would be entering the band at different levels of musicianship in addition to no marching experience.

Throughout the year, my leadership capabilities were tested and expanded. I learned that a good leader isn’t just a person who provides instruction, it is someone who is there to help guide the people they are leading. A good leader helps to develop the skills of another, who lets that person know that he or she is there to help, and that he or she will keep working with the person to help make them better. I also learned that in addition to diligence in the face of adversity, honesty with oneself and others is also important. Despite the necessity of taking on many responsibilities at once being in the job description of a leader, being honest in knowing when to ask for help is huge in developing as a person. I have always had a bad habit of letting myself become completely overwhelmed before finally breaking down and asking for help, and my senior year, I learned that it’s okay to not be able to do everything at once. Having the help of another person in my section as well as the support from other staff in the band really let me focus on making my section and myself better musicians.

Today, I still keep these values of diligence and honesty in the back of my mind when approaching situations of leadership and in my daily life. I strive to exemplify these values every day, even when working hard and being realistic with myself is difficult. As I continue to experience new things, I hope to continue to develop my values as both a leader and a person.