After an in depth analysis of Essential Elements, Standard of Excellence, Yamaha Advantage, Accent on Achievement, and Premier Performance method books, my preferred selection would be the Standard of Excellence, by Bruce Pierson. In my opinion, the Standard of Excellence best educates the beginning band student, as well as aiding in the preparation of the band director. While other method books like, Essential Element, Yamaha Advantage, or Accent on Achievement, also have adequate conductor manuals, the information provided in the Standards of Excellence's manual is by far more encompassing musically, theoretically, historically and truly has the best interest of the student and director at heart. Aside from the conductor’s manual, the Standard of Excellence also has the most state of the art Pyware Assessment tools that are available when a student purchases the “enhanced” version of the series. The Pyware Assessment allows the student to check tuning, grades the student on their playing, and also comes with a metronome to keep the student in time. None of the other elementary band method books reviewed have a feature can compare to the Standard of Excellence’s Pyware Assessment. Another very inspiring feature that the Standard of Excellence excels in is student encouragement, which is consistent throughout all three levels of the series. The Standard of Excellence uses a “medal” award system, which allows the directors to actually purchase the medals that the students see everyday in their books and award them for their success. While most method books have certificates
Below you will find a detailed description of how each method book addresses the introduction of the instrument (woodwind, brass, and percussion), the sequence of instruction, strengths and weaknesses of the series, visual attractiveness, and how the National Standards are included throughout the individual method.

1. Essential Elements:

Introduction of Instruments:
Did not give specifics on posture, how the students should stand (especially for the percussive instruments). It is lacking on the correct ways to form the “airstream” and how to begin making sound, and does not talk about how to “buzz” for any of the brass instruments. Overall more pictures are needed during the introduction of the instruments and pictures of children should also be incorporated in the posture and playing sections. More information required about the storage of instruments and how to properly put them away. Also, more information needed about the proper cleaning of instruments.

Sequence of Instruction:
Excellent teachers manual, which includes history, theory, and individual instrument based lessons and quizzes. The overall pace of the books is reasonable in the fact that they start slow and gradually pick up the pace. The student books include many “real” compositions from reputable composers like Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Rossini, etc. They children or students will learn something new on every page, which in turn will help keep them engaged learners.

Strengths and weaknesses of method:
For the Woodwinds there are, no pictures provide for reed placement and maintenance. The books do not include pictures of kids in posture illustrations and as a plus, the book do warns against placing extra material, non essential “stuff” in the instrument cases. For the brass instruments one weakness is that the series gives the wrong ideas about airstream and flow and does not introduce “buzzing” or how to “buzz” at all.
The Percussion Series:
Overall, the books give the beginner student percussionists a strong and detailed beginning foundation. For example, it shows students a picture of matched grip, which is preferred by most band directors, and writes a description next to it. Also, it shows and describes the traditional grip, which is helpful to the student to see both aspects. The series starts off the instruction with the snare drum. And easily jumps into rhythm by introducing quarter notes, quarter rests, and subdivision. Later in the series as the student advances, they introduce other note values in the order of: half notes, whole notes, dotted quarter and half notes, eighth notes, and then lastly sixteenth notes. Thoughtfully, it introduces clefs, time signatures, and sharps and flats after the first page of rhythms. The next percussive instruments are taught in the following order: bass drums, bells, triangle, suspended cymbal, wood block, crash cymbals, and the tambourine. Following the instruments, the percussive techniques are introduced in this order: sticking, flams, paradiddles, multiple bounce rolls, dynamics, which conducting patterns go with certain time signatures, tempo markings, and accents. Lastly, Keyboard Percussion book includes the same basic technique, notes, and rhythms as the coinciding percussion books. It begins on a five-note Bflat scale and quickly has the student playing duets with others. Like the other instrumental books in the series, the percussion books expose the students to valuable “real” music from the same composers previously mentioned above.

Visual attractiveness:
Overall, the books are modern and up-to-date in their pictures and language. The front of each instrument’s book has appealing and attractive “eye catching” visuals of that specific instrument, that would help to draw in the student, even though the books are lacking in color variety. Each beginning page has a short history of the instrument, including famous players. The teachers and student manuals are rich in enrichment activities, which are also visually appealing to the eye. Every theory and history lesson is written in bright yellow (highlighted), making them very easy for a student to follow along. Overall the visual attractiveness is visually organized, which will entice the students’ interest over the long term and will allow them to be able to always remember that the “highlighted” portion is the place where they can go to learn the “theory” or instrumental “history” lesson.

Equitable inclusion of the National Standards:
Thoughtfully, all of the National Standards for Music are covered throughout the books. Essential Elements offers the student and teacher numerous enrichment activities some of which include: students conducting new time signature, clapping new rhythms and practicing dynamics, sections for student composing, relating pitches to the keyboard, allowances for solo improvisation. And lastly, the conductor book offers different options for the use of these valuable enrichment activities in your classroom, which will graciously help the Director cover the National Standards.
2. Standard of Excellence:

**Helpful Features Include:**
Three-book color-coded series (red, blue, and green) of progressive methods. Each book is intended to be used and completed in one school year. Each book includes: a practice journal on inside cover, a “How-To” page on assembling, preparing to play, playing, and caring for the instrument, studies in musical symbols, key signatures, time signatures, fingerings, and articulations, individual studies as well as duets, trios, and full band arrangements. Also found in the back of each instrumental book: scale studies, rhythm studies, glossary/index, checklist for completing exercises, history of the instrument, and fingering charts. If you are fortunate enough to purchase the “Enhanced Comprehensive Band Method” they all include: CD accompaniment, which includes a helpful disc with tuning pitches, also full band and piano accompaniment, and interactive Pyware Assessment Software (iPAS) which will record the student playing and indicates areas of success, improvement, and imperfection. The Pyware Assessment also includes a tuner and metronome.

**Introduction of Instruments:**

**Woodwind:** The assembly of the instruments is for the most part very accurate instructions, and offers the example of pressing down keys to open bridge key function on clarinet and oboe, etc. The Series suggests picking up the body of the saxophone before securing mouthpiece to neck, reed to mouthpiece. When addresses embouchure, the series is fair but could offer more extreme descriptions of how to create accurate embouchure. When caring for the instruments, the series gives good advice on not damaging keys on oboe/clarinet when cleaning and storing it, but is vague on proper maintenance for the saxophone. When addressing the carriage of the woodwind instruments the series describes angle of instrument in relation to body, curvature of fingers, placement of wrists and elbows. It only gives saxophonists the option of placing the instrument to the right side of the body (not in between the legs which might be a more successful position for a specific player). The descriptions offered of how to use seat/neck straps are lacking clarification. The series addresses woodwind posture by including colored illustrations of children playing, which might possibly be more helpful to have actual photographs, or real people playing the specific instrument.

**Brass:**
For the assembly of the brass instruments, each book provides detailed pictures, starting with opening your case to how to put on the mouthpiece. The books include pictures of how to remove the valve caps and how to apply valve oil to correct parts of instrument. Although in the French horn book, it does not tell student to press down specific valve to remove slides; this information is included in the trumpet Book. The directions say to “drain water” from instruments, but does not tell the student how to go about doing it. When covering the carriage of the instrument, each book provides detailed pictures of instrument and includes arrows that tell the student the exact name for each specific part.
The posture (like the woodwind books) uses pictures of children playing, and simply states to “sit straight up on the edge of your chair”, but does not give any detail of correct posture while attempting to stand and play. The French horn book provides fingerings of $F$ and also B-flat horn which is parenthesis. The book does not provide any description of where to place which fingers on the valve(s). The airflow instructions are severely lacking and the only description provided is to “take a full breath and blow”. Does not tell student where to feel the breath, or any visualization.

**Percussion:**

The percussion method book(s) would be a helpful way for introducing how to set up, play, and care for a wide variety of percussion instruments. The books gradually introduce drumming rudiments throughout, at a progressive rate. The series does a thorough job of explaining time signatures, key signatures, and rhythms, while also providing dynamic markings. The highlighted areas in yellow are at the top of each page and are the cohesive section where the book introduces and explains each new musical concept. The illustrations used to show how to play, set up, and care for the instruments are very helpful and would make it easy for the beginner percussion student to follow along.

**Sequence of Instruction:**

Overall, the series provides a very thorough teacher/directors book and supplemental theory workbook. The pace is reasonable in the fact that it starts off slow, (possibly too slow) and progresses at the growing rate of the student. The series does not do a profound job explaining time signatures, transposition, or key signatures. The overall tempo picks up quickly, in middle of books with solo/piano accompaniment and duets. The series includes an extensive collection of general beginner works, for example, “Merrily We Roll Along” and “Hot Cross Buns”. The series also offers authentic variety with compositions by composers like, Rossini, Mahler, Brahms, Offenbach, etc. For theory study, the book provides student with beginning composition practice. And as the student learns and is successful in doing so, the series provides very useful “Achievement” lines at the bottom of each page, giving the student something to work towards. The series allows the students to study music from different cultures, which include: Mexican Work Songs, Norwegian Folk songs, West Indies Fool Songs, etc.

**Visual attractiveness:**

As a whole, this series will enhance the children’s long-term interest. The books provide an appealing overall visual appearance, which would be applicable for young players and beginning older players. Overall the books are modern and up to date in appearance. All pictures provided are in color and of children, not adults. A variety of “games” are included (in theory workbook) as well as other enrichments activities, which will appear in color to seem more appealing to children. The series uses solidified highlighted color(s) to signify different sections, which is consistent throughout all the books. There is a letter to student at beginning of each book. Including lots helpful practice tips, stating at the end of every practice session, to “play something fun”. Each book includes a “survival kit” checklist for beginner players and this information is also provided in the
Conductor’s Book, for each instrument. At the end of each book, an instrument history is provided along with more detailed pictures. Also at the end of each book, a fingering and position charts is included. The Glossary includes symbols, to help students recognize musical signs. For ex: > or < with the definition that goes with it. And detailed colored pictures in theory book acting out different musical events throughout history in different cultures.

**Equitable inclusion of the National Standards:**
In this particular series, the MENC National Standards are not specifically addressed, but most the standards are addressed through musical activities, which are included in the teacher’s manual. These enrichment activities include: knowing about the music, listening to music, producing or performing music, reading or notating music, analyzing music, creating music and making musical judgments.

**3. The Yamaha Advantage:**

**Useful Features:** Welcome note from the authors, a daily practice log, musical terms or glossary page, a play-along accompaniment CD, an “Introductory Page” of the instruments, as well as including some basic music theory.

**Introduction of Instruments:**

**Woodwind:** The series does a fair job with instrumental assembly. In particular it mentions to not try to assemble for the first time without your teacher, which any beginner should know. It is specific in stating not to damage the keys and offers directions on how to apply cork grease. When describing the placement of the reed, it states, “use standard position so you can just see the tip of the mouthpiece”. This information might be confusing if a beginner player does not happen to know what the “standard position” is. The book provides accurate pictures of the different steps on assembling the instruments. The posture section states, “be sure to sit up straight on the edge of your chair with your feet flat on the floor,” which is proper and precise advice to give a beginner student. The book directs the student to keep their thumbs straight and fingers curved on the keys, but do not tell which finger goes on which specific key. The airflow portion begins with the reed and mouthpiece only (only reed for oboe) and states “take a full breath and exhale through the mouthpiece and play a long steady tone.” While this information is helpful is it not precise enough when directing a student to begin to play.

**Brass:** The assembly process specifies how to put the mouthpiece in and mentions to not place it in the instrument too tightly. The posture section all direct the student to “sit up straight, feet flat on the floor”, but does not explain how horn should be held, especially the bell hand., Although the book does offer an actual picture of a student sitting with the instrument correctly. When describing how to
create the airflow, the book states, “take a full breath and exhale”, which is vague and lacking in description. The tuning of the brass instruments are addressed fairly early, which is helpful, but it does not describe how to adjust the instrument if it goes out of tune. Horn maintenance is also covered and it briefly explains how to lubricate slides and oil rotary valves.

**Percussion Series:** Is a total of five percussion books, which include: combined percussion, snare/bass, keyboard, accessory and timpani, as well as a piano accompaniment book. Each book offers detailed diagrams of the percussion instruments. The pictures provided are of actual children or young students playing the instruments, which is also helpful. The pictures are also alternating “boy, girl” so to not depict prejudice of a particular percussion instrument. Helpful instructional and accompaniment CDs are included with all percussion books.

**Conductor’s Manual:**
The Yamaha Advantage provides their conductors with a very well organized score and teaching manual. There’s a section titled, “teaching tools” which provides useful tools and allows the conductor to know in advance which elements each instrument is focusing on. All fingerings and charts are included for each instrument. Visually the book looks like an actual score, so you can show your students what a real “full score” actually looks like. Like most series, The Yamaha Advantage includes helpful theory lessons.

**Visual attractiveness:**
This series is designed to imitate an actual computer screen, which visually is very attractive to almost all children. When they see a computer screen, they automatically think “fun”, which is designed to help promote the child’s progress and overall success. The entire series is color-coded, very well organized, and modern.

**Equitable inclusion of the National Standards:**
The National Standards covered in this method book are as follows:
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music –
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
5. Reading and Notating Music-
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

**4. Accent on Achievement:**

**Some Useful Features:** Age appropriate instructional material, varied illustrations (mini cartoons) provided throughout the book, real pictures, color coded theory and music and instrumental history study, “how to” sections on ledger lines, staff reading, and producing actual tone. It is easy to read and follow along, with review portions in the beginning of the series.
Introduction of Instruments:

**Woodwinds:** There are eight actual pictures of real students playing in a seated position. There are no pictures of students standing while playing brass instruments. This series offers a detailed portrayal of each instrument and the it's individual parts. This series does not go into specific detail about reed placement and does not visually show the student how to do replace the reed with pictures. This book goes into very detailed instructions about getting ready to play and proper care and maintenance of the instruments. It also instructs student to use a reed holder, but does not tell the student how to tune their brass instrument. This series progresses at a steady pace and offers adequate instruction in the introduction of different notes and rhythms.

**Brass:**
Overall, this series does a good job of addressing how to begin playing a brass instrument. It simply states to “be gentle with placement of the mouthpiece” and to “oil valves regularly”. Unlike other band series this book instructs the student to the teacher if they have more questions about instrument maintenance, for example the book tells the student to not remove a stuck mouthpiece without the help of the director. Unfortunately, the book does not show the student how to use proper hand placement in bell of the French horn. When refereeing to breathing and producing a good sound, this book tells the student to think about making a good “tone” not just sound. How to play both F and B flat sides of the French horn is included. This book also tells the student how to remove condensation from the instruments, which could also be a cross over lesson into something the students are learning in science class. When referring to the tuba, this series only provides fingerings for three-valve instrument. There is a helpful glossary provided in the back of each book, as well as supplemental exercises (solo work, rhythm, theory, composition, etc.) for each individual brass instrument.

**Percussion:** This band percussion series explains learning the different instruments in a simplistic pay that would be easy to follow for a beginner percussion student. The books use real pictures of instruments, which help the student to visualize the proper playing height for the instruments. The books introduces the student to these percussion instruments: triangle, woodblock, tambourine, suspended cymbal, snare drum, bass drum, marimba, vibraphone, chimes, xylophone, bells, and crash symbols. The books explain the use of the “natural clef” as well as bar lines, time signatures, and basic rudiments. This percussion series uses a helpful guide of learning rhythm entitled the, “Rhythm Tree”. When a student purchases the percussion books, playing sticks are provided. The introduction of the rudiments is gradually introduced throughout the books. In the back of each book the students
can find a chart of the Percussive Arts Society Rudiments. Also found in the back of each book is scale and rhythm exercises. This series provides the piano accompaniment to every exercise in the book(s).

**Sequence of Instruction:**
Accent on Achievement starts out very simple and basic in the sequence od instruction and does a thorough job of explaining the “basics” to the beginner student. The series (like all the others) uses color-coding when teaching new materials or information. This series places emphasis on what the director’s preferences are of specifics, and tell the student to always ask questions when it comes to the maintenance and care of the instruments.

**Equitable inclusion of the National Standards:**
All Nine National Standards are addressed in Accent on Achievement.

- **Standard 1:** Students are frequently encouraged to sing their line before playing it.
- **Standard 2:** Accent on Achievement gives each student detailed instruction on how to successfully performance of a different variety of music representing many genres and cultures. Visual aids in the form of text and photographs remind the student about the importance of posture, embouchure, tone, and airflow.
- **Standard 3:** This series allows students to learn how to make their own music through the form of writing variations and has the student participate in thoughtfully planned out exercises. The student will perform basic improvisation.
- **Standard 4:** Through the use of creativity exercises, the students will start to manipulate the elements of music, adding in rhythm, dynamics, orchestration and form.
- **Standard 5:** The series offers many instances where the students can learn to read music. There are theory exercises and rhythm drills that are in the student's books as well as the Teacher's Resources Kit.
- **Standard 6:** In the Conductor’s book, the series offers multiple listening exercises that are encouraged to involve students in describing music and the beginnings of learning how to analyzing musical selections.
- **Standard 7:** “Thought Questions” are used throughout the Conductor’s Score to encourage the director to prompt the students to produces a thoughtful evaluation of their own and others’ performance.
- **Standard 8:** This standard is addressed by helping the students to form connections between music and other art forms.
- **Standard 9:** Worksheets are found throughout the Conductor’s manual, which address cultural and historical connections throughout music and the humanities.

5. **Premier Performance:**
“An innovative and comprehensive band method, by Ed Sueta”
Kara Simpson  
Music 511 Instrumental  
Band Method Comparison and Analysis  
April 1st, 2011

Introduction of Instruments:

**Woodwind:** When addressing the clarinet, it is unclear as to why to place your “right hand down” when playing throat tones. Instrumental maintenance is covered in a clear and precise manner. There’s an overload of information and text when describing assembly, posture, and embouchure.

**Brass:** How to tune the brass instruments are not mentioned, as well as anything pertaining to the tuning slide. How to play the Euphonium is not at all addressed. Instrumental care is discussed in a clear and efficient manner. Like the woodwinds, this series overloads the students with too much information discussing assembly, posture, and embouchure.

**Percussion:** Teaches how to play the Electric bass, but excludes anything about how to play the piano or guitar. There’s a chart of rudiments in the back of the books for reference. There are portions of the percussion books that are strictly for percussion instruments, which cannot be played by the rest of the band.

Sequence of Instruction:  
A fingering chart is located at the back of each book in this series. There are also theory and composition tests as well as different exercises that the directors can use to test knowledge learned. Throughout the entire series each book contains one solo piece for each instrument. At the end of the student books a “premiere technique” guide is provided for each instrument as well as a “premier rhythm” section for rhythm technique practice. This series includes six band arrangements that are strategically placed throughout each book. A “Musical Artistry Series” is provided in each book, which is comprised of trios and quartets for all instruments. There is a “quarterly practice” record, so the children can periodically check their progress throughout the book.

Strengths and weaknesses of method:

**Weaknesses:** Ed Sueta, the author of this band method, composes most of the excerpts or playing exercises in this series. Because of this, the students are not being exposed to any of the classic musical composers like Mozart or Beethoven. A piano accompaniment is provided, but only for the first (beginner) book of the series. The director’s manual is simply a compilation of all the students’ books combined. This series gives the students too much information for them to process. Lacking in visual attractiveness, with no pictures (drawings, cartoons, etc.) at all. The introduction of new musical concepts is at random and does not flow well with the music the students are learning.
Strengths: • CDs are provided for all student books and the conductor’s manual. Real pictures are used of children playing the instruments, from different ethnicities and cultural background.

Visual attractiveness: 
The very first page is attractive visually, but slowly declines from there. Overall this book is not aesthetically attractive and does not have the ability to keep the students’ interest visually. This series uses actual pictures of all the instruments (not cartoons), as well as pictures of real children. There is a “map of the instruments” in each specific book to serve as a guide in identifying the different parts of each instrument. A musical dictionary is at the end of each book in the series with the coinciding musical symbol next to each definition.

Equitable inclusion of the National Standards: 
This series addresses all of the National Standards, but not in a clear and efficient way.