

Advocacy

A big thank you to Steve Litwiller and his staff of educators that once again made MMEA's second annual Mentoring Conference a great success! Thirty six first year teachers were in attendance. We witnessed one and half days of great ideas, new approaches and most importantly a network of highly motivated and innovative young teachers. I left encouraged and excited for the future of music education in Missouri.

One thing that I learned from the conference was the ongoing need for grass roots advocacy efforts on the part of all stakeholders especially the parents of the children we teach. The government has repeatedly emphasized the importance it places on stakeholders and their views on schools, and none more so than parents. So with this in mind I thought I would share some thoughts, ideas and resources for our parents in this ongoing crusade to ensure music education for all children in all areas of Missouri.

So parents, what can you do? Here are 5 ways you can support your music program:

(bullet points.....)

Get involved in your music booster group and/or volunteer in the classroom. Your teachers have ideas, and you could be the answer.

Thank your school principal for supporting your child's music program and music teacher. "Thank you" is not something they hear every day. And it shows you're paying attention.

Write your local/national newspaper a letter-to-the-editor about what music has meant for your child. It only takes 80 to 100 words, but it can go a long way. Lawmakers and other decision-makers are keeping track of what constituents want.

Invite your school board members, county/district supervisors, state/national lawmakers to your child's school concert. No, really! They may see it as only a public relations opportunity when they come, but when they leave, they'll understand why music matters in all schools.

Reach out to local media. Whether on radio, TV, or in print, your school music program has a story to tell. See the "**Public Relations 101**" resource for advocates below for more ideas. (source NAFME)

For everyone that is an advocate for music education in schools, it helps to first understand WHY these types of programs are so important.

Studies have demonstrated positive links between music education and outcomes such as test scores and graduation rates. These outcomes help affirm the value of music programs; however, NAFME believes that music study does something even more important for students.

(bullet points)

Music education shapes the way our students understand themselves and the world around them; Studying music allows for deeper engagement with learning; and

Music education programs essentially nurture the assets and skills that pave the way for a student's future success, such as curiosity, creativity, collaboration, self-discipline, and motivation.

Teachers Create Your Advocacy Approach

Always focus communication on how music education benefits every student and, where possible, get parents and community leaders to champion the cause. It is important that you

support music education; however, it will be more effective for members of the community to speak out on why it must be a vital part of every student's education. The following are a few ideas about how to be advocates for music education.

(bullet points)

Invite administrators and school board members to rehearsals/classroom to observe.

Include administrators in your next program (perform a piece with narration to include them).

Get administrators to present awards to your students during your awards ceremony.

Communicate your program's successes with local media.

Parents/community members should submit letters to the editor supporting music education in the schools.

Include advocacy material in your concert program, on your program's website, and within any regular communications you have with parents.

Parents should send letters to school board members explaining why they should support music education in the schools. (Sample letters, petitions, and other communications are available in the Community Action Kit on NAMM's Support Music website)

Parents should attend school board meetings and speak to the importance of music education for all students. (source NAMM)