

(Brandes)

Looking Forward

The theme of this issue is something I think about constantly as I consider the future of MMEA and how best to serve its members and our mission. There are so many things that we want to do and many current issues that need our attention. I find it difficult to prioritize and focus my thinking.

As I write this article I am in the process of developing our Strategic Plan for MMEA. The purpose is to determine and prioritize goals both immediate and long range for the association. I find this both exciting and at the same time a daunting task. In the following paragraphs I will summarize my thoughts and ideas as we look forward to the future of our association. Once completed I will publish MMEA's Strategic Plan for all to read.

My thoughts are dominated by how to not only maintain but strengthen and improve the vitality of the association. These ideas require action on many fronts including fostering positive relationships with our eleven districts and all of the state affiliate organizations. It is the responsibility of elected officers to ensure a fiscally sound organization. This includes MMEA supporting and strengthening our eleven districts. We have started a process that will align all of our districts with MMEA's "not for profit" status as well as unifying the administrative structure. These unified goals of fiscal management and governance will certainly strengthen the association.

I am proud of the fact that Missouri ranks tenth in the nation in terms of membership and boasts the largest membership in the southwest division, but building our membership needs to be a goal if MMEA is to be the primary association for insuring the widespread advancement of the profession. I hope you will join me in setting a goal of increasing membership by 10% in all areas annually.

An additional area of organization vitality is the strengthening of our mentoring program and efforts. The alarming rate of teachers that leave the profession is not something that we can ignore. MMEA is in a unique and highly qualified position to make a difference for our new teachers. We need to develop a strategy for encouraging experienced teachers to serve as mentors. We also need to develop a strategy that helps us identify new teachers and develop a means to reach out to

these individuals and their administration to encourage In-Service attendance and opportunities for mentoring visits and dialogue.

Additional questions that we must consider is how can MMEA best serve the profession and the music educator? What type of programs, projects, events and professional development opportunities will serve the membership and also meet the needs of our students? It is time for MMEA to consider additional professional development opportunities other than our annual In-Service Workshop. As new assessment criteria and curriculum changes are instituted we are in an ideal position to offer assistance and support from experienced educators in all areas of implementation. We must expand our capabilities to provide resources, materials and opportunities to further professional and personal development.

We must continue to develop the MMEA web site so that it becomes a resource for all areas of the association. We have initiated a dialogue with our web host for upgrades and improvements. In all areas of the association we must continue to embrace technology so as to serve membership effectively and efficiently.

Resources for effective music teacher evaluation and new curriculum changes are issues in which MMEA must continue to take a lead in order to better serve our membership. We must continue to develop and upgrade the documents that are currently in place for effective music teacher evaluation. Student learning objectives (SLO) examples for all content areas and across all grade levels are a priority as we approach the 2014-15 school year and implementation of the assessment process. Common core curriculum alignment and adoption of the new National Music Standards that will assist this alignment must become a priority to assist membership and this transition.

MMEA must become a unifying force in terms of music advocacy. It is vital that as an organization we serve as the chief advocate for music education and our students. We need to develop and provide access to resources that can be used at the local level, in Jefferson City and nationally. We must be proactive in maintaining a dialogue with policymakers and all organizations that influence education and the delivery of music to our students. This must be an ongoing mission of the association and all its members.

Missouri is a leader in regards to education research. The Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education (MJRME) is 52 years old. It is one of the oldest publications dedicated to music education research still in circulation. A priority is to make this research readily available through the MMEA web site and

therefore create a much sought after platform for continued research and study in music education. We will continue to encourage and support research presentations at our annual In-Service.

The magazine you are holding is one of our most prized possessions. We recently developed access to an online version that can be found on our web site. We will continue to publish and mail the hard copy because it defines us. The information that is contained within these pages is priceless. I have seen other state publications and ours is one to certainly be proud of. I always look forward to the arrival of the MSM in my mailbox. As you are aware the format and appearance of the magazine continues to be developed to best serve our readers.

MMEA has celebrated 76 years of continued success in offering professional development and recognizing outstanding models of performance in all disciplines at our annual conference. It is not the time to become complacent. We must be prepared to meet the challenges of today's ever changing landscape that is education. It is our task to develop a systematic approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. I see the growth of MMEA as very important to the future of music education in Missouri.

As we establish goals and augment our continuing mission we renew our commitment and dedication to music education and the benefits that a comprehensive music education offers our students. I am excited about the future of music education and MMEA but this future is dependent on enthusiastic participation and dedication from all members. We are a strong and vibrant association with gifted, talented and forward thinking members. I encourage you to be a part of this exciting ongoing mission of ensuring future generations the same joy and rewards of a life filled with music!