

Helping policy makers listen!

Once again I find myself in what I consider an envious position from which I am able to serve the MMEA membership in a leadership capacity. June 28 through July 1, found me in Tyson Corner, VA, attending the 2013 NAFME National Leadership Assembly. While in attendance I participated in the “NAfME Advocacy Day” on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. Prior to my trip to Washington D.C. I scheduled appointments with Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer (3rd District), Congresswoman Ann Wagner (2nd District) and Senator Claire McCaskill. Each office responded positively and invited me to visit on Friday, June 28.

My agenda included discussion of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization that is currently being debated in the House and Senate. The ESEA was last amended in 2001 and became known as “No Child Left Behind.” The Senate version of the ESEA bill is very arts friendly. The Senate version of the bill also lists “music” specifically as an enumerated covered subject for a Well-Rounded education. This is extremely exciting news for the music education community! I will speak to the House version later in this article.

My day began with a quick breakfast at the law offices of Nelson Mullins across the street from the capitol. Before leaving I visited with NAFME President-Elect Glenn Nierman who gave me directions to the various office buildings.

(insert picture of Glenn Nierman, NAFME President-Elect and I)

From there the race began finding my way to each office building for my scheduled appointments. It is hot and muggy in Washington D.C. in June!! My speaking points included the following, all related to the ESEA Reauthorization:

- Ask Congress to ensure that we maintain the arts as a CORE ACADEMIC SUBJECT in any reauthorization of ESEA.
- Music educators should be EVALUATED by qualified individuals utilizing reliable measures germane to their field.
- Stipulate that the U.S. Department of Education collect RESEARCH in support of the music education.
- Provisions for ACCOUNTABILITY that measures successful education for all students.

- Congress should ensure that all federal FUNDING streams be available for music education.
- School day ACCESSIBILITY to music education programs across the country.
- CHARTER SCHOOLS need to be consistent with public schools in offering a comprehensive education that includes music education taught by certified music educators.

I visited with Congressman Luetkemeyer and his Legislative Correspondent, Trey McKenzie for approximately 25 minutes. Both were very aware of the reauthorization proposals. Congressman Luetkemeyer is very supportive of teachers and the important job we do. He was adamant about his stance of local controls for teachers and schools in terms of curriculum and evaluation. Senator McCaskill was not in but her Legislative Correspondent and Education representative, Lucia Alonzo, did meet with me for about 20 minutes. Lucia is a violinist and attended Truman State University. Lucia is positive advocate for Music Education and she assured me that Senator McCaskill shares the same beliefs. Congresswoman Wagner was already back in Missouri when I arrived at her office but her Legislative Assistant Erik Rust sat with me in her office and was very knowledgeable about the new ESEA bill. He was a bit concerned with the delays that seem to surround the bill. Congresswoman Wagner sponsors an annual art contest for Missouri Students. The art work of the winners decorates her office and the tunnel that leads from the Cannon House Office Building to the Capitol.

On July 17, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the GOP ESEA bill H.R. 5, the “Student Success Act.” This version of the ESEA reauthorization is not very arts friendly and has no language that speaks to a well-rounded education. It is very math and reading oriented and spells bad news for any federal support of music education. Congressman George Miller, California, introduced a substitute bill that was a great deal more arts friendly and ensured a well-rounded education, but it was soundly defeated.

It is believed that the House bill will be short lived. The Senate will act on their version of the ESEA bill this fall. Senator Harkin the presenter of the Senate version hopes his bill will reach the floor early this fall. Senator Harkin is a strong advocate of music education. I will do my best to stay tuned to the Senate agenda. If and when the bill reaches the floor of the Senate I will send an e-mail to alert everyone that it is time to write your Senator and Representative encouraging their support of the Senate version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Missouri Educator Evaluation System

In May of 2013, the State School Board adopted the Missouri Educator Evaluation System. School Districts can adopt the state model or they can create their own evaluation systems that align with the new principles and standards. The Teacher Standards can be found at: <http://dese.mo.gov/eq/documents/TeacherStandards.pdf>.

I encourage all music teachers to familiarize yourself with the position statement on teacher evaluation presented by NAFME found at:

<http://musiced.nafme.org/about/position-statements/teacher-evaluation>.

As this evaluation system unfolds we are all searching for guidance. While at the National Assembly I attended a session in which a summary of a NAFME Workbook for effective professional development and successful evaluation was introduced. This workbook is still being developed and is untitled. The intention is a guide that both teachers and supervisors can use to improve instruction and program effectiveness. We did not receive a target date for publication. I will be attending a pre-conference session at the National In-Service in October on Teacher Evaluation. I hope I will have additional resources for you at that time. I will post updates to the web site.

MMEA is dedicated to assisting our membership with music specific criteria for evaluation and professional development. It is our goal to align the Teacher Standards to music specific language and develop a rubric that will offer ideas and suggestions that you can use to assist your administrators in developing a fair subject specific evaluation for you and your students. Effective evaluation measures must include a means for determining student growth in the subject area being evaluated. This is best done through the use of Student Learning Objectives (SLO) that should be developed by each teacher and district. It is our goal to offer SLOs examples for different disciplines and all levels that you will be able to adapt for your situation. Please monitor the MMEA web site for these developments. I will host a session at the annual MMEA In-Service Workshop that will present and explain the “MMEA Model Music Teacher, guidelines for effective educational practices and professional development.”

STEM to STEAM

STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

At the federal level STEM Education Coalition represents all sectors of the technological workforce – from knowledge workers, to educators, to scientists, engineers, and technicians. In Missouri this group is called the Missouri Math and Science Coalition. These groups work at the federal and state level to insure America is a global leader in science and technology. The Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) is committed to improving education and supporting

development of industry in the critical mathematics, engineering, technology, and science (STEM) fields. I completely agree with the need for America to remain a global leader in technology. To be a global leader we need to think in creative ways so science and technology can better society. What industry leaders need to realize is that creativity is fostered by participation in the arts. To this end a movement championed by the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and widely adopted by institutions, corporations and individuals is called STEAM: STEM + Art = STEAM. The objectives of the STEAM movement are to: *transform research policy to place Art + Design at the center of STEM; encourage integration of Art + Design in K–20 education; influence employers to hire artists and designers to drive innovation.* To learn more about STEAM go to: <http://stemtosteam.org/>. You can sign a petition to encourage Congress to add art and design in Federal programs that target the STEM fields at <http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/support-stem-to-steam-1>

Advocacy work does not take a vacation. I have additional advocacy agenda items to share in the future. These are challenging times but with your help MMEA will make a positive impact on the future of music education in Missouri. Again it is a pleasure to serve the MMEA membership. Please contact me with concerns, ideas, suggestions or news about your program that you would like to share, brandesg.mmea@gmail.com. MMEA is about you, the practicing Music Educator, help us help you.