

# Parents: GET THE MESSAGE!

**Parents** are potentially the greatest source of support for your program. They see the benefits of your teaching when their kids come home full of chatter about music class. Parents are also quick to offer their time and energy to activities like fundraising and the logistics of concert planning and travel. They're also the best pool to draw upon for manpower in developing your advocacy efforts.

## Messaging

Where to begin? Your parent coalition won't come together on its own. As with any group, members must be recruited, and that requires a compelling message.

**Start by answering this question: What issues motivated them to take an interest in your advocacy initiative in the first place?**

- Learning to play a musical instrument helps students build confidence. They take pride in their achievements, both individual and as members of an ensemble.
- Students who participate in music education programs see music as their "social glue," connecting them to one another and the wider world.
- On average, music students score higher on both the verbal and math portions of the SAT, helping them to get into good colleges and universities.
- Students who take music classes tend to have fewer drug and alcohol problems and fewer brushes with the law.
- Music education helps in the development of 21st-century skills that employers prize, including
  - 1) critical thinking and problem solving
  - 2) collaboration
  - 3) creativity
  - 4) initiative and self-direction
  - 5) leadership and responsibility



**National Association  
for Music Education**

## So, how do you direct all the parental good will and enthusiasm to meet your advocacy goals?

- Send home a flyer with your students inviting their parents to an informal gathering to briefly discuss the advocacy team's mission. Let them know how valuable their contributions will be to their child's music education.
- Designate a "team leader" from among the volunteering parents once you have your team in place. It's your job to guide them, but let them take the initiative in researching the issues, collecting data, organizing events, scheduling meetings with district school boards and PTAs, etc.
- Work with your team to design a website for your advocacy campaign. Make sure it's updated regularly and frequently.
- Create a listserv so team members can communicate easily with one another.
- Have your team start a Facebook campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of music education for your students.
- Select a public relations contact for your team to engage the traditional media by publicizing every concert, meeting, and advocacy-related event.
- Meet with your team every few months to evaluate your efforts and assess whether the goals are being met. If they are, stick to your plan and keep in touch with your important contacts. If not, then decide what needs to be changed and keep at it. Patience, persistence (and good humor) are key in protecting a music education program.

## The Bottom Line

Today's music educator is faced with a difficult choice: Either actively advocate on behalf of your program or run the risk of it falling victim to budget cuts when the time comes for school districts to make tough funding decisions. Protect your students' access to a comprehensive education that includes music education provided by exemplary music educators. Their futures may depend on it.

## Questions?

Write to [advocacy@nafme2.org](mailto:advocacy@nafme2.org) or call (800) 336-3768.

© National Association for Music Education ([www.nafme.org](http://www.nafme.org))



For today's students to succeed tomorrow, they need a comprehensive education that includes music education provided by exemplary music educators.