

Elementary School Principals GET THE MESSAGE!

Elementary school principals know one thing above all: the most effective way to educate young children is to cultivate a love of learning in them at an early age. Capture their imaginations when they're just starting out, and you'll find yourself with school full of bright, eager students primed for success in later life.

Music education has a crucial role to play in achieving this goal, and support from the administration is essential to ensuring it keeps its place in the curriculum. With the principal as an ally, a music program stands a much better chance of surviving when cuts must be made to the school budget.

Messaging

What's the key to securing their support? They're under as much pressure to get results as you are. With more time and resources being devoted to science and math, they're often likely to look to other subjects if hard financial choices have to be made. The answer is a compelling message.

Start by answering this question. What issues are important to them and will serve as tools to recruit them as fellow advocates for your program?

- Music study is crucial in brain development for young children.
- Learning to play a musical instrument helps young children to build confidence. They take pride in their new-found talent.
- Music study enhances the learning experience in other subjects, engaging students' reading, math, and scientific skills.
- Schools with music programs have significantly higher attendance rates than those without them (93.3% as compared to 84.9%).
- Music study helps students to develop discipline and focus, and they're less likely to be disruptive in the classroom.
- Music study helps students to connect socially. Performing as a group, they learn to work together toward a single goal.



Elementary School Principal as Advocate

Now that you've brought your principal on board, how can you best use him/her as an advocate for your program?

- Start by inviting your principal to observe you teaching your students. If he or she has a clear picture of the learning your students are engaged in, your principal will be a better advocate for your program.
- Invite your principal to open your concerts with a few remarks to the audience on the benefits of music study, which you provide.
- Ask your principal to speak on the music program's behalf at PTA and school board meetings. His/her words carry a lot of weight with these groups.
- Keep your principal up to date on all important issues concerning your program. His/her continued effective involvement is dependent upon you keeping him/her informed.
- Provide your principal with relevant research and hard data when he or she is pressured by their superiors to eliminate music education at your school.
- Create a collaborative environment in your advocacy efforts so that your principal feels like part of a team. Make sure he or she is intimately involved in any letter-writing or social media-based campaigns.
- Be sensitive to your principal's concerns. If you're both on the same page, it's much easier to work together to maintain the long-term health of your program.

The Bottom Line

Today's music educator is faced with a difficult choice. Either actively advocate on behalf of your own program or have it run the risk of falling victim to budget cuts when it comes time for school districts to make tough funding decisions. Protect your program and 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 or call (800) 336-3768.

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