

Secondary School Principals: GET THE MESSAGE!

Secondary School Principals are charged with one very important task: insuring that the nation's children are prepared to go off to college or university or out into the world ready to handle every challenge that awaits them.

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?

- Schools with music programs have significantly higher graduation rates than those without programs (90.2% as compared to 72.9%).
- 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



Secondary School Principal as Advocate

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

- Invite your principal to observe you teaching your students. With a clear picture of the learning your students are engaged in, he or she 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 program's behalf at PTA and school board meetings. His or her words carry a lot of weight with these groups.
- Keep your principal up to date on all important issues concerning your program. His or her continued effective involvement is dependent upon you keeping them informed.
- Provide your principal with relevant research and hard data any time they are 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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