

Diverse Web Resources for Music Education Advocacy

Brett A. Richardson

In the 21st century, research provides evidence to support the position that music, as well as the other fine arts, enriches students' lives and expands their learning capacities. In addition, current data confirms that students who participate in the arts, in combination with their general education curriculum, tend to score higher on standardized tests, have higher rates of acceptance into institutions of higher education, and report fewer difficulties with discipline and truancy. Despite the statistics correlating music and the arts with numerous positive effects of on our young people, music educators around the United States often find themselves fighting for their program's existence, frequently combatting reductions in instructional space, equipment, staff, and budget. While I never advocate violence, a war analogy seems apropos because a soldier going into battle needs enough ammunition to be effective . Likewise, we must be able to provide the appropriate information to our local and state governing bodies so they will have the tools needed to formulate policies that benefit our students. To that end, I recommend the following web resources to assist you in defense of your program:

Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA)

<https://www.tmea.org/resources/advocacy/materials>

Founded in 1920, the Texas Music Educators Association is comprised of over 11,000 members who teach music at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels. As one of the largest organizations of its kind in the United States, TMEA has provided free access to a section on its website dedicated to music advocacy materials that are ready for duplication and distribution.

TMEA's music advocacy resources include print-ready PDF documents, audio and video clips from speeches by leaders in the music education field, and a PowerPoint template for creating customized slides to report data from your individual school district or corporation showing how local campuses with increased fine arts enrollment have higher academic ratings and graduation rates.

National Association for Music Education (NAfME)

www.nafme.org/take-action

Although the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) recently changed its name to National Association for Music Education (NAfME), the organization's mission to support music education has never wavered. One of the leading professional associations for music educators nationwide, NAfME has developed a web presence in the area of advocacy that provides relevant and up-to-date information for supporting the arts in our schools. The "Take Action" section of the webpage features print-ready materials for use in presentations and speeches, as well as links to webinars with instructions on how to schedule appointments with your state legislators and how to provide more effective advocacy for music education at the local and state levels. NAfME has also developed the innovative Broader Minded campaign with the tagline, "Think Beyond the Bubbles™," with bubbles referring to standardized tests. At www.broaderminded.com, advocates of music education will find a variety of print and electronic media resources supporting the role of arts in the total education of our students.

Music for All Foundation

<http://www.musicforall.org/who-we-are/advocacy>

Formed in 2006 out of a merger between Bands of America, Inc. and the Music for All Foundation, Music for All is one of the largest entities in our country providing music programs across the country both competitive and non-competitive performance opportunities as well as professional development initiatives for music for educators. In the area of music advocacy, Music for All's website provides a diverse set of tools to assist with creating PowerPoint presentations for use at concerts or school board meetings, links to news articles/videos from all over the United States in support of the arts, and a special "Help My Program" link to request expert assistance if your program is facing elimination. In addition, Music for All's "I Believe" campaign offers many helpful tools for motivating your communities and parent booster organizations to give, advocate for, and support your music program.

National Association of Music Parents (AMP)

<http://www.amparents.org/resources/music-facts/>

Led by Music for All's founder Scott McCormick, the National Association of Music Parents (AMP), was formed "...in response to the increasing need for a national parental voice in support of music and the arts as an integral discipline within the education system in America." As expected, AMP's website features an advocacy area that is parent oriented, providing links to articles that support arts education, pro-arts media for use at concert events, and strategies and templates for writing effective e-mails to legislators and district administration. The variety of

materials is a unique feature of this organization's advocacy area, driven by its hyper-specific mission to motivate parents to advocate for music education in America's schools.

National Association of Music Merchants Foundation (NAMM)

<http://www.nammfoundation.org/why-music-matters/why-learn-play-music>

The SupportMusic Coalition is self-described as “a program of the NAMM Foundation [that] unites non-profit organizations, schools and businesses ... to keep music education strong in their communities.” “Why Learn to Play Music?” is an advocacy brochure that highlights statistics about the benefits of music education. The print-ready brochure is available in both English and Spanish, and NAMM may be able to provide complimentary print copies for distribution in some cases. The SupportMusic Coalition webpage also offers strategies for recruitment and retention of middle school students to high school as well as tips for applying for grant funds available from the NAMM Foundation.

Children's Music Workshop

<http://www.childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy/>

The Children's Music Workshop is an Emmy-award winning music education company, based out of Los Angeles, CA. The organization's web page offers links to over sixty articles addressing a variety of advocacy topics, including the benefits of music education on child development, music's positive effect on character building, the “standardized testing pull out”

crisis that has affected music programs across the country, and statistical data regarding the advantages of including music as part of the core curriculum in America's educational system. Not only can you find information to support your argument in defense of your program, but you can also find citations and bibliographies for source material from which the data was gleaned, providing further credibility to your advocacy efforts.

VH1: Save the Music

http://www.vh1.com/partners/save_the_music/what_you_can_do/advocacy.html

VH1: Save the Music Foundation is an organization founded in 1997 that has donated over \$40 million dollars worth of musical instruments to 1,500 schools in nearly 100 U.S. cities. The foundation's mission is to provide musical instruments to at-risk programs that are facing elimination due to budgetary crisis or cutbacks. On the Advocacy section of their web page, VH1: Save the Music provides over forty links to downloadable Word documents that contain quotes, facts, and data in support of music education programs and their positive effects on America's youth. The site includes numerous templates for communication with school boards, local governments, and state legislatures, as well as PowerPoint and PDF files containing graphs with data supporting the positive effects of music on children.

American Music Therapy Association (AMTA)

<http://www.musictherapy.org/research/factsheets/>

Music therapy as a clinical-based medical profession serves as a showcase for the positive effects of music in our nation's schools and hospitals. More specifically, music therapy is a widely

respected and well-established health profession in which music literally serves as the therapeutic intervention for physical, emotional, cognitive, and social difficulties of individuals. The AMTA provides a PDF document on its website corroborating the benefits of music education on students with disabilities, including the value of music education as part of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and the advantages of including music therapy in the public and private schools of America. One point to consider is that audiences in America may not fully understand the scope of music education initially; however the context of healthcare for music education may help school board members and legislators become more receptive to your position.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to acknowledge that increasing emphasis on standardized testing, regardless of a student's age and socio-economic status, has resulted in conditions of flux as educational system in America struggles to evolve. As advocates of music education, we must help our legislators and district administrators recognize that improvement in both academic performance and quality of life for our students can be influenced through music and arts education in our schools. In the battle to define the "core" curriculum, advocates must rely on each other and empirical data to support fine arts activities.— Participation in the fine arts, including music, visual art, and theatre, provides our students with the tools they need to be successful in the world's colleges and universities as well as competitive in today's workforce. We must gather up arms and fight for our music programs to ensure that both the left *and* right sides of our students' brains can develop – creating innovative, thoughtful contributors to our society.

“Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”

–*Albert Einstein*

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Brett A. Richardson serves as the Coordinator of Music Education/Director of Bands and an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas where he oversees the music education curriculum, teaches courses in instrumental pedagogy, and administers all facets of the UIW Band program. A native of Houston, Dr. Richardson previously served on the band faculty of Stephen F. Austin State University as well as taught in the Clear Creek and Lewisville Independent School Districts. In addition, he has guest conducted and presented clinics at both the Texas Music Educators Association Convention and Midwest Clinic. He holds the Doctor of Music in Wind Conducting from the world-renowned Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, the Master of Music in Wind Conducting from Texas A&M University-Commerce, and a Bachelor of Music Education from Stephen F. Austin State University.

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