

5 Steps to Keep Music Education Strong for the Students in your Community

1. Be proactive... Find a parent or community volunteer to develop a database and a face book page for your music program. Collect contact information for parents, teachers, administrators, community members and legislative supporters. Develop and impact statements and understand the curricular elements of your program. Good personal relationships with parents and community leaders are the best and first line of advocacy!

2. Publicize your program and the benefits of music education... Toot your horn when students receive awards or win competitions or scholarships through social media and local media. Have a core group of students ready to perform for community events. Let people know how many students benefit from your school district music programs. Share the latest research and statistics about how music education improves graduation rates and contributes to the health and well-being of people and society. Make a video to promote music education to play before and after public performances.

3. Build community relationships... Personally invite legislators and community leaders as well as school board members and school administrators to attend school concerts. Ask them to MC your performance or recognize them in the audience. Meet with local media and request coverage of school music events, exemplary music students and the results of district and state music competitions. Attend and have students perform or speak at school board, PTA, town council and civic organizations meetings.

4. Know the numbers behind your music program... You can't 'make the case' for your program if you don't have a grasp on how much it costs, the numbers of students participating, and how many full-time educators are needed to replace you. Most people don't realize that money is actually saved by making in-school music programs stronger – and that it costs more in the long run to make cuts to programs. Create an annual report for distribution.

5. Recognize and thank supporters... The next election is always right around the corner: let your community leaders and elected officials know that music education is a priority for you as a voter. Write letters to the editor. Tell funders, parents, hard-working teachers, alumni, music retailers, and anyone else who helps preserve music education in your community that you appreciate their support.

Based on the work of Dr. John Benham and a modified NAMM article by Jim Harmon.