

NEWS



MARCHING BAND
Students march in-sync while performing with their school band.
PHOTO: JILL ENSLEY

TAKE ACTION!

The top 25 things you can do to keep music in your schools

■ 1. Start early

Provide your child with access to the benefits of music education from birth; sing to your baby, move to music and feel the joy of making music together. Visit your local community music school to find musical opportunities and discover what you can do to get started.

■ 2. Know the law

Ensure that your local school administrators, teachers, legislators and community members know that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act includes music and arts as "core" academic subjects; support this policy for your local school.

■ 3. Get quality educators

Check that your local schools provide access to the benefits of music education taught by highly qualified teachers just like the other core academic subjects. To learn more about the Opportunity to Learn Standards for Music Education and to rate your school music program, go to supportmusic.com and click on "Grade Your School Music Program."

■ 4. Get involved

Participate in school and/or district planning committees including curriculum, assessment and budget. Position music education as an important instructional tool for improved student learning and to close the achievement gap.

■ 5. Participate in budget discussions

Understand the budget process in your district and school, including how your music program is funded and when the budget is discussed and

finalized; participate in school budget hearings and monitor district and school support for music and the arts.

■ 6. Stay on top of current information

Keep up-to-date on current research supporting the benefits of music education.

■ 7. Make it about the students

Keep all advocacy efforts centered around education, and spread news about the accomplishments of students.

■ 8. Form a coalition

Encourage parents and community members to become advocates for your community's school music programs and form a local coalition. For detailed information on building a coalition, please visit vh1savehemusic.com.

■ 9. Schedule performances for decision-makers

Arrange for your school music program to perform at school board meetings regularly. On appropriate occasions, follow this with comments from students about why music education is important. Allow school board members to see and hear the value of music education! Don't wait until there is a threat to the music program.

■ 10. Make friends

Identify key supporters of music education including members of the school board, administration, school faculty, parents, media, and influential civic and business leaders. Build relationships with these individuals before threats to the music program are apparent; invite them to concerts, greet the audience

or be guest conductors of student ensembles.

■ 11. Start the party

Encourage school staff to be involved in the school music program. Do teachers at the school play an instrument, sing or have children who study music? If so, encourage them to be involved in rehearsals and concerts.

■ 12. Go local

Encourage parents, students and/or influential members of the community to write an op-ed piece on the value of music education for your local newspaper. Invite a local news reporter to do a story or ask a newspaper to donate a full-page ad highlighting the benefits of music education; highlight student participation and accomplishments in all forms of media, wherever possible - a great music program is the best advocacy!

■ 13. Establish an award

Nominate an administrator who has demonstrated strong support for music for a "Music Education Award" given by the local or state music educators association or establish one in your district.

■ 14. Rally support

Participate in the national community recognition program presented by the NAMM Foundation "Best Communities for Music Education" and use this designation to ramp up support for your music education program.

■ 15. Educate your community

Turn a local performance into an "informance" by placing interesting music facts inside concert programs. Hold a reception

after so that community leaders can start conversations with music supporters.

■ 16. Spread the word

Help create program inserts highlighting the benefits of music education for your school concerts and performance centers throughout your community. These can be inserted into all concert programs.

■ 17. Involve different groups

Bring students to perform at local civic organizations such as the Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary Clubs and highlight the importance of music education.

■ 18. Make it official

Obtain an official proclamation from your Mayor or City Council leaders dedicating the month of March as "Music In Our Schools Month."

■ 19. Reach out to TV and radio

Ask your local television and radio stations to publicly recognize local music programs throughout the year and salute "Music In Our Schools Month" in March. Follow this by providing a calendar of local musical events during March and ask your local media to dedicate them to "Music In Our Schools Month."

■ 20. Get competitive

Sponsor an essay competition for students to write about why music is important to them. Arrange for the local newspaper to run the winning entry. Or participate in School Band and Orchestra magazine's annual essay contest for the potential to win scholarship funds: sbomagazine.com/essay-contest.

■ 21. Let parents know their options

Arrange for your local music program to perform at local pre-schools, elementary, and middle schools. Get students and their parents excited about all the music learning opportunities that can be part of their future in school.

■ 22. Take it to Congress

Write a letter to your Member of Congress about the value of music education in your community and take a delegation of music students to meet with your Congressional representative at their local office. List upcoming local school music events and invite him or her to attend.

■ 23. Do your homework

Write letters to legislators supporting music education. Research the academic and social benefits of music study and be sure to include these in your letters to advocate for music education.

■ 24. Get donations

Encourage local businesses to support music programs with special donations for special projects that supplement core education funds from the district. Be sure that this support is not seen as a replacement for district funding of music programs.

■ 25. Articulate the issues

Be involved in local, state and national music education organizations and the National Coalition for Music Education at supportmusic.com.