

## AN ADVOCACY PLAN TO STOP CUTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### 1.) Identify the Issue.

Projected budget deficits in two years may lead the board of education to reduce its music education program. (This could be cuts in staffing, music budgets, new instrument purchases or maintenance and repair, etc.)

### 2.) Identify a goal and strategies.

Prevent reductions in the music program through the following strategies:

- Establish relationships and trust with key policy makers in the school district and community, (e.g. members of the local board of education, superintendent, principals, teachers, students, parents, musicians in the community, business community leaders, higher education faculty, civic leaders, faith-based community, media, etc.)
- Build support for music education among policy makers and the community.
- Position music education as valid and important in and of itself, but also as an instructional method to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap among students.

### 3.) Gather information and data.

- Determine if cuts are needed to balance the school district's budget, and the process and timeline that will be used for deciding when and where cuts will be made.
- Determine if your school district will be in compliance with Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools if budget cuts are made.
- Document the following: student achievement and recognitions in music; the number of students choosing careers in music; the number of students enrolled and earning graduation credits in music; and, the personal and economic value of music and the arts to the community.
- Document the impact of potential budget cuts on the following: opportunities for students in music; the quality of the music education programs, including impact on recognitions and awards; and, district school improvement or reform efforts for closing the achievement gap among students, keeping students in school, and reducing the graduation dropout rate.
- Determine the depth of support for music education in the school district and community.
- Identify strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats regarding music education.
- Identify decision makers, stakeholders, friends, allies, and opponents. Are they important because of their power, influence, networks, or resources?

### 4.) Develop strategies and opportunities.

- **Organize** – Organize a steering committee to do research and coordinate implementation of strategies. Define roles and responsibilities and how decisions will be made. Include stakeholders and allies in the school district and community, and involve teachers from other disciplines, local musicians, music/arts organizations, the faith-based community, and volunteers (PTA/Music Boosters) in the schools. Identify a spokesperson or chairperson who is respected and known in the community, and who has relationships with decision makers in the school district.
- **Network** – Develop contacts and relationships with policy/law makers, other educators, parents, musicians, business contacts, the media, etc. Provide them with information on music education and data on student achievement that supports continued funding for music education programs in the district. Invite them to music events and concerts. Encourage voters to approve levies, and lawmakers to reform Ohio's system for funding schools.

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Encourage music educators to participate on school district budget, curriculum, and assessment committees, and accept leadership roles on these committees to be sure that music and the arts are represented and advocated for.

- Communicate – Develop and implement a communication plan. Conduct a briefing for the board of education and the media on the status of music and the arts in the school and community and the impact of potential budget cuts on music education programs. Include information about how the cuts will impact student achievement, career opportunities for students, and the quality of life in the community. Distribute this information to the parents and community members. Write letters to the editor, schedule presentations before community groups, and distribute information at music events.

**5.) Implement and assess your achievements.**

- There is an organized advocacy effort in support of music education in the district that includes a variety of stakeholders. That effort is visible in the schools and community, and is led by a respected member of the community.
- Networks and relationships have been developed that support music education. Music educators are members of key district committees, and advocate for music education and the other arts on these committees.
- Information about the personal, economic, and academic value of music education has been shared with the school district and community. This information is reaching the community through letters in the newspapers, information at music concerts and events, school building newsletters, etc.
- Voters approved a levy, which will temporarily eliminate the budget deficit. The music programs are saved.

**6.) Revise and adjust the plan based on its progress, and remember to recognize supporters and celebrate successes along the way.**