

HOW TO INTERVIEW A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER OR ELECTED OFFICIAL

Interview Process and Questions for Elected Officials

The purpose of the brief interview is to gauge the attitudes, knowledge, and interests about music education of elected officials (local school board members, Ohio representatives, Ohio Senators, State Board of Education member, or other elected or appointed offices.) The interview provides an opportunity to become acquainted with elected officials, and develop a rapport with them. The interview is not the time to lobby for a particular issue, but is a “fact finding mission” to determine who supports music education and the arts, who does not, and who can be persuaded with the appropriate information.

Before the Interview

- 1.) This interview can be conducted by email, mail, phone, or in person. Be sure to make an appointment if you plan to conduct an interview in person or by phone. If you plan to conduct this interview by mail or email, then include a cover letter to explain its purpose. If the interview is mailed, please also include a self-addressed and stamped envelope for the official to use to return the survey to you.
- 2.) Do some research about the official so that you can personalize the interview, especially if the interview is going to be conducted in person. Check newspapers, campaign literature, committee assignments, or ask colleagues what they know about the elected official.
- 3.) Be prepared to answer basic questions about your local school music programs, and your professional organization - the Ohio Music Education Association. If the interview is in person bring copies of you school music program, calendar of music concerts and events, and/or OMEA’s mission and goals, copies of music education support materials to leave with the official, etc.
- 4.) Bring a colleague or music parent along to serve as a recorder if you are doing a personal interview. It is very difficult to conduct a conversation and also record responses, so have someone accompany you to take notes and keep the interview on track.

During the Interview

Allow the official to do most of the talking. This is an opportunity to find out the opinions of the official and what they want to do in office. Listen to points of disagreement to determine if the positions are based on principles or a lack of knowledge. Be courteous. Remember that today’s foe is tomorrow’s ally. Thank the official for past support of music education or other arts organizations.

Possible Interview Questions about Music Education

1. Do you support music/arts education as part of a high quality education for all of the school district’s/Ohio’s children?
2. Do you support music/arts education as a way to reform schools and increase student achievement?
3. What will you do to ensure adequate funding and resources for music/arts education in the local school district’s budget/Ohio’s schools?
4. Do you support music as a comprehensive, sequential program and part of the core curriculum for all students?
5. What is the value of music education to students, parents and the community?

After the Interview

Send a thank-you note to the elected official, and any follow materials that were promised. Share the information learned with the OMEA Executive Director and OMEA Government Relations Chair, as well as colleagues at our school. Use the information below as a checklist to keep track of who, has interviewed whom, and how the interview was conducted.

Interviewer's Name

Position

Address

Phone and Email

Date of the Interview

Interview Team Members

The Name of the Candidate or Elected Official being Interviewed

Elected Office (e.g. local board of education, Ohio House, Ohio Senate, State Board of Education, etc.)

Official's Local Address: Street, City, Zip Code

The following questions are for the interview team to complete after the interview. These questions are not part of the interview, but will help to summarize the responses and how the interview was conducted.

- 1.) How accessible is this elected official? (Was it easy or difficult to arrange an interview?)
- 2.) Does this elected official have a background in music or the arts?
- 3.) Did this elected official mention a particular interest in music or the arts that could be used at a later date to build a relationship upon?
- 4.) What committees is this elected official assigned to?
- 5.) What other interests did this elected official mention in the interview?
- 6.) In your opinion, is this elected official an advocate for music and arts education?
- 7.) If not, were any reasons given?
- 8.) In your opinion would additional information help persuade this official to be an advocate for music and the arts? What kind of information would you suggest?