

ALL IN

Advocacy

By David Branson

The key to success is you.

We all want success. Success for ourselves, our programs, and most of all, for our students.

We want to reach the highest graduation and attendance rates. We want to help our students have the highest in social, emotional and intellectual capacities and the highest levels of citizenship. We want our students to have a lifelong relationship with music. And we want them to have the grounding in music that will help them achieve in life.

For each of us to evolve from good music teachers to great music teachers, we need to build success on the pillars of trust: honesty, integrity, dignity, ethics, and sensitivity.

Developing quality relationships is the bridge to guarantee success.

This part of the ALL IN series shows how to become an effective Advocate for your music program.



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ALL IN: THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

What are those qualities found in the exemplar music educators that result in a life-changing experience for students? Through their curricula and practice teaching, collegiate programs do a good job of preparing teachers. The graduates of these programs understand the basics of pedagogy and musicianship. Yet, the great music educators have that “something extra” which goes beyond the material and concepts covered in school. It is that “essence” which empowers the Ninja music educator to have a profound impact on students, inspiring them to succeed not only in music but in life. Students who study music stay in school and demonstrate higher GRADUATION rates than those who do not. The evidence is broad and deep that music learning improves a student’s academic achievement. But the best programs even further strengthen test scores and grades, and lay the groundwork for success in professional life following school. Behind each and every outstanding program is an outstanding teacher.

What is it then that stands apart the model music educator? Such an educator:

- 1) Believes in him/herself as someone who can make a difference
- 2) Is inspired, passionate, AND persuasive
- 3) Is primarily interested in the PEOPLE s/he is teaching and working with
- 4) Is able to make personal connections
- 5) Is a music missionary

How can I, as a music teacher, create, revive, or invigorate a program than can reach my students, help grow them, and increase the likelihood that they will graduate? I should:

- 1) Investigate and determine whom I am serving. I need to make a sensitive and strategic assessment to learn what music-making modalities already strongly live in the community. It is important to consider what kinds of music-making might engage or be interesting to this body of students. I must remain open to a variety of musical styles and genres.
- 2) Perform an honest self-evaluation of my unique special interests, biases, and skills. I should consider all possibilities, be willing to free myself from a particular approach to music-making and embrace what may already exist in the community.
- 3) Develop ethical but real personal connections with the students. It is personal relationships that allow me to grow as a human being and to succeed as a music teacher.
- 4) Develop relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents, and citizens in the community
- 5) Become a well-informed, compelling advocate for music educations, able to motivate and persuade stakeholders of the core value of the music program
- 6) Become a dynamic and determined fundraiser, equipped to generate significant resources to advance the programmatic mission.

In order to become an advocate who can inspire and persuade stakeholders of the value of the music program at your school, you must be regarded and serve as:

- A. An informed proponent for the teaching and learning of music for all students
- B. A communicator and marketing engine for your program

To become an informed proponent for the teaching and learning of music for all students:

Making music will help all students achieve at a higher level. There is increasing research indicating that students do better in school, have higher graduation rates, and lower dropout rates than students who do not study music. While the case for music as a valued discipline is meaningful to musicians, persuading administrators and other stake holders is another matter. Therefore, the extra-musical value of music is the argument most likely to convince decision makers in your school. Every school principal, superintendent, and supervisor cares about graduation rates. The evidence is overwhelming that participating in music directly impacts overall academic performance! It is imperative that you become conversant with the data on this subject. Familiarize yourself with the advocacy information is provided in sites listed below.

1. Download a complimentary copy of the Community Action Kit available online at <http://www.nammfoundation.org/support-music/community-action-kit>
2. advocacy.nafme.org
3. aep-arts.org
4. artsusa.org
5. childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy
6. jrm.sagepub.com
7. musicachievementcouncil.org
8. qmusiqconsortium.ning.com (The QJMC Case for Music Education)
9. supportmusic.com
10. www.vh1savethemusic.org

To become a communicator and marketing engine for your program

1. Assemble the most meaningful data for your program.
2. Make an inclusive list of your constituents. (See the Sample Letter that follows, which can be inserted into a concert program with the music department logo attached)

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are now a member of the Mozart Middle School (*Choose appropriately:* Coalition for Music Education, Music Boosters Club, Committee to Promote Music Education, Music Education Fan Club).

Because of your interest in our program, we would like to add your name to our brand new mailing list so that you can be kept informed about all of our music news and department activities.

Thanks for your interest in the Mozart Middle School Music Program. If we may ever be of service, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to seeing you at future events.

Sincerely,

Name

Director

Please complete the information below and return to one of our student performers.

- - -

Name _____ Phone _____

Preferred Email _____ FAX _____

Street Address _____ Zip _____

Place of Business _____ Phone (W) _____

3. Create a data base to use for sharing advocacy information.
4. Develop a strategy to deliver advocacy information across the school and beyond. (You might consider a “Music Corner” newsletter, including advocacy information and listings for future concert events.)

The Music Corner

Did you know that Arts instruction increases learning and achievement?¹

1. Boosts literacy and English Language Arts
2. Advanced math achievement
3. Engages students in school and motivates them to learn
4. Develops critical thinking
5. Improves school culture

¹*Preparing Students for the Next America*, April, 2013. www.aep-arts.org

Indulge your senses by spending an enjoyable evening with us.

- Spring Musical: A Night at the Theatre DATE
- Madrigal Dinner: A Feast of Fantasy DATE
- Band Concert: Saluting Sousa DATE
- Orchestra Concert: Made in America DATE
- Mariachi Extravaganza: Fiesta Fantastico! DATE
- Guitar Concert: Bach to B.B. DATE

www.ourschoolsmusicwebsite.org

5. Use salient anecdotes to dramatize the importance of doing music. For example, think of things from your own or your colleagues' experiences that match the following story:

A young man in an urban Texas high school was involved with gangs, drugs, and was truant. Though often a problem and/or absent he also had enrolled in the high school band as a trumpet player. Born into a single parent family living below the poverty line, he was destined for a lifetime of delinquency and likely incarceration. But the band saved him! As a frequent guest conductor with the band over the course of several years, I saw this transformation before my own eyes. When I first encountered this student he was last chair in the trumpet section, not co-operative, and never practiced. Then, somehow through the influence of a dedicated band director and an environment in which the students were highly motivated, everything changed. The young man began to show up every day! He started practicing and becoming a skilled musician. More important, his attendance pattern and grades across the board in school began to rise and eventually soar. Subsequently, he graduated with a B plus average and went to college. Playing in the band redefined his life and his future.

6. Establish an annual meeting with your immediate supervisor administrator to discuss and share information about the benefits of music education to students.
7. Cite evidence showing how the music classes have benefited students at your school and include graduation rates for students in your program.
8. Distribute advocacy information in a variety of methods. Social media, Newsletters, program notes, articles in the school paper or webpage. Send weekly or monthly email blasts. Hold one on one conversations about specific benefits to students in your program.
9. Periodically share the research about the impact music study has on overall academic performance with your students, their parents, and members of the community at large. Provide specific examples of how being in your class has helped a student. Keep track of graduation and dropout rates, GPA, college and career ready preparedness of your students. In a music class, students are being taught to show up on time, work as a team, to collaborate and cooperate---all vital 21st century skills.
10. Keep your parents and community informed about the good work that is happening in your classroom. Emphasize your program's successes and more importantly the successes of your students.
11. Communicate with local print and electronic media regularly about concerts, events, awards, recognitions and honors for students.
12. Seek out partnerships with local arts and music groups that can support the education of your students. Examples might include:
 - a. Invite local musicians to come in and work with your students
 - b. Encourage the parent volunteers
 - c. Perform joint concerts with other music groups
 - d. Invite local university or college professors to give clinics for your students
 - e. Play for civic events