



MUSIC EDUCATION

POLICY ROUNDTABLE

To: President-Elect Biden and the Biden-Harris Transition Team

From: The Music Education Policy Roundtable

Date: 12/21/2020

On behalf of the Music Education Policy Roundtable, we would like to Congratulate President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris on winning the 2020 presidential election. The Roundtable looks forward to working with the Biden administration and the U.S. Department of Education on advancing the goal of a relevant and equitable music education for all students.

Since 2011, the Music Education Policy Roundtable has advocated to ensure the continued presence of a high-quality music education in America's schools. Consisting of 43 music education organizations and businesses, the Roundtable believes all children, regardless of circumstance, should have access to high-quality in-school music education.

In 2015 President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act into law. This bipartisan legislation recognized the need for students to participate in a well-rounded education and named music as one of the subjects to which all students should have access. While we continue to celebrate music being recognized as part of a complete curriculum, additional resources are necessary to see this commitment through and ensure that all students are ensured equitable access to music.

We look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration and the newly elected 117th Congress in building on the success of ESSA. Below are some policies and issue areas that will bolster access to a well-rounded education and support the important goal of a quality music education for all:

COVID-19 Relief Package

Financial instability and uncertainty continue to plague the U.S. economy, but we fear school districts have not yet felt the worst. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the combined revenue shortfall for state budgets—not including additional costs incurred by COVID-19—will be approximately \$555 billion. States have already revised their budgets for the current fiscal year, and many have made cuts across the board, including millions of dollars from education budgets. Without additional relief for the states, further cuts to state education budgets and services can be expected.

The Roundtable believes that Congress must appropriate, and the President must enact, at least \$200 billion specifically allocated for education to make up for lost state revenue. Without this funding, teachers will be laid off, school music programs will be jeopardized, and students will not have the access to the well-rounded education Congress set out to ensure with the passage of ESSA.

Additionally, the inequities of the 'Homework Gap' have been magnified during the pandemic for students who lack home internet access. Recent estimates suggest between 8 and 12 million K-12 students in the United States are unable to log online for distance learning, and that students from rural communities and racial minority groups are disproportionately affected. Without home internet access, millions of students are at a significant disadvantage in completing projects, research, and study.

Congress can address this crisis by authorizing emergency funding through the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) E-Rate program—the largest federal education technology program. We encourage the new administration to support legislation that will help school districts procure discounted laptops and WiFi hotspots to be loaned out to students.

School Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Students need music and arts education more than ever during the pandemic. Music and arts programs support students not only through providing academic rigor and outlets for creative expression but by also fostering healthy social and emotional learning environments and positive school climates. All students must have access to an equitable delivery of music and arts education taught by certified professional arts educators in partnership with community arts providers.

Roundtable members have joined an international effort to fund research [investigating aerosol spread in music and performing arts classrooms](#). This research, spearheaded by experts at the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Maryland College Park, has equipped the performing arts community with mitigation strategies that reduce the spread of aerosol particles by over 90% during music-making activities. Roundtable members have [created resources](#) that are available to help the Center for Disease Control and USED establish consistent guidelines for schools to offer in-person music classes safely.

We wish to work with your administration on creating practical guidance for PreK-12 schools as administrators and music educators seek to ensure safe, meaningful music instruction for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this unique time, music educators are modifying their practices not only in teaching, but in classroom orientation, cleaning, and management. Music educators want to offer the best instruction possible, so all students can learn and grow their knowledge, understanding, and love of music and the arts.

Increase Authorization and Appropriations for Well-Rounded Programs

Well-rounded funding found in ESSA has been important to music and arts programs across the country, and we hope the Biden-Harris Administration will work with Congress to increase these funding levels during its first term. President-Elect Biden’s commitment to tripling Title I-A funding comes at a time when under-resourced schools need additional support as their educators continue to teach in new ways during the pandemic. Both programs found with Title I-A, school-wide assistance and targeted assistance, can provide supplemental funds for a “well-rounded education,” including music and the arts.

The issue of funding increases to Title IV-A was advanced during the Democratic presidential primaries with a call to increase the funding authorization levels to \$3 billion. The Roundtable supports such an increase as this program provides funding for a well-rounded education, including music education. Roundtable members have documented how Title IV-A funds led to more students gaining access to music education in the [2018-2019](#) and [2019-2020](#) school years.

Instrumental to a well-rounded education is the recruitment and retention of teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Through the elimination of “core academic subjects” and the introduction of a “well-rounded education,” music and arts educators have an expanded allowable use of Title II-A funds for the professional development activities essential to supporting a high-quality education workforce. The Biden education platform places a strong emphasis on greater teacher support and increasing funds for this program would be a great place to start that initiative.

We also look forward to stronger engagement with the U.S. Department of Education. Music and arts education would benefit from the reinstatement of a special assistant of national arts education policy at USED. The position would help focus the Department to improve music and arts teaching and learning, document the availability of music and arts education for all students, and disseminate effective programs and practices.

The USED must also reinstate the arts assessment found in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP stands alone as the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what U.S. students know and can do in various subject areas, including music and the arts. We hope the Biden Administration will work with Congress to appropriate adequate funding to restore the arts assessment in the short term. In the long term, we hope the new administration will work with Congress to enact statutory language that makes the NAEP arts assessment a mandatory part of the Nation's Report Card.

The undersigned members of the Music Education Policy Roundtable look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration to strengthen music education in our nation's schools.

Sincerely,

National Association for Music Education

American Composers Forum

American Off-Schulwerk Association

American String Teachers Association

Barbershop Harmony Society

Chorus America

CMA Foundation

Conn-Selmer

Educational Tours, Inc.

El Sistema USA

Jazz at Lincoln Center

League of American Orchestras

Little Kids Rock

Music for All

Music Teachers National Association

Music Together Worldwide

Music Travel Consultants

NAMM Foundation

National Federation of State High School
Associations

National Music Council

Organization of American Kodaly Educators

Percussive Music Society

Quadrant Arts Education Research

QuaverEd

Rock and Roll Forever Foundation

Save The Music Foundation

The Metropolitan Opera Guild

The Recording Academy

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