



National Association
for Music Education



MUSIC EDUCATION
POLICY ROUNDTABLE



Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools with Safe and Effective Music Facilities

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a greater need to address school infrastructure as schools plan to bring students back to campus. We know that many schools across the country need to upgrade their ventilation systems to ensure classrooms have clean air. Maintaining the safety of students and teachers by mitigating the spread of the virus should be our highest priority as we work to get all students back in school buildings.

We also know that music plays a vital role in the American educational system. Facilities for music learning should be designed in a fashion that protects the health of students while maintaining a quality learning environment for the rest of the school. This means building classrooms with efficient ventilation, effective noise reduction, and enough space for students to rehearse in large groups safely. However, the cost associated with creating or enhancing these facilities often outstrips the resources available. The Rebuild America’s Schools Act would provide the funding needed to ensure student access to appropriate facilities, including music classrooms.

[The Performing Arts Aerosol Study](#) advises that mitigating the impact of COVID-19 as schools reopen will be incumbent upon two areas where infrastructure changes may be necessary:

Distance: Music programs should adhere to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) distancing guidelines of 6 feet by 6 feet with additional space (9 feet by 6 feet) for trombone players.

Air Flow: Outdoor activity remains the best place for air flow. Indoors, HEPA filters are strongly recommended to increase the amount of clean air and the number of air changes per hour (ACH).

As we move past the pandemic, many schools will still have to deal with the traditional concerns brought about by inferior facilities:

Space: Music classrooms require more square footage per pupil than other areas of a school.

- The instructional space must allow for large groups of students to play instruments and stand on choral risers without being crowded.
- Doors and hallways must be wide enough to safely move through while carrying or wheeling large instruments and equipment.

- Students need dedicated storage areas for instruments, uniforms, and sheet music libraries, so that equipment is not posing a hazard by being left out in open spaces.

Acoustics: Music classroom design should accommodate the volume level of large ensembles.

- Ceilings must be high enough to reduce the volume in the classroom below the decibel (dB) threshold of causing permanent hearing damage.
- Flooring must be composed of material that limits decibel levels, while also being easy to clean, as condensation from valves on wind instruments can build up in carpet, causing mold and bacteria to grow.
- Walls and ceilings must include materials designed to dampen sound to reduce the classroom volume to safe levels and keep sound away from other classrooms.

The renovation and creation of music facilities requires strong commitment, planning, and resources. While most schools provide some form of music instruction, fewer dedicate classroom space specifically for music learning. This reality diminishes the positive outcomes associated with music education. Investment in quality music facilities is essential to creating a healthy environment for students that is conducive to learning.

Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act

H.R. 603, the *Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act*, introduced by Representative Bobby Scott (VA-3), would create a \$70 billion grant program and \$30 billion tax credit bond program targeted at high-poverty schools with facilities that pose health and safety risks to students and staff. The bill includes the renovation or development of music and arts facilities as an allowable use of funds.

We thank Representative Scott for introducing the Rebuild America's Schools Act, and for his continued leadership in supporting a well-rounded education for all students. We ask members of Congress to support this legislation and commit to ensuring America's students can learn in safe, healthy schools.