



**National Association  
for Music Education**

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK for 2022 NAFME STRATEGIC PLAN



**Strategic Plan Approved & Adopted by the NAFME  
National Executive Board on September 27, 2022**

# A Roadmap to the Future of NAFME

## Introduction

**Scott R. Sheehan, NAFME President (2022-2024)**

This year (2022) we celebrate the 115<sup>th</sup> year that the National Association for Music Education has been advancing music education and supporting music educators across our country. Beginning in 1907 with a small gathering of just over 100 music supervisors, the organization has grown to include music educators at all levels from prekindergarten to university, collegiate members, middle school and high school Tri-M<sup>®</sup> members, music industry partners, music program leaders, and parents and community members who support the cause of music education. Change and evolution has always been part of our Association. We have persevered through numerous economic downturns including the Great Depression, wars and conflicts, natural disasters, societal and civil rights movements, shifts in political leadership, and most recently, a global pandemic. Through all of this we have survived, all while being responsive to our members' needs and the needs of their students. Even our Association's name has evolved over time. We were originally called Music Supervisors' National Conference; then, in 1934, we became Music Educators National Conference (MENC). In 1998, the name changed to MENC: The National Association for Music Education. On September 1, 2011, we simply became the National Association for Music Education.

As we examine the history of our Association, the overarching theme of ensuring that every child in every school in the United States and beyond has access and opportunity to learn and grow through music has always been present. Support for music educators whose expertise, dedication and passion actualize this important work has also been a priority. Additionally, "music for every child" has been a perennial refrain that has had many iterations over the decades. The new strategic plan continues to amplify this same message by deeply examining the barriers and root causes that hinder our work towards seeking to make this goal a reality. It also provides directions and pathways to achieve the overarching purpose of increasing NAFME's capacity to advocate for equitable access to music education for every child.

The new plan also continues the evolution of our Association's identity and shapes how we will accomplish our goals in the years to come. In addition to providing conventional goals and action plans, this plan serves as a conceptual framework that addresses many questions currently challenging our Association. As educational reform and political discourse continue to impact nearly every aspect of the music education profession, questions such as Who Are We?, Why Do We Exist?, and Why Belong? needed to be addressed. After two years of conversation, soul searching, and introspection, as well as sharing the strategic planning process with our entire membership, **this plan answers those questions.** Built from the ground up, the plan also embraces a strong sense of belonging and provides ways for everyone to see themselves as an important part of NAFME's work.

This plan sets a course for NAFME to continue our critical work of **Advocacy and Public Policy**, which over the past decade has defined a large piece of our identity. The plan outlines new approaches and directions for the development of advocacy resources at the grassroots, state, and national levels and

highlights the importance of partnerships with other organizations, companies, and associations in the music education ecosystem and beyond. In addition, the Advocacy and Public Policy cornerstone creates a path to expanding our relationships with educational institutions serving historically marginalized populations, to develop and support advocacy initiatives and support Tri-M® and collegiate members engaging in advocacy work in their local communities.

The new plan also provides support for meeting the needs of music educators through the cornerstone of **Professional Learning and Growth**. The introduction to this cornerstone states, “The goals of the Professional Learning and Growth Cornerstone are designed to refine and strengthen our profession. As a community of practice, this goal will be accomplished through the intentional development and delivery of relevant and responsive professional development opportunities for music educators. Placing priority on utilizing new understandings of effective practices while taking advantage of new technologies, these goals will move NAFME members in the direction of vital collaboration, understanding, and research discovery.” Implementation of the new online NAFME Learning Management System (LMS) – NAFME Learning Center - will be a new member benefit in this area as it actualizes the contemporary professional learning music educators need for their personal and professional growth.

The strategic plan amplifies the work of our higher education communities through the **Research and Music Teacher Education** cornerstone. The Society for Research in Music Education and the Society for Music Teacher Education have significant impact on the future of the profession not only by nurturing and developing the next generation of music educators, but also by conducting and sharing scholarly research that influences new ways of thinking about music, paradigms about the profession, curricula for PK-12 music classrooms, etc. This cornerstone is vital to “NAFME’s ongoing commitment to the development of new knowledge and the preparation of music educators, and also addresses the need to develop strategies that contribute to creating a more diverse music education workforce.” The plan calls for research in the key areas of policy, advocacy, equity, professional learning, and music teacher education.

Embedded within each of the cornerstones and standing on its own is the keystone of **Equity in Music Education**. NAFME understands that not all children have the same access to music education, and the needs of music educators and the availability of resources vary greatly. The keystone of Equity in Music Education solidifies NAFME’s commitment to “defining, developing, and promoting resources and frameworks that expand equitable access to music education.” It also outlines support not only for buttressing diverse curricula, repertoire, and musical opportunities, but also for providing a lens through which to examine policies, procedures, and practices. The creation of an Equity in Music Education Resource Center will be a vital benefit for all members.

I encourage everyone to carefully review all of the details in the following pages of this plan. You will find bold and strategic directions outlined for our Association to do the hard work of advancing the future of our profession, supporting our members and music educators everywhere, and ensuring that every child knows the power that music possesses to unlock their unique creative spirit. I encourage all of us to be engaged in the directions this new plan sets forth, and remember that **Together, We Are NAFME**, and together we will have a lasting impact on the profession by believing in a bigger and brighter future.

## Transforming and Reimagining

Mackie V. Spradley, NAFME President (2020-2022)

The NAFME Conceptual Framework and Strategic Plan represent our journey of becoming. The timeline below provides a high-level overview of the process and the hopes and dreams embedded in the work.

### 2018

As Kathleen D. Sanz began her presidency, NAFME was grappling with many difficult questions. Little did we know at that time that our process of grappling would also start our journey of self-discovery. Our journey would require serious reflection, courage, honesty, trust, vulnerability, collaboration, strong leadership, commitment, civility, and openness to engage each other in dialogue. There were no guarantees that any of this would be easy; in hindsight, I can admit it was not easy. But the joy of seeing the results is more than worth it all.

### 2018-2019

NAFME revisits its position statements.

NAFME had previously published position statements on Advocacy, Equity and Access in Music Education, and Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education. However, as a practice, the statements were reviewed and revised on a rotation. NAFME [Position Statements](#)

President Sanz took a specific interest in heightening the importance of the NAFME Societies and Councils and how their work can become a lever to advance the mission and goals of the Association. As such, the Societies and Councils met regularly, established organizational structure, and identified work that aligned with the interests of the Association as well as initiatives, grants, and special projects. As a result, the work of the Societies and Councils shows up at various points throughout the strategic plan.

### 2019

Celebration of Vision 2020 at the National Conference and All-National Honor Ensemble (Gaylord-Florida)

Dr. Clifford Madsen was a keynote speaker. He shared the importance of The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education. In response, I called NAFME to action. *“For 20 years, we have talked about advocating for all students...for 20 years, we have talked about equitable access for all students...now, it's time to be about it! It's time to Walk the Talk.* [Vision 2020](#)

### 2019

The National Executive Board commissioned a [Current State Study on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access](#), by Cook Ross, a firm specializing in unconscious bias. The report identified critical growth areas and helped us to further investigate our systems and work. See [NAFME Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Study Executive Summary](#).

The findings of the Cook Ross Study helped us to determine which areas had the most significant impact on the Association. What were members saying about the Association? What remained their concerns?

As we reviewed the richness of the study in greater detail, it was evident the work could spread across multiple presidencies. The strategic plan addresses vital themes from the Cook Ross Report.

### **Spring 2020 -Transition to My Presidency- 2020-2022**

I organized a Think Tank, a group of colleagues I greatly respect. I could be open and trust that they would always be brutally honest with me. I am forever grateful to each of them for sharing their insight, advice, ideas, and kind words of encouragement. The Think Tank members who served as my transition team included Judy Bush, Armalyn De La O, Anne Fennell, Jacqueline Henninger, and Michael Raiber. Thank you, Judy Bush! Finding our Why became a recurring refrain. We don't have a foundation unless we know our why.

### **2020**

At the beginning of my presidency, we created a road map to answer the following questions:

Who are we? What is our identity? Why do we exist? What is our why?

The Cook Ross Study revealed that 1) members generally were encouraged by NAFME's recent efforts towards Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access; 2) members acknowledged and appreciated the shift in national programming over the past few years to prioritize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access; and 3) members' shared understanding and agreement that prioritizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access will bring value to NAFME, ranging from increasing membership, supporting a diverse teacher workforce, and providing resources for the study and performance of diverse repertoire. Diverse Music Repertoire Project; Music Teacher Education Project

### **NAfME Equity Committee**

The Equity Committee was initially formed as an Ad-Hoc committee focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. Forming the Equity Committee would be a turning point for our Association. *Equity would become our door and pathway to advance music education for all!*

### **Town Halls**

Over the 2020-2021 school year, NAFME members participated in a virtual town hall series. The purpose was to engage members in an open discussion about the history of MENC/NAfME, the findings of the Cook Ross Study, and other data. We also wanted to create time and space to lift different perspectives and voices about the current state of the music education profession. We hoped that the discussions would help us to articulate what we believe, our mission, vision, and goals. Our desire is to be a national association that **Advocates for All**--music students, music programs, music teachers across the United States, regardless of geographic location, and irrespective of which school they graduated from, or if they had an advanced degree. How do we make this vision reality? We created a space to hear the voices of all our members, especially the Collegiates.

Revisiting history and sharing stories always uncovers surprises; however, everything in the past continues to impact our future. So, how and what can we learn from our past to help us understand and know ourselves better? Hopefully, what we learn will shape our future.

## Historical Issues Surrounding Gender and Race

Using NAFME's history, I wanted to address the elephant that continued to sit on our chest, smothering us- Causing us to sustain wounds of the past. NAFME, with its 115-year history, was no exception to the cultural rules and laws of the past. For that reason, NAFME was structured and organized to promote those with freedom, privilege, and access, to belong without question. Historical and cultural practices, attitudes, and acceptable behaviors guided the operations and procedures of MENC.

- Our stories provide examples of the grave injustices of the past. For example, Frances E. Clark earned the nickname "Mother of MENC" both for her tireless service and for having presided at the 1907 conference; however, she was not the first elected president. That honor went to Phillip C. Hayden. Even now, although a few more women have served as president of the organization, leadership remains predominantly white males. In contrast, the number of women music educators exceeds that of men.
- Although African American music educators were a large constituency of MENC members, ongoing social injustices and racism prevented the full participation of African American members. As a result, members felt slighted and overlooked. Things came to a head at the 1972 MENC Conference in Georgia when the entire group of African American music educators, researchers, performers, and conductors exited the conference to voice their collective concerns. This single act of protest would lead to the creation of the National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music (NASPAAM), originally the National Black Music Caucus.. This story is also a part of NAFME's history and a part of who we are. Unfortunately, it would take 50 years for NAFME and NASPAAM to reconcile. See <https://nafme.org/nafme-celebrates-50th-anniversary-of-naspaam-with-resolution/>

What steps can we take to ensure that NAFME policies and procedures, historical, social and cultural aspects, and behaviors, no longer create barriers and deny access to music education? For example, how do gender, race, color, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, immigration status, and ability make a difference?

The shared stories give us a historical context of our past. However, we are responsible for creating new stories for our shared future.

## Membership Surveys

Members voice their budgetary priorities via an annual membership survey. A recent survey suggested that the top priorities of NAFME are *Advocacy and Public Policy, Professional Development, Conferences/Events, Organizational Development & State MEA Relations, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access, Membership Benefits/Resources, and Research*. NAFME's new strategic plan addresses each.

Our recurring refrain: *What is our Why, and Who are we? And What do we Believe?* We struggled for over a year before we began to have some concept of our identity or at least who we wanted to be.

## Fall Division Meetings

As state MEAs invested more time and effort looking at their state policies, procedures and programs, we saw synergy building around a new identity for NAFME quickly. Over the next two years, 26 state

MEAs began to examine where there were monumental barriers associated with but not limited to, language, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, class, and ability.

### **NASS 2020- Addressing our Beliefs and Matters of the Heart and Reimagining and Transforming**

During NASS 2020, we focused on how to reframe our thinking to have a more significant impact on music education.

In order to make the change, we began by looking at the “Association in the Mirror.” We centered Michael Jackson’s, “Man in the Mirror” for inspiration. Who is that looking back at me? NAFME’s outward-facing mission is “*to advance music education by promoting the understanding and making of music by all.*”

*Making music by all* is a great mission. However, if we actually intend to impact “all,” we will need to find ways to address the small, exclusionary pathway to leadership that was designed to give advantages to those with social capital. We will also need to place more effort into supporting a diverse teacher workforce. This is especially true as we continue to experience the loss of music teachers and music programs at an alarming rate.

If we intend to uphold the values so eloquently stated in our Inclusion and Equity position statement, we will definitely need to build a larger table and co-create space for many voices and experiences.

### **The Impact of the COVID Pandemic, A Nation’s Struggle for Identity, and Domestic Chaos**

First, we cannot ignore that the development of the strategic plan occurs during a time in which our nation continues to be extremely polarized, fractured, and filled with emboldened acts of violence in private and public spaces. The impact that COVID had on the medical, health, economic, educational, transportation, and supply system, was staggering. COVID revealed the inequities in all of our systems and exacerbated teachers, performers, health care workers, food suppliers, services, and more.

I must admit that I would never want anyone to spend their entire presidency in a “stay at home” status, but there were benefits that we must acknowledge and for which to be grateful:

- It was evident that the world found solace, comfort, strength, and hope through music and musical performance. From the rhythmic clanging of pots, pans, handclaps, drums, solo violinists on the balconies and rooftops, and all sorts of unheard-of musical collaborations, we experienced firsthand that what we do is critically important to the well-being of our heart, soul, mind, and body.
- We acknowledge that all teaching is shaped and informed by the context in which we teach. As such, some of our conversations reflected the tensions across the United States. For that reason, we resolved to focus on how our discussions could unify our Association across differences and how it was necessary to remain focused on the healing power of music to all peoples.
- After years of focusing on performances and contests associated with large ensembles, we learned that our teaching practices side-stepped having to teach the whole curriculum and all the 2014 Music Standards. COVID forced us to develop a growth mindset to continue learning. It also taught us how to be malleable and adaptable. We learned how to pivot.

- As such, *Professional Learning* was the lifeline for teachers across the nation. Professional development was no longer an isolated task, but became a collaborative and inclusive project led by members of the National Executive Board (NEB), the Societies and Councils, and members of the Equity Committee.

## **2021 NAFME National Leadership Assembly Nuts and Bolts**

At the 2021 NASS, leadership saw the first draft of the conceptual framework. Then, we opened breakout sessions to discuss each of the cornerstones. One significant change would center equity as the critical pathway to advancing the other cornerstones: Music Research and Music Teacher Education, Advocacy and Public Policy, and Professional Learning and Growth.

During the Assembly, we asked for volunteers who had experience writing strategic plans or curricula. From the list of names, we formed a writing group for each cornerstone.

The writing teams met as a whole group to learn more about the writing processes, timelines, available resources, collaborative tools, procedures for the review and editing of content, and a high-level overview of what the end product might look like. Each writing group selected a team leader. The work was not directly supervised or overseen by staff or the NEB unless an NEB member volunteered to be part of the writing group.

After the first draft was completed, the draft was posted to give the general membership an opportunity to provide public comments. The public comment period was 30 days. After the public comment period ended, the feedback was synthesized and shared with the writing groups. Writing groups made edits as necessary. Then, NAFME staff reviewed the plan to identify places where it aligned with projects already in development, completed, or in an exploratory phase. The plan went to the National Executive Committee and finally to President Scott R. Sheehan, President-Elect Deb Confredo, and me for final suggestions and technical edits.

The entire process of developing the NAFME Conceptual Framework and Strategic Plan was a unique collaborative process. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to each of the writers, who gave of their time, expertise, and long commitment, to see this through to the end I ask that members please help me to thank them for their service to the National Association for Music Education and to the profession.

I hope that everyone can see themselves in the new plan. This is only the beginning. There are many, many “isms.” We will continue to advocate for the inclusion of everyone. Everyone has a seat at the table.

Finally, the plan's implementation will not rest on the shoulders of staff; but will rest solely on the shoulders of the Association. Roll up your sleeves! Let's get to work.



## Getting to Work

**Christopher B.L. Woodside, NAFME Executive Director**

As Executive Director of NAFME, it is hard to put into words what it has meant to me personally, as well as to the entire NAFME staff, to be in service to the Association and profession during the time of the development of the new NAFME Strategic Plan. While it has always been an honor and a pleasure to represent music educators, the opportunity to increase our capacity to advocate for every student, from every background and lived experience, is deeply rewarding. In order to effectively implement the new Strategic Plan, however, NAFME will need to rely on a broad network of constituencies and partner organizations, all collaborating, to achieve our desired results.

Collaboration has been the watchword of the process that NAFME Immediate Past President Mackie V. Spradley has used to explore, conceptualize, and, ultimately, develop the new NAFME Strategic Plan. In that continued spirit, the NAFME National Executive Board and staff, working together, as a team, now begin planning a multi-year strategy to identify the resources necessary to execute the new Strategic Plan, and to prioritize the stated goals of its 3 cornerstones and keystone.

In order to ensure NAFME members, state affiliates, partner organizations, and additional interested constituencies are well-informed regarding the new Strategic Plan, NAFME will next embark on a communications tour, designed to inclusively educate and engage. As we begin this phase of our work, what we know conclusively is that we cannot be successful without the support and collaboration of our state affiliates. **The federated state music education associations of NAFME are the heart and soul of our membership**, and the volunteers and staff who serve these organizations all across the country and beyond are critical to the implementation of the new Strategic Plan.

In 2019, NAFME commissioned [Cook Ross](#) to conduct a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Access (DEIA) Current State Study of the Association. The findings revealed that “NAFME’s federated/local autonomy structure provides opportunities for the national organization to trickle down DEIA support, guidance, and advisory to music educators at the local level.” The report also was clear, however, that for this process to bear fruit, NAFME must create space for affiliates to share best practices of their own, and to celebrate progress. In this spirit, much of the undertaking of the new Strategic Plan will be driven through the contributions and participation of NAFME constituencies and state leaders.

In this sense, while each state affiliate is a separate organization, the NAFME Strategic Plan represents a shared direction for our combined “family of associations,” through which all can feel included and represented. In the weeks and months to come, the National Executive Board and staff will be back in touch regarding next steps in the important process of creating action plans aimed at implementing the goals of the new NAFME Strategic Plan. We encourage all interested individuals to reach out to President Scott R. Sheehan at [sheehanmusiced@gmail.com](mailto:sheehanmusiced@gmail.com) and express a desire to participate. Once these plans have been formalized, NAFME will be well-positioned to making budgetary and timeline decisions (beginning with the start of the Association’s next fiscal year – starting July 1, 2023), which will guide the work to come.

This moment in our history represents a significant milestone for a 115-year-old membership association. An unprecedented commitment of time, expertise and passion for the profession of music

education drove the development of the new NAFME Strategic Plan. To any music educator wishing for brighter days ahead, I encourage you to find hope in the exquisitely thoughtful shared efforts of hundreds of your colleagues, each seeking to build a more inclusive future for the cause we all hold so dear. For **ONLY** together, we are NAFME.

## Strategic Plan Writing Teams

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### Cornerstone Research & Music Teacher Education

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### NAfME Equity Committee (2022-2024)

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- Cecil Adderley
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- Jared Cassedy
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- Roque Diaz
- William Earvin
- Laurie Fellenz
- Kendra Kay Friar
- Johnathan Hamiel
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- Lenora Helm Hammonds
- Amy Martinson
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- Russ Sperling

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