

## **Biography**

Joseph Flores is the Director of Fine Arts for Teaching and Learning for Las Cruces Public Schools. Mr. Flores earned his Bachelor of Arts in Music Education and Master of Music in Instrumental Conducting from New Mexico State University. Prior to overseeing Fine Arts curriculum and activities for LCPS, he taught middle school and high school band programs in Las Cruces, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas since 1997.

During his time in the classroom, Mr. Flores' ensembles consistently earned superior ratings and were recognized at local, state, and national levels for musical excellence including: multiple state championships in band and symphony orchestra, multiple competition finalist for Bands of America and Winter Guard International regional events, New Mexico Music Educators Association (NMMEA) Honor Jazz Band and Honor Symphony Orchestra, and his music department's program earned recognition as a Grammy Foundation Signature School. Mr. Flores was nominated for the New Mexico Golden Apple Award in 2016. He was selected as the 2017 NMMEA Music Educator of the Year and then later received the 2019 NMMEA Rollie Heltman Distinguished Service Award. He was recently selected to receive the 2023 Doña Ana Arts Council "Papen Family Award" for demonstrating extraordinary commitment to the arts through service and leadership and was most recently selected as a 2024 NMMEA Hall of Fame inductee.

During his tenure as Director of Fine Arts, Las Cruces Public Schools has annually been recognized as one of the Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) and was also selected to receive the 2022 and 2025 NMMEA Award of Distinction.

In addition to his work, Mr. Flores remains active as a guest speaker, guest conductor, concert band & marching arts adjudicator and clinician, and he regularly presents professional development sessions at educator conferences regionally and across the country. Mr. Flores has served as President of the NMMEA Southwest District and has also served at the state level as Band Division Vice-President and President for the entire NMMEA organization. Additionally, he is a member and former President of the New Mexico Chapter of the International Band Master's Fraternity, Phi Beta Mu.

In his free time, Mr. Flores enjoys spending quality time with his husband, Daniel, and their dog, family and friends as well as traveling with focus centered on art, history, culture, and culinary experiences.

## **What do you see as the major challenges music education will face during your term and in what ways can you transform these into opportunities during your presidency?**

I envision a multifaceted approach to transform challenges into opportunities for growth in music education.

First, while it is critical to look ahead to future challenges, we must do all we can to fully support music educators who are currently in the classroom to be the absolute best educators they can possibly be. The power of quality teaching cannot be denied and is a force with which to be reckoned. The better we develop our music educators the less likely we are to see negative circumstances and outcomes in the security and longevity of music education in schools and communities. Nothing hurts a student or a program more than an ineffective teacher. Quality support of educators must come first. NAFME must respond to the evolving landscape of music education that encompasses diverse learning styles, musical traditions, and technological advancements. This involves curating inclusive curricula that recognize the cultural richness in our schools and integrating contemporary music production techniques to resonate with today's students.

Furthermore, divisive concept laws pose a threat to the integrity of music education. It's essential to equip our educators with the skills and knowledge to navigate these challenges confidently. NAFME must continue to offer workshops and create resources to guide educators on how to uphold inclusive educational practices that foster social-emotional learning through music.

Secondly, addressing teacher shortages is critical. I propose that we implement a two-pronged strategy focusing on recruitment and retention. Building on the concept of a national recruiting campaign, we should establish partnerships with colleges, universities, and other organizations, leveraging and expanding NAFME's resources to create enticing incentives for undergraduates to choose music education as their craft and vocation. Concurrently, we should work to combat teacher burnout by facilitating peer-support networks and advocating for policies that promote work-life balance and professional development opportunities.

Last, but not least, I am committed to dispelling the misconception that music education is an expendable luxury. Through evidence-based advocacy, we need to demonstrate music's intrinsic value in developing well-rounded individuals capable of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. I pledge to promote and lead by example in engagement with policymakers, parents, and educators to champion the necessity of music in the academic curriculum.

By fostering an environment that values innovation, inclusivity, and advocacy, NAFME will not only confront the challenges head-on but will also pave the way for a resilient and vibrant future for music education.

**What do you see as the major challenges the association will face during your term and in what ways can you transform these into opportunities during your presidency?**

I anticipate the pivotal challenges facing NAFME in the near future will continue to be centered on reaffirming the essential role of music education in our schools and society. Music education is a cornerstone for developing critical thinking, creativity, and

emotional expression among students, and ensuring its prominence and sustainability is my primary focus.

Advocacy for music education should be at the forefront of our mission. We must equip educators to champion the benefits of music learning, which transcend cultural and academic boundaries, developing well-rounded individuals. A strong advocacy network will empower our members to present compelling cases for the inclusion of music programs in educational curricula, irrespective of restrictive legislation.

Financial sustainability is crucial for the continued support of music education programs. My vision involves helping our educators broaden understanding of available, but not always accessed, funding sources and collaborations, leveraging Federal Title programs, seeking grants, and forging partnerships that recognize the value of music education. These efforts can bolster supportive financial resources in schools across our country, enabling the support of music educators and students, and ensuring the vitality of music programs.

Uniting educators from diverse music disciplines, populations, and backgrounds will be key in showcasing the holistic value of music education. I advocate for cultural and interdisciplinary collaborations that emphasize music's unique contribution to educational outcomes. By strengthening the voice of music education in dialogues on educational policy, we position music not just as an art form but as an indispensable element of a comprehensive education.

Adapting to the evolving needs of our diverse membership means providing tailored resources that support the role of music education in developing critical life skills. Revamping our digital presence and resources will create more accessible, high-quality professional development and networking opportunities focused on the pedagogical and advocacy skills that support music's educational role.

The overarching goal of my presidency will be to solidify the position of music education as a field vital to the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students. By addressing these challenges with a forward-thinking, strategic approach, we will pave the way for a future where the transformative power of music is an integral part of every student's educational journey.

**How do you plan to advance equity/DEIA in NAFME during your term of office?**

To advance equity/DEIA during my tenure, I will prioritize inclusive practices that foster an environment where every individual's voice can be heard and valued. Recognizing that equity is about curiosity, fairness, and justice in treatment, access, and opportunities for all, my action plan will be to work toward these via the advancement of music education.

Though NAFME has made strides to review current programs and initiatives to identify and dismantle any systemic barriers that may exist within our organization, my plan is to

actively engage as many individuals and groups as possible, especially those from communities who have historically been underrepresented in music education and in our association. This will involve soliciting feedback from a diverse range of voices to ensure that our policies and practices are equitable and inclusive to all.

In addition, I will work to champion a broad spectrum of music education opportunities and experiences that reflect the diverse tapestry of cultures, identities, and experiences present in our society. By doing so, we acknowledge and celebrate the rich musical heritage of all students, which is essential for a well-rounded music education.

Professional development and resources will be a cornerstone of my presidency, providing our educators with the resources they need to improve their teaching while cultivating classrooms that celebrate the diversity of our educators and welcome and affirm all students. This means providing training focused on how to be a better teacher while promoting cultural competency and strategies for creating inclusive learning environments.

By implementing these actions, I aim to help transform NAFME into an organization that advances music education in a manner that embodies equity and inclusion in every aspect of its work. It is through this commitment to action that we can ensure the future of music education grows stronger and brighter and is as diverse as all of the communities we serve.

### **Equity Statement**

As a leader of NAFME I will be committed to fostering an organization where the advancement of music education and equity in access are the cornerstones of our identity, mission, and practice. I believe that every student has the right to high-quality music education that celebrates their culture, respects their voice, acknowledges their unique potential, and honors their individual contribution and achievement.

A vision of diversity includes a plurality of perspectives, fostering respectful dialogue and mutual understanding. I believe that music education inherently invites every voice to join the harmony, to listen, and to respond.

Equity in music education means more than just access; it encompasses representation. Music education is at its best when all educators and students can see themselves reflected in the music they study and perform and strengthens the bonds of greater community. Equity means advocating for music curricula that are culturally responsive and reflective of the myriad heritages that compose our classrooms. It involves creating spaces where differences in cultural background are acknowledged and respected, not as divisions, but as enriching elements that contribute to the whole, where students from all backgrounds can see themselves not just as participants, but as creators and leaders in the field of music.

I will work to be inclusive; to listen to and learn from those with lived experiences different from my own, and take action based on multiple insights and perspectives. I will

strive to promote professional development and resources that equip educators with the skills to effectively teach music and implement inclusive teaching practices.

I recognize that this work will be ongoing and requires persistent effort and reflection. As an individual and as a leader in NAFME, I will hold myself accountable to these ideals, measuring progress not just by the advancement of music education, but by the diversity of those I serve, the variety of voices I amplify and elevate, and the communities I empower. My vision is a future where every student benefits from the beauty, dignity, and power of music education in a way that is just, equitable, and inclusive.

### **Leadership Statement**

Leadership to me is the confluence of vision, inspiration, and action. As the Southwest Division President of NAFME, I will embrace the privilege of leadership with a vision to cultivate an environment where every educator has the opportunity to grow, and every student has the opportunity to experience the transformative power of music. My goal is to champion proven and innovative practices, inspire collaborative efforts, and uphold the highest standards of excellence and inclusivity in music education.

Music education is a vital thread in the fabric of our educational system, essential for the enrichment of students' lives and for fostering the skills needed in the 21st century. In my role, I will be committed to advocating for robust music programs, ensuring they are accessible to all students, and supported by well-trained, passionate educators.

I believe in leadership that is responsive to the needs of our diverse community, one that listens deeply, speaks with intention, and acts decisively. My approach will be built upon the foundational pillars of integrity, transparency, and service, with a steadfast commitment to nurturing the growth of both students and educators.

In the pursuit of these goals, I will actively engage with policymakers, educators, and the community to strengthen the impact of music education. Together, I hope to work to integrate cutting-edge research, promote best practices, and promote necessary resources that will embolden our profession and enrich our student's educational experiences.

As we face the challenges of a rapidly evolving educational landscape, I will strive to lead with agility, fostering an organization that not only adapts but thrives amidst change. It is my goal to empower our members to become advocates for music education, equipped with the tools and resources to make a lasting impact in their communities. I am here to serve, to lead by example, and to support the mission of NAFME in creating a future where every student can partake in the joy and the discipline of music, and where the arts are acknowledged as a critical component of a well-rounded education.