

## All-State: Advocacy for your Program

by Shane Schmeichel

In the world of teaching music, our day-to-day duties are enough to consume our time and energy. We are passionate about what we do and prove it by giving ourselves to our profession. My goal for talking to you at the MNSOTA All-State workshop was to provide resources for advocacy and assist you to have one new perspective on how to successfully support your own program.

Any and every small action you take to advocate for your program and arts in general will benefit you and your students. Do not avoid being an advocate because you don't have time for another BIG project. Small actions can be powerful. If you have the time and energy to become a leader for the arts, good for you, but for those of us consumed by our current teaching position, we need to remember that we too can be a positive influence on leaders around us.

Here are some resources to help you become an advocate:

- [www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/critical-evidence.shtml](http://www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/critical-evidence.shtml) — *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement* responds to the needs of policymakers, educators, parents and advocates for fact-based, non-technical language documenting the most current and compelling research on the value of arts learning experiences.

- [www.americansforthearts.org](http://www.americansforthearts.org) — On this web page you can find arts education research facts, examples of advocacy letters, a public awareness campaign, and much, much more.
- [www.capwiz.com/artsusa/home](http://www.capwiz.com/artsusa/home) — This is a resource that will allow you to quickly communicate with your local and national political leaders about the importance of supporting the arts.
- [www.amc-music.com](http://www.amc-music.com) — More resources about the importance of the arts!
- [www.mtn.org/mca](http://www.mtn.org/mca) — Minnesota Citizens for the Arts is a local arts support organization.

I interviewed a few principals about the importance of our own advocacy in our buildings. Here are some ideas they shared:

- Plan musical events around family nights and other community/school activities.
- Help find financial resources for your program.
- Be positive and supportive of the building mission and yearly improvement plan.
- Support what happens in core areas by reinforcing reading and math concepts when possible.
- Create theme-based activities that in turn enhance higher order thinking

skills.

There are many more ideas on how to advocate for your program; do not forget to share your successes with other arts staff in the state.

When the going gets tough I remind myself of a few good guidelines to stay focused. They are: always be positive when working with building administration; do not forget that anyone (and everyone) in the district can be your advocate (find those people); and rely on leaders outside the school to be a support system. I give you my best wishes for another successful year and if you ever need an ear to listen to your story feel free to contact me at...  
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