



TOUCHPOINT

The Division of Education Newsletter

Conn-Selmer
DIVISION of EDUCATION

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A Note from Dr. Tim

Greetings. In this edition of *Touchpoint*, Scott McCormick, President and CEO of the National Association of Music Parents shares with us the importance of educating and mobilizing one of an educator's greatest advocates and assets: PARENTS.



Three Ways to Mobilize Your Parents Before the Need Becomes a Crisis

By Scott McCormick

Two years after the launch of The National Association of Music Parents (AMP), I'm often asked, "What's the biggest challenge you're facing?" My answer is always the same: getting teachers and parents to see the need for advocacy before their program faces crisis.

Every day, music programs are being slashed and budgets dissected. People shrug and conclude that there is nothing to be done about it. They may assume that smarter people are making the right decisions on their behalf, that the powers-that-be have stacked the deck against them or that it's too late and there's too much momentum to change anything now. I believe that's just not true, specially for the parents in your program.

Parents are in a unique position. They represent the school district's client (their children). They see firsthand the end result of the school board's decisions. Parents elect the school board, which hires the administration and teachers. Parents elect our local and state legislatures, which make decisions about education funding.

As a music educator, if you advocate for music education, opponents cry that you're just in it to save your own jobs even though you are the one with deepest understanding of the benefits of music education. That's why discussing advocacy with your parents is critical. It's the parents who will make a difference in this conversation. We have to model the behavior we want by proactively educating parents before cuts are proposed.

Parents can speak out most effectively about how arts education has positively affected their children. They watch their children learn and grow, developing character in ways that can only be done in a music classroom.

We need to prevent a reactive scenario. When a threat

arises, parents and teachers scurry feverishly to **Save Their Programs**. By that time, we have parents who resemble a pack of angry wolves rather than calm, educated, powerful citizens who are the ultimate decision makers about what their kids learn. The challenge for parents is time. After working and caring for their children, there's not much time left for advocacy. None of us ever anticipated having to actively advocate to keep what most of us took for granted: a well-rounded public education that includes music and the arts.

One simple solution? **Form a team of parents** whose responsibility it is to attend every school board meeting and work session they hold. If you have a team of five or six parents, each only has to attend every other month. They would listen for topics that could affect budgets and policies that in turn affect our music and arts education programs. They'd report back to the board of the parent booster organization, which would mobilize when necessary.

Even if parents can't attend in person, there is still more they can do. **Write a letter to the school board and cc it to your local newspaper.** Make it relentlessly positive! And of course, don't forget that school board members are elected "by the people, for the people." A great way to begin is to research and interview local school board candidates, inviting them to speak to your group, and of course, don't forget to **VOTE** what you believe!

One day soon, I hope that our biggest challenge is handling the exponential growth of music education programs! AMP is thrilled to be partnering with Conn-Selmer on a new parent initiative in June as part of Conn-Selmer Institute. We hope you'll consider getting your parents involved and take advantage of valuable resources like these and many more. Engage with us today at <http://www.AMParents.org>.

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founder of the Jazz Conception
Company and Conn-Selmer
artist.

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