

Speaking Up and Playing Out:

How to Advocate for You, Your Students, and Your Program

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DR. ROSE SCIARONI

University of Nevada, Reno
Music Faculty Member
rsciaroni@unr.edu



University of Nevada, Reno

DR. JACKIE SKARA

Oklahoma State University
Asst. Professor of Music
jackie.skara@okstate.edu



MICHAEL AND ANNE GREENWOOD
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
College of Arts and Sciences

Defining Advocacy

Advocacy is defined as support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
(Google definition)

Strong advocacy can lead to: More funding, higher enrollment, community support, or even the existence of a program.

Grounding Advocacy in Philosophy

To begin thinking about advocacy, first think about what it is that you are advocating for and why you think it is important. In other words, start with your own philosophy! Here is a step-by-step guide, adapted from Tutt and Townley (2011).

1. Develop your philosophy

What do you value?

- Clarify your values
- Define your terms
- Answer: Why?

Back it up!

- Your own experience
- From reading (methods, theories, research)
- Observations
- Conversations

2. Create a set of goals
 - Based on your values, what are your actionable goals
 - What are the goals of your stakeholders?
 - Administrators
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Community members
 - Create goal statements that are true to your values and speak to your stakeholders
3. Implement an advocacy plan
 - Develop talking points
 - Think about possible responses to your points
 - Meet with stakeholders to review and plan
 - Carry out the plan

Specific Resources:

Jorgensen, E. (1990). Philosophy and the music teacher: Challenging the way we think. *Music Educators Journal*, 76(5), 17-23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3400984>

Tutt, K. & Townley, M. (2011). Philosophy + Advocacy = Success. *Music Educators Journal*, 97(4), 60-63. doi: 10.1177/0027432111405671

History of Music Education Advocacy

You do not have to recreate the wheel! Advocacy has been a big part of our profession since the beginning. We suggest the following resources for thinking about how music educators have thought about advocacy in the past:

Hedgecoth, D., & Fischer, S. (2014). What History Is Teaching Us: 100 Years of Advocacy in "Music Educators Journal". *Music Educators Journal*, 100(4), 54-58. www.jstor.org/stable/43288871

Mark, M. (2002). A History of Music Education Advocacy. *Music Educators Journal*, 89(1), 44-48. www.jstor.org/stable/3399884

Shorner-Johnson, K. (2013). Building evidence for music education advocacy. *Music Educators Journal*, 99(4), 51-55. www.jstor.org/stable/43289017

Sturm, C. (1998). Advocating Music Study in the United States: A Colorful History with Lessons for Today's Arts Supporters. *American Music Teacher*, 47(4), 17-79. Retrieved July 6, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/43545784

The Demonstration Effect

As suggested by Shorner-Johnson's (2013) description of Woodbridge and Mason, these founders of music education in the United States used the demonstration effect for advocacy. This included:

- Getting stakeholders to the event by either inviting them or bringing the event to them
- Providing meaningful experiences including a variety of performance types, locations, and audiences served
- Be visible in the community and offer opportunities for students to play
- Effectively demonstrate what students are learning
- Use media (print and social!)
- Use performance as capital

Others have also suggested demonstration of, specifically, musical excellence as an effective means of advocacy:

Brenner, B. (2010). Reflecting on the Rationales for String Study in Schools. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 18(1), 45-64. doi:10.2979/pme.2010.18.1.45

Wagner, M. (2017). Grassroots Advocacy for your Music Program. *American String Teacher*, 67(1), 64–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000313131706700115>

Four Pillars of Advocacy

(Hedgecoth & Fischer, 2014)

Relevancy

- Who is in your classroom/program and who is not?
- How can you create a more relevant curricula that involves the largest group of students?

Community

- Ask yourself, what does community support mean to me and my community?
- We need to sell music education instead of leaving music to sell itself.
- We need to communicate so people can hear and understand us.
- We need to examine our contacts and how we maintain them.
- We need to speak up!

Value

- What does each stakeholder group value?
- What are the financial values of my program?
- What are the artistic values of my program?

- What are the cultural values of my program?
- What are the academic or intellectual values of my program?
- In what other ways might my program provide value and to whom?

Perpetual Nature

- Re-program our thinking; music advocacy is not new
- Cannot be fixed or solved
- Seamlessly build advocacy into our programming

Curating Your Online Presence

Think like a business:

- Create online value by providing educational or artistic content
- Have an easy-to-use website → make sure others can easily navigate it and you do not have to spend too much time on the backend getting it up and running!
- Build an email list through contacts you meet at various events and organizations
- Develop relationships by utilizing personal messaging
- Be active online → don't let your content go months and years without any update
- Utilize social media
- Produce content → showcase your programs and your students (with appropriate permissions and always being sure to avoid FERPA violations)

More Tools and Strategies

1. Use research with caution: It is a spice, not a main ingredient for advocacy!
Reasons to be careful:
 - Correlational, not causal (Hallam, 2010)
 - Most of this research is not string specific (Bugaj & Brenner, 2011; Hallam, 2010)
 - Does not give a full picture (Odendaal, A., Levänen, S., & Westerlund, H., 2019)
 - Is the relationship of music to other subjects what we want to highlight? (Elpus, 2007; Shorner-Johnson, 2013)
 Good resources for advocacy-ready research:
 - Hallam, S. (2015). *The Power of music: A research synthesis on the impact of actively making music on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people*. International Music Education Research Center Press.
 - NAMM website research page: <https://www.namm.org/news/research>
2. Foster a booster club
3. Develop a social media presence

4. Grab your “gigging students” and let them do the hard work!
 - Regularly scheduled concerts
 - School special events
 - Local churches or religious institutions
 - Affiliations of school volunteers (give back!)
 - Local events
 5. Get the students to buy-in
 6. Learn about the budget!
 7. Be involved! Get involved with your local MEA, ASTA, etc. They will give you countless strategies, help you build a community, and constantly help you advocate for the arts.
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