

Impacting State Education Policy It Can Be Done!

“Legislation is decided by those who show up.” – Joe Gagen

What the Law Says in Texas – all a direct result of TMEA lobbying efforts

- A. Fine Arts is a part of the Required Curriculum which all school districts must offer
- B. All fine arts instruction must be standards-based
- C. Music, art and theatre must be taught in grades K-5
- D. ISDs must offer three of the four fine arts areas (music, art, theatre, or dance) in grades 6, 7, or 8 and, in addition, every student in middle school must take one fine arts course in grades 6, 7, or 8
- E. One credit of fine arts is required for graduation in all graduation programs
- F. Arts and Humanities endorsement is now a graduation program available to all Texas high school students
- G. High schools (grades 9-12) must offer courses in two of the four fine arts areas
- H. Arts education is gaining ground as a part of the accountability system – community and student engagement

Understand the total process of establishing educational policy

- A. Know what is in law and what is in rule in your state
- B. Know when to fall on your sword on an issue and when to accept status quo
- C. Utilize the whole system to get what you want – will a state board rule accomplish your purpose rather than trying to change law?
- D. Lobby for fine arts – not just music
- E. Always be leery of unintended consequences

About legislators

- A. Legislators work for you
- B. They are real people – treat them that way
- C. They wear lots of hats – parents, candidates, legislators, sometimes arts supporters, and we have to communicate in different ways
- D. Ninety-nine percent of time they want to help, understand the issue, and do the right thing
- E. Their time is short and they deal with a myriad of issues, so don't overwhelm them, but do strive to get into their heads
- F. Do not overlook their staffs as key contacts

Local Advocacy

- A. Perhaps the most important component of fine arts survival
- B. Provide materials – printed and/or on website
- C. Inspire and train your members and parents on how to be effective lobbyists
- D. Organize presidents of arts booster organizations in your district (COPS)
- E. Sell your programs on their curricular nature – not the extracurricular components or activities

Is Anybody Listening?

- A. Dan Pink message – clear and succinct
- B. Establishing a connection with your audience will allow you to communicate successfully with them
- C. Focus on similarities and mutual goals and the curricular nature of music
- D. Advocate for the arts rather than against something else – John Benham
- E. Do your best to determine what is most important to your audience
- F. Must work from a platform of a high standard of excellence

Networking with other educational associations

- A. Administrator associations, PTA and teacher associations – get them on your side
- B. Most educational groups believe in educating the whole child
- C. Get other organizations to make it a priority on their agenda
- D. Get them to support your bill by submitting a card of support at the hearing
- E. If they won't support, try to get them to stay silent on the bill or issue
- F. Maintain your own identity for times when you disagree on an issue

Networking with other state arts organizations – TCQAE, TCA, PTA, TAEA, TETA, TDEA

- A. Texas Coalition for Quality Arts Education
- B. Texas Cultural Trust
- C. Other music organizations – TBA, TCDA, TODA
- D. Why arts coalitions sometimes fail – political in-fighting and disagreement on philosophy

What you should be doing now

- A. It is not too early to educate your members on candidates
- B. Invite candidates to your school to see what arts education really is so that they can recall “why” when a vote comes up
- C. Attend coffees, host forums
- D. Survey the candidates prior to the November election and distribute the results
- E. They need you now; they do not need you after the November election
- F. Identify your supporters through your members

Communication

- A. Understand the most effective means of sharing public sentiment – letters, phone calls, personal contacts, and social media
- B. GoArts.org
- C. Stay informed through legislative newsletters
- D. Work to get the media on your side – utilize op eds
- E. “I am their leader – where did they go?”
- F. Know your audience
- G. “No one has to do everything but everyone has to do something.” For our constituents, we have a unique obligation and must make an investment. Help advocates understand why it is their duty to be involved. Do not wait until they have to be told to do something – they will push back.

- H. Arts Education Day at the Capitol
- I. Other Capitol Performances

Social media

- A. Utilize to the fullest
- B. Way to get others to sign up to support
- C. Reach out multiple times
- D. Post concerts and send out pictures
- E. Sometimes a bright student can drive the process
- F. Newspapers are still good, but social media critical

What if I have no budget?

- A. Monitor your state's legislative website
- B. Seek a volunteer – a retired teacher
- C. Subscribe to political newsletters
- D. Rely on business and arts contacts to assist you
- E. Identify members who have personal contacts with legislators
- F. Align with other associations with whom you can partner that are most similar to you
 - TASA, TASB, Raise Your Hand Texas, Friends of Texas Public Schools, principal associations, Texas Cultural Trust, PTA, TAMSA, etc.
- G. Get involved in the political/election process

Hints to passing a bill in the legislature

- A. Know what you want in law or rule
- B. Select supportive bill sponsors and start early
- C. Be patient and persistent – it quite often takes more than one session
- D. Identify your allies early on
- E. Know the key players and focus your lobbying efforts on them initially
- F. Respect the power of the chairs
- G. If your bill fails, try to amend to another
- H. It takes 48 steps for a bill to become law

Further hints for success

- A. Fine tune your message that what you are seeking is important for kids
- B. Legislators may know the process but know little about arts education – be ready to clearly articulate
- C. Don't assume all is good – Everyone wants to talk about accountability and assessment, but no one is going to talk about the arts without encouragement and education
- D. Line up your votes in advance of the hearing and/or vote
- E. Do not try to develop a relationship with your legislator the night before a key vote

Effective Testimony

- A. Be brief but make it clear what you want
- B. Try not to read
- C. Limit the number of people testifying saying the same thing

- D. Try to anticipate questions, but do not be afraid to say “I don’t know but I will get back to you.”
- E. Provide written copy and make sure it includes the bill number.
- F. Tell a story but also have an arsenal of data available to back up your claims
- G. Have someone testify whose legislator sits on the committee and give them advance notice so they can *claim* the testifier – lots of political posturing
- F. Be polite

The role of a governmental relations consultant

- A. An added benefit because of the doors he or she may open
- B. Hired primarily for information and advice – not to do all the work
- C. Helps you understand the process
- D. If possible find a consultant who is passionate about music and fine arts
- E. Fees are more reasonable if a person believes in arts education
- F. Gives contributions to candidates
- G. TMEA does not endorse political candidates nor does it have a political action committee

Coda

- A. It’s all about relationships – and there are no better relationships than those built by constituents.
- B. Decide what you want and get started now
- C. If your program is not supported in state law and rule you have nothing to stand upon
- D. You CAN do it – think positive!

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This handout available on Midwest website; PowerPoint available at www.tmea.org/midwest2015