

Impacting State Law and Rule to Protect Arts Education  
It Can Be Done!

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. One credit of fine arts is required for graduation in all three graduation plans
- D. Music, art and theatre must be taught in grades K-5 – standards based
- E. Every student in middle school must take one fine arts course in grades 6, 7, or 8 – standards based
- F. Arts education will become a part of the state accountability beginning in 2013-2014
- G. School districts must provide standards-based instructional materials

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. Don't ignore Higher Education Coordinating Board or State Board for Educator Certification
- E. Lobby for fine arts – not just music
- F. Always be leery of unintended consequences

Hints to passing a bill in the legislature

- A. Know what you want in law or rule
- B. Fine tune your message that what you are seeking is important for kids
- C. Legislators may know the process but know little about arts education – be ready to clearly articulate
- 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
- F. Line up your votes in advance of the vote or hearing
- 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. Select supportive bill sponsors and start early
- B. Be patient and persistent – it quite often takes more than one session
- C. Identify your allies early on
- D. Know the key players and focus your lobbying efforts on them initially
- E. Respect the power of the chairs

And further hints

- A. Understand the most effective means of sharing public sentiment – letters, phone calls, personal contact
- B. Stay informed through legislative newsletters
- C. Work to get the media on your side – utilize op eds
- D. Know your audience

*Remember: 1) legislators work for YOU; 2) 99% of the time they REALLY do want to help and understand the issue and; 3) their time is short and they deal with a myriad of issues, so don't overwhelm them.*

#### The role of a governmental relations consultant

- A. A must 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

#### Networking with other educational associations

- A. TASA, TASB, 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 won't support, try to get them to stay silent on the bill or issue

#### Networking with other 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

#### Effective Testimony

- A. “Legislation is decided by those who show up” – Joe Gagen
- B. Be brief but make it clear what you want
- C. Try not to read
- D. Limit the number of people testifying saying the same thing
- E. Understand the power of the chair
- F. Try to anticipate questions, but do not be afraid to say “I don't know but I will get back to you.”
- G. Provide written copy
- H. Tell a story
- I. Be polite

#### 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
- F. New from TMEA – Distinguished Administrator Award

#### 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
- D. Advocate for the arts rather than against something else
- 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

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 November 6

What if I have no budget?

- A. Seek a volunteer – a retired teacher
- B. Subscribe to political newsletters
- C. Monitor your state’s legislative website
- 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, etc.
- G. Get involved in the political/election process

Coda

- A. It’s all about relationships – and there are no better relationships than those had by constituents.
- B. TMEA does not endorse political candidates nor does it have a political action committee
- C. Decide what you want and get started now
- D. If your program is not supported in state law and rule you have nothing to stand upon
- E. You CAN do it – think positive!

Robert Floyd  
 Executive Director  
 Texas Music Educators Association

[rfloyd@tmea.org](mailto:rfloyd@tmea.org)

*This handout available on Midwest website; PowerPoint available at [www.tmea.org/midwest2011](http://www.tmea.org/midwest2011)*

