

How You Can Positively Impact State Education Policy 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 – SB815
- C. One credit of fine arts is required for graduation in two of the three graduation plans
- D. Music, art and theatre must be taught in grades K-5 – Standards-based – new State Board of Education rule in Texas

Understand the total process of establishing educational policy

- A. Know what is in law and what is in rule in your state
- B. In Texas the legislature writes the laws that govern education; the State Board of Education writes the rules school districts follow to carry out the law
- C. Know when to fall on your sword on an issue and when to accept status quo
- D. Utilize the whole system to get what you want – Will a state board rule accomplish your purpose rather than trying to change law?

Hints to passing a bill in the legislature

- A. Understand fully the legislative process
- B. Know what you want in the law or rule
- C. Fine tune your message that what you are seeking is important for kids
- D. Select supportive bill sponsors
- E. Start early
- F. Be patient – and persistent
- G. It's all about relationships
- H. Get to know staffers in offices of legislators
- I. Identify your allies early on
- J. Know who the key players are and focus your lobbying efforts on them initially
- K. School yourself in the art of effective testimony

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 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 reasonable if person believes in arts education – part is pro-bono
- F. TMEA pays \$200 a month year round and \$500 per month during a legislative session (five months every two years)

Networking with other educational associations

- A. Get teacher and administrator associations on your side – willing to testify on your behalf or sign a testimony card in support or minimally not get in your way
- B. You will find most educational groups believe in “educating the whole child”

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

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

Identifying other advocates

- A. Inspire and train your members and parents on how to be effective lobbyists
- B. Booster organizations
- C. Understand the most effective means of sharing public sentiment – email, letter, phone calls, personal contact
- D. Expose legislators to music programs in local districts
- E. Involve the business and arts communities who may also provide lobbying assistance
- F. GoArts.org – an electronic petition gathering tool building support for fine arts
- G. Arts Education Day at the Capitol - sponsored by TMEA and TCQAE
- H. TMEA Convention 2005 – Governor’s appearance and Distinguished Service Award to Chair of the State Board of Education
- I. State Director of Fine Arts – a source for information and support
- J. Legislative newsletters

Local Advocacy

- A. Perhaps the most important component of fine arts survival
- B. Provide materials – printed and/or on website
- C. Lobby for fine arts – not just music
- D. Be as pro-active as possible
- E. Sell your programs on their curricular nature – not the extracurricular components

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

Coda

- A. What to do if you have no budget or hired leadership to drive the process
 - 1. Governmental relations consultant – seek a volunteer
 - 2. Subscribe to political newsletters
 - 3. Monitor your state’s legislative website
 - 4. Rely on business and arts contacts to assist you
 - 5. Find out what members have personal contact with a legislator
- B. It’s all about relationships
- C. TMEA does not endorse political candidates nor does it have a political action committee
- D. Decide what you want and get started now
- E. If your program is not supported in state law and rule you have nothing to stand upon
- F. You CAN do it – think positive!

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www.tmea.org – Resource Center/Advocacy/Floyd’s Midwest Presentation

