

Advocacy: Use It or Lose It

William W. Gourley

It seems the band or orchestra educator's job is never done. Keeping up with budget, festival and association deadlines, preparing programs, booster meetings, repairs, moving chairs and stands, testing, grading and keeping the office and rehearsal rooms presentable fill the days. Where does one find time to promote the value of music?

In spite of the many successes a program enjoys, we cannot escape the importance of Advocacy as an integral pillar of a successful music program. The music industry has realized its importance for over two decades. The Gemeinhardt Report of the late 1970's emphasized the importance of keeping the community aware of the benefits of music participation. Instrument manufacturers have watched as music programs have come under attack throughout the country during the past 25 years and have sought to bring the Advocacy message to the music education community.

The pressures on music programs across the country are varied. Increased core curriculum testing by states, a demand for higher academic achievement, our continual perceived diminished academic standing worldwide, a demand for more instructional

time for core subjects, block scheduling, budget shortages; all affect music programs across the country as they do in Michigan.

Schools have had to make some difficult decisions that negatively impact music programs. In November I received a phone call from a middle school director in one of Michigan's historically strong band programs. The district made the decision to have middle school band cut back to every other day to accommodate more instructional time in the core areas. The faculty and administration valued the music program but felt it was the only choice they could make to create more time for core classes hoping to improve their standardized test scores.

Educated in the art of music making and teaching, we as music educators are unaware or reluctant to get involved in the business aspects of music education. We rely too

heavily on music selling itself based upon its inherent artistic value. We understand it, so should the general public. Kids are happy, the band or orchestra sounds good, and the students do well at festivals year after year. We have a strong program, the community and administration support music

Students with coursework/experience in music performance scored 52 points higher on the verbal portion of the SAT and 39 points higher on the math portion than students with no coursework or experience in the arts.

Profiles of SAT and Achievement Test Takers, The College Board, 1998.

Studying music strengthens students' academic performance. Studies have indicated that sequential, skill-building instruction in art and music integrated with the rest of the curriculum can greatly improve children's performance in reading and math.

Martin Gradner, Alan Fox, Faith Knowles and Donna Jeffrey, "Learning Improved by Arts Training," Nature, May 23, 1996

When researchers analyzed the NELS-88 database of the U.S. Department of Education, which tracked 25,000 students over a ten year period, they discovered that students who were involved in music scored higher on standardized tests and reading tests than students not taking music courses. This finding was consistent for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Dr. James Catterall, UCLA, 1997

so we feel we can let inertia continue its course. Marketing music is the modus operandi of the P. T. Barnums and Harold Hills of the world where the promotion

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is bigger than the product. We, as artists, are above that. We are about the art. So, we continue to produce fine programs feeling all is well. *Inertia*.

Remember what you learned in physics class about Newton's first law of motion, inertia. Objects at rest tend to stay at rest, objects in motion stay in motion at the same speed and same direction, *unless they acted upon by another force*.

We need to look to industry to help us in the continued success for music programs. Coca-Cola, McDonalds, General Motors, Disney, all enjoy the largest market share in their respective markets. They have inertia. Still, they market their products as if every day was the first day on the market for their product..

They constantly *Advocate* (market) their product to varied audiences. Disney markets to children to introduce them to the product and to parents to remind them how much fun they had as children so they will take their children. They also market to older adults to remind them of the joys they had as children going to Disneyland, how, as parents, they enjoyed taking their children, and how great it would be to go on their own, without parents or children. GM doesn't assume you know the benefits of their product over Ford or Chrysler. Coca-Cola and McDonalds continually market an image and the value of their products over the competitions'.

These companies all did well for the longest time until that *acted upon by another force thing*. GM's inertia changer was the Japanese imports. Coke's other force was Pepsi (remember that New Coke fiasco?). Mickey Ds' is fighting off Wendy's, Burger King, et al. The smart companies realize the importance of, not only product, but keeping their message out front. They were able to minimize damage because they marketed their product through good times to stay ahead rather

than waiting until that *Another Force* thing came along to create rough times

Successful businesses understand the importance of developing and maintaining their message to the consumer. They know that attitudes are changed slowly, through constant information, reinforcing the benefits of the product and realizing the audience is constantly evolving. They continually add force to their inertia so when they encounter that *Another Force* it will have less impact than had they not added power to the message. Advocacy may not eliminate the impact but it can definitely minimize the damage (change in direction) it could have on our music programs.

In a 1995 study in Hamilton, Ohio, string students who participated in pullout lessons averaged higher scores than the non-pullout students in all areas of the Ohio Proficiency Test. Sixty-eight (68) percent of the string students achieved satisfactory ratings on all sections of the test compared to fifty-eight (58) percent of the non-pullout students.

Michael D. Wallick, "A Comparison Study of the Ohio Proficiency Test Results Between Fourth-Grade String Pullout Students and Those of Matched Ability," Journal of Research in Music Education, 1998

Those of us that have been involved in music education for more than ten years have seen at least one music program negatively impacted by other forces. Block scheduling gradually undermines the finesse of ensembles or curtails enrollment. The pressure to improve MEAP scores results in less instructional time for beginning and intermediate band/orchestra classes. Team teaching creates oddly configured instrumental music classes that challenge effective instruction. Music programs carry a greater share of the budget burden when state funding is reduced so the core classes can maintain their

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financial stability. The popularity of soccer, hockey, equestrian clubs, etc. creates demands on students' time and parents' resources. Another Force.

The average scores achieved by music students on the 1999 SAT increased for every year of musical study. This same trend was found in SAT scores of previous years.

Steven M. Demorest and Steven J. Morrison, "Does Music Make You Smarter?," *Music Educators Journal*, September, 2000.

College students majoring in music achieve higher than students of all majors on college reading exams.

Carl Hartman, "Arts May Improve Students' Grades," *The Associated Press*, October, 1999.

There is a very high correlation between positive self-perception, high cognitive competence scores, healthy self-esteem, total interest, school involvement, and the study of music.

O. F. Lillemyr, "Achievement Motivation as a Factor in Self-Perception," Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities.

Nations whose students consistently outperform the United States in tests assessing science achievement are the countries where music is a primary focus of the curriculum.

James R. Ponter, "Comparing School Music Programs and Science Test Scores Worldwide," *NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals) Bulletin*, February, 1999

Fortunately, for music educators there has been an Advocacy inertia created by industry and the education community. This information is at our fingertips waiting for us to take action. The excerpts in this article are from the CD-ROM, "Essential Music Advocacy," available from David Madera at Focus On Excellence 800-332-2637. This is a collection of indexed articles and lists ready to be printed and distributed: to parents, administrators, school newsletters, newspapers, music booster newsletters and e-mail, at parent teacher conferences, open houses, concerts, wherever school information is exchanged. You don't need to spend valuable time

searching the Internet, it is all there for you to add energy to your *Inertia*.

Music manufacturers have packets that include posters, pamphlets, videos and scripted power point presentations designed for presentation to businesses, school boards, administration and parent groups. These can be presented by a parent, student or yourself. NAMM (National Association of Music Manufacturers) has created a complete advocacy campaign entitled, *The Einstein Kit*, that can be easily instituted by any support organization. Contact Sharon McLaughlin 800-767-6266 ext. 129 or www.namm.com. Another useful Advocacy site is musicachievementcouncil.org

Great concerts, of great music, variety, lots of kids, festival ratings, great teaching and, yes, trips, parties and awards all contribute to a successful program. These build tradition and an *Inertia* that can nurture and grow a program. But, none of these addresses the academic benefits of music participation and the integral part it plays in student achievement, attitude, self-worth, enhanced creativity and problem solving skills gained through the study of music. They don't reflect what is happening to the brain. So when *Another Force* (block scheduling, expanded core instruction, budget constraints, high school, academic load or the junior year) comes along, it becomes easy to dismiss band or orchestra as an expendable frill.

Ongoing Advocacy is an essential element in any successful program. It brings students to the program, can help keep them in the program, create a demand for a vital and supported program, encourage parents to select music for their children

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and to keep them there year after year, establish a positive attitude among fellow educators regarding the impact on student learning music has and more. But, these attitudes do not change with a flood of action after that *Another Force* hits. The course is too altered by then and it takes years to create your own force to redirect the impact.

I am not suggesting music education will vanish from our schools without an active Advocacy program. I am concerned with the diminished effectiveness such programs will have on students both cognitively and affectively. Will music programs be able to offer rewarding performances of quality literature, involving a significant portion of the student body? Or, will they have to settle for adequate performances of acceptable literature, by a small fraction of the student body? Will overall student creativity and problem solving skills be enhanced by music study or limited in the pursuit of higher MEAP scores?

As music educators and artists we understand the benefits gained through music performance. And, an engineer understands the benefits of the car he or she designs. But, the marketing guys sell that car, not engineers. Music educators need to step off the podium and onto Wall Street. Before students can realize the magic (art) and benefits of music making, we need to get them in the seats by educating them, their parents, the administrators, school board and core subject teachers regarding the enhanced academic, creative and societal skills achieved through music making.

We are the only ones who can create the *Advocacy Inertia*. We cannot expect people to make an informed decision regarding music participation if we do not inform them. We must be that *Another Force* that changes the *Inertia of Perception* that music is a wonderful and rewarding frill into the *Inertia of Recognition* that music is a vital cross-curricular academic discipline that enhances all learning. And, it is wonderful, enriching and fulfilling.

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