

# Music Advocacy: Outreach Communication

## “Sharing the Good News with the Right People”

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

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In our haste to complete the ever-evolving “to do” list, we often do not think about the importance of **ADVOCATING** for our music programs. In fact it very easy to simply push this responsibility to the back-burner and focus our efforts-and-energies on the more (seemingly) immediate needs. Unfortunately, we tend to reach for the advocacy tools in times of desperation; program cuts, faculty reduction, scheduling woes, slashed budgets, etc., and—by then—it is too little, too late. It's time to connect-the-dots and awaken our communities to far-reaching benefits of music as it relates to every aspect of the learning-growth process.

Music advocacy, by definition, means we are “vocal” about our various thoughts and beliefs concerning the importance of music education for everyone. We continue to gather positive data concerning the impact of music learning; the ongoing research points to the countless benefits of investing in the study of music, however the information itself is of little value unless it is delivered to the right people.

Perhaps our greatest challenge is the dissemination of the library of facts and figures supporting the advantages of being a music-maker in today's world. Who needs to hear this good news?

### Parents

We know over 80% of today's musicians developed their musical skills while attending public/private school. Clearly, the choice to add music to a child's daily curriculum is greatly influenced by parents. If the parents are not privy to the latest information pointing to the positive effects of music study, their decision is bound to be less enthusiastic compared to those *parents who know and understand the myriad of rewards generated via music learning and music performance*. In the beginning stages of music study, the parents play a pivotal role in encouraging their child to explore the various avenues of music making.

### Administrators

School administrators want to do what is “right” for their student clientele. These are the people who determine the framework of the school day, both in terms of schedule as well as class offerings. We assume administrators understand the need for a comprehensive arts program, as well as the obvious correlation between outstanding academic students and music

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students; however that is a very naive assumption. Invariably those students who are the academically high achievers are the same students involved in the school music program. Do the administrators take for granted it is a result of “the smart students choosing music,” or do they understand it is, in fact, *“the study of music that makes students smarter?”*

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### Counselors

Counselors and advisors are charged with the responsibility of helping students complete high school and prepare for the college, assuming the student is seeking an extended education. The various mandated state requirements combined with the suggested preparatory requisites for admission to the college setting often limits the amount of time for additional classes, i.e., MUSIC. If counselors consider music to be an extracurricular subject, they will often advise the student to not pursue their music study, but rather replace band, orchestra, and/or choir with a foreign language, advanced calculus, etc. Again, counselors are concerned about the educational welfare of the student; an understanding of the value of music learning affords the advisor a greater advantage that ultimately supports the end goal, student success.

### Board of Education

Herein lies one of the key areas we often overlook or avoid. By design, the American educational system encourages local involvement in establishing the school curriculum by creating a Board of Education. As elected officials, Board members guide administrators and charge them with the duty of carrying out the various Board decisions; ultimately the Board of Education has the final say-so on any issue; therefore it is crucial that EVERY Board member receives ongoing communication concerning the value of music learning and music making. **This often-forgotten small group of decision-makers can be the most influential supporters in assuring the certainty of MUSIC in our schools.**

### Community Leaders

Whether it is members of the Chamber of Commerce, the officers of the Rotary Club, or the Mayor's Counsel, every community has a group of influential key-leaders; their thoughts and opinions carry political clout and are heeded by those who organize and administrate our school programs.

**They can sway public opinion through the media as well as their personal network of trusted colleagues.** Community leaders are keenly aware a necessary component of every thriving society is a strong school system; outstanding schools have comprehensive music programs. We must work hand-in-hand with these people so arts education is a part of their visionary plan for the welfare of the community.

### Students

As we eagerly share the latest discoveries about music learning with the adult world, we miss one of our most potent audiences; the consumer, the music student. In the midst of teaching music, we must make the time to integrate the all-important music-advocacy materials as part of their daily lesson plans. **Perhaps retention in music programs would increase if the young artists knew the often-hidden rewards of music study.** In addition to the intrinsic joy of creating music, there are many educational, emotional, and economical reasons to participate in a musical organization.

**Perhaps our greatest challenge is the dissemination of the library of facts and figures supporting the advantages of being a music-maker in today's world. Who needs to hear this good news?**  
**PARENTS**  
**ADMINISTRATORS**  
**COUNSELORS**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**COMMUNITY LEADERS**  
**STUDENTS**

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Each of these six categories could easily be split into several subdivisions:

**Parents:** Elementary, middle school, high school, college, non-music parents, parents with students who have graduated, and parents who are about to have students ready for music.

**Administrators:** Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Curriculum Coordinators, Principals, Assistant Principals, Department Heads, Supervisors, etc.

**Counselors:** Those who serve as counselors are often other educators in the school, local ministers, coaches, a favorite teacher, assigned advisors; literally anyone who has an influence on curriculum decisions.

**Board of Education:** Present members, candidates for future Board positions, past Board participants, and those who are close friends of Board members.

**Community Leaders:** Every business person in the town, members of the clergy, the local politicians, and even the morning coffee club made up of the shakers-and-movers in the town. The news media is always seeking information that will trigger the interest of readers, viewers, and listeners.

**Students:** Those presently in music, those getting ready to explore their musical careers, and those who appreciate music. From the nursery to the nursing home, everyone is a potential music student.

Unfortunately, we often find ourselves “preaching to the choir.” It is not difficult to get musicians, music educators, and music parents to agree about the importance of music; these are the people who have already made a commitment and the music advocacy information simply confirms their favorable posture. It is now time to move out of the comfort zone and begin to communicate with those who are not involved in music. We have a great story to tell; making music is more than playing an instrument or

singing in a choir, it creates a blueprint of success that transfers to every aspect of life.

Today’s greatest source for the most compelling music/arts advocacy information is: [www.supportmusic.com](http://www.supportmusic.com) You will discover an infinite amount the latest data highlighting the value of MUSIC FOR EVERY CHILD. Now is the time to share the good news with the right people!

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....STRIKE UP THE BAND...

*Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser is a well-known name in the music education world as a teacher, clinician, author, composer, consultant, adjudicator, and above all, a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence. His own career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following three years in the music industry, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, an organization that manages workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the pathway-to-excellence. Tim presently holds the Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer position at Ball State University. Tim is the Executive Director of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., and he serves as the national spokesperson for MENC’s “Make a Difference with Music” program. His books The Art of Successful Teaching, The Joy of Inspired Teaching, Music Advocacy and Student Leadership, and Everyday Wisdom for Inspired Teaching are best sellers. He is co-author of Hal Leonard’s popular band method Essential Elements - 2000.*