

This year's school budget votes and proposals could signal the beginning of the most important issue that we will face in most of our careers. As the situations throughout the state continue to develop, here are some things that you can do to prepare to defend your programs:

1) **No Emotions – It's not Personal** – As you defend yourself, your programs, and your students, remember that this is not a personal issue. It has nothing to do with you, the success of your programs, or the Arts in general. Administrators and Boards of Education are making difficult decisions and you need to approach your conversations with that in mind. Don't go to your administrators and tell them about the benefits of your program – most of them already know. Instead approach it on an economic level. Tell them about the number of students that you see every day and how those students will have to be placed somewhere if they are not with you. Tell them that families have made a large investment by purchasing instruments and music. Tell them that music is curricular and your programs are co-curricular.

2) **Mobilize Parents and Students** – Fill the Board meeting with parents and their children. Have them all wear the same color shirt so the Board knows that you are organized and they see the number of people that are there for the same topic. Choose a few well prepared people to speak on behalf of the program. Students are also allowed to speak.

3) **Mobilize Community Groups** – Administrators and Boards of Education rely heavily on public opinion. Speak with organizations for which your ensembles have performed: holiday parties, parades, gala events, etc. Let them know what is happening and urge them to voice their support for your music education programs.

4) **Offer Yourself as a Resource** – You are the expert in your domain. Administrators may not understand that combining band and orchestra into one period is a bad idea. They may not understand that chorus at the beginning of the day is a bad idea or that lesson groups with four different instruments defeats the purpose of small group instruction. They may not understand that music is a sequential subject that is developed over time.

5) **Contact the Governor and State Legislators** – Voice your support for music education and encourage others to do the same:

[Governor Murphy](#)

[Find Your NJ Legislator](#)

6) **Refer to the Code** – Music is a part of the NJSL. All students must have the opportunity to experience music taught by a “highly qualified” teacher. It is the law!

7) **Take Action!** – The links below include talking points and sample letters. Share the links with key stakeholders, especially parents.

- [Wisconsin MEA: Practical Guidelines in the Event of Proposed Reductions](#)
- [2024 Letter to the Editor: Music Program Cuts in Amherst, MA](#)
- [Open Letter to All Boards of Education About the Power of Music and the Arts in Schools](#)
- [Sample Letter Regarding Project Cuts](#)

Other Links of Interest:

- [The Benefits of Music Education](#): Overview of neuroscience research published by The Royal Conservatory (2014)
- [Learning, Arts, and the Brain](#): Summary of neuroscience study results published in the 2008 Dana Consortium Report.
- [Why Music Matters](#): Information from the NAMM Foundation