

MAKE YOUR CASE TO ATTEND  
THE 2023 NJMEA STATE CONFERENCE

# JUSTIFICATION TOOLKIT



2023

NEW JERSEY  
MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

**STATE CONFERENCE**

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February 23 - 25

Atlantic City Convention Center  
Atlantic City, NJ

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This toolkit includes:

*General tips and talking points*  
*Sample justification letter to your administrator*

# WHY ATTEND?

The 2023 NJMEA State Conference is the only comprehensive professional development event for music educators in the state of New Jersey. This event offers hands-on workshops, performances, keynotes, and music industry exhibits relevant to all areas of music education: PreK-12, collegiate, instrumental, choral, jazz, technology, and general classroom, in targeted sessions throughout the 3-day period.

When you propose your attendance to your supervising administrator, focus on the value that your participation will bring back to your school, your program, and your students. The conference features more than 150 Professional Development sessions focused on the latest practical strategies for effective music education.

This year's conference will allow you to expand your toolkit of ideas, models, and activities, as well as connect with colleagues from throughout the state and region. Come and learn from the best and contribute to moving the profession forward.

## Schedule Overview

**February 23, 2023:** Specialized Academies, PD Sessions, All-State Bands & Treble Chorus Rehearsals, Music Industry Exhibits, Keynote by T. Andre Feagin

**February 24, 2023:** PD Sessions, Keynote by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser, All-State Bands and Treble Chorus Rehearsals, Music Industry Exhibits, Gala Concert by "Naturally 7"!

**February 25, 2023:** PD Sessions, All-State Bands and Treble Chorus Conference Performances

To demonstrate the reasons for attending the 2023 NJMEA State Conference, here are some suggested takeaways to share with administrators:

- You will return with innovative, new standards-based teaching strategies to use in your classroom and to share with other teachers, students, and parents.
- You will earn up to 20 hours of Professional Development hours by attending workshops, exhibits, concerts, and meetings
- You will meet with fellow educators and have dedicated time to network and learn best practices through the featured sessions and hundreds of peer-reviewed presentations and poster sessions showcasing educators from throughout the country.
- You will have access to more than 70 exhibitors and sponsors who will provide new and innovative musical instruments, materials, and equipment for you to test on behalf of your district and colleagues.
- You will have the opportunity to observe the All-State Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, and Treble Chorus, led by world renown conductors, as they rehearse for their Sunday Concert at NJPAC.

# PLANNING AHEAD

As you prepare to ask for support from an administrator, make certain that you have your plans in place and information ready to go. Things to consider sharing with your administrator when you ask to attend the conference include:

**Overview of the Conference:** You can share the conference website ([www.njmea.org/conferences/](http://www.njmea.org/conferences/)) to share general information on the conference.

**Identify the content in which you are most interested.** Which sessions will you attend? Why? What value will this learning bring back to your classroom and your school? A list of sessions can be found on the conference website.

- Being able to speak to the content and how it connects directly back to your professional growth and daily work is vital to convincing your administrator of the value this conference brings to you, your classroom, and your school.
- You may want to print out the list of sessions and highlight those that you wish to attend to review with your administrator.

**Estimated cost for attending the conference:** Members - \$180.00, Non-members - \$360.00

- Do you know your district's policy for submitting for travel? What are your estimated costs for travel, lodging (Sheraton AC - \$119 per night), registration, and food costs? Does your district pay registration and housing by Purchase Order or do they reimburse you directly? If they are paying by PO, what is your timeframe for submitting the PO and having it approved to meet conference deadlines?
- Keep in mind how you can save here. Would you be willing to share a room with a colleague?
- If you are registering as a member, is your NAFME/NJMEA membership up-to-date? (<https://nafme.org/join-renew/>)

**Lesson Plans that are ready for a substitute.**

- Do you have substitute lesson plans ready to go for all of your classes and/or ensembles?
- Do your lesson plans work for a non-music educator substitute as well as a music teacher if one is available?

**Your plan to share when you return to school.**

- How will you share your newfound information with your colleagues? Do you have a Professional Learning Community in your district, so you can share with your fellow music educators?
- Does your school expect a written report? Having a timeline and ideas on how you will share what you've learned shows how the district will receive value in sending you to the conference.

**Use your attendance to demonstrate professional growth.**

- Does your district require an annual professional review/evaluation or Professional Growth Plan? Seeking new knowledge and methods contributes to professional growth.
- Do you conduct an ensemble? Observing varied ensembles and conductors and listening to new music contributes to professional growth.
- Are you exposed to a limited number of music teachers in your daily routine? Collaborating with other music teachers allows for sharing of information and methods that can contribute to professional growth.

On the following page is a sample of a letter you can provide your supervising administrator explaining the importance of your attendance at the conference and the benefits of your attendance to your school and district. Please feel free to edit the letter to best meet your needs and interest areas.

# SAMPLE LETTER

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am requesting your permission to attend the New Jersey Music Educators Association (NJMEA) State Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey February 23-25, 2023. This conference will provide me with a focused professional development opportunity geared toward my needs and interest areas. Depending on the session schedule, I would like to attend the following sessions during the conference:

(list 7-10 sessions and a few sentences on what you expect to learn from each)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

The sessions that I have selected will help me expand my teaching techniques, offer new ideas and knowledge to better educate the students at our school, and provide information on how to incorporate the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards into each lesson that I teach. I will earn 15-20 hours of focused professional development across a range of topics in music education by attending this conference. The NJMEA State Conference will include groundbreaking research-based concepts that are immediately applicable to my music classroom; sponsored sessions by leaders in the music education industry where I can try out new and innovative teaching methods and products; and poster sessions where I will learn from the latest research in the field.

I have included a detailed estimated cost breakdown of the conference as well as more information about the conference for you to review. I estimate the total cost of the conference to be \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to hearing from you and to representing our school and district at the 2023 NJMEA State Conference.

Sincerely,