

Excerpt from NSBA President:

Music Advocacy: Dancing with the School Board

By Joan E. Schmidt

I recently delivered a keynote address to a group of music advocates at the Support Music Coalition Summit. In my presentation, I identified six basic steps that should be mastered by anyone who wants to dance with the school board:

- **The big picture.** Instead of pitting one subject against another, look at the comprehensive needs of students in the context of educating the whole child.
- **The long-term perspective.** Although it is tempting (and sometimes necessary) to do battle for survival of a program, seek long-term reform of education financing and of state and federal policy.
- **The locus of power.** Target advocacy efforts where they will be most effective. Support funding from the state legislature and standards from the state board of education. And then support implementation at the local level.
- **The window of opportunity.** Take advantage of times when advocacy efforts are especially effective. New research often piques the interest of policymakers. And funding lawsuits at the state level provide splendid opportunities to speak out for adequacy and equity.
- **The guardian of high-quality programs.** Be proactive in protecting a standards-based music curriculum, preserving physical space in the building for music instruction, and ensuring that certified music teachers are in charge of school music programs.
- **The ethical center.** Always, without exception, place the well-being of children at the heart of every advocacy effort.

If we are truly committed to educating all children, we had better not settle for merely raising test scores. Endless test preparation and dreary scorekeeping may give the illusion of accountability, but they do nothing to foster the joy of wonder-filled discovery.

Our nation's children deserve better. They need to master reading and math, but they can do so in places of learning where artwork adorns the hallways, music lifts the spirit, and hope abounds. High-quality education for each child is a moral imperative; making it happen requires a magnificent collaborative effort from all of us. Shall we dance?

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