



*Great Public Schools for Every Student*

# NEA Arts Advocacy

Resource Guide

# NEA Resolution B-45

*The National Education Association believes that artistic expression is essential to an individual's intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional development. The Association also believes that fine arts transcend cultural barriers, foster multicultural understanding, and enhance critical thinking skills. The Association therefore believes that pre-K through adult education curricula must include a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential program of fine arts instruction for all students. These students must be taught by a licensed specialist in a facility or room designed and equipped for that purpose. Resources must be provided to maintain and upgrade materials and provide for emerging technologies.*

*The Association urges its state affiliates to become involved in the promotion, expansion, and implementation of an academic fine arts program in curricula and as a requirement for high school graduation. (1980, 2009)*

# Introduction

The National Education Association's commitment to the arts and arts education is well documented. As noted in NEA Resolution B-45, NEA believes that high-quality arts education taught by licensed, certified arts educators is part of a balanced, comprehensive education. Without the necessary and ongoing resources to support such a program, however, arts education gets tossed aside. When that happens, the students—and the community—suffer.

NEA developed this Arts Advocacy Resource Guide for use by students, educators, and supportive community patrons as they advocate to keep

arts education alive in public schools. The Guide compiles resources from the major fine arts education organizations such as the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), the National Art Education Association (NAEA), the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), and Americans for the Arts. These resources feature effective advocacy campaigns, and highlight the roles that students and their families, educators, and supportive community patrons can play.

# An Investment in Arts Education is an Investment in America's Future

The arts are an integral part of our everyday lives. From cave drawings to graffiti, we use the arts to communicate, pacify, stimulate, and celebrate. If the arts are a valued and essential element of our culture, how then can they not be a valued and essential element of our education? Too often, student access to arts education is limited by socioeconomic status and inadequate school funding. In this era of high-stakes testing, economic downturns, and reduced funding, arts education is often removed from the K-12 curriculum and concentrated in performing and visual arts “magnet” schools—out of reach for the average student.

The National Education Association believes, however, that the arts are an essential part of a balanced education for every child. According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the arts are a “core academic subject of learning,”<sup>1</sup> supported by a rigorous set of voluntary national standards<sup>2</sup> and assessments<sup>3</sup> designed to improve and support the teaching and learning process. The benefits of arts education are almost

immediate. Students gain self-confidence, enhance critical thinking skills, and often improve their overall grades. In fact, “children and teenagers who participated in arts education programs have shown more positive academic and social outcomes in comparison to students who did not participate in those programs.”<sup>4</sup>

The benefits of arts education do not stop at the classroom, however. In addition to creating better, well-rounded students, exposure to arts education also produces better, civic-minded citizens. In his introduction to the report, *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*, National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman observed that regardless of socioeconomic status, students with art-rich experiences in school also become “more active and engaged citizens, voting, volunteering, and generally participating at higher rates than their peers.”<sup>5</sup>

# Why Advocate for Arts Education?

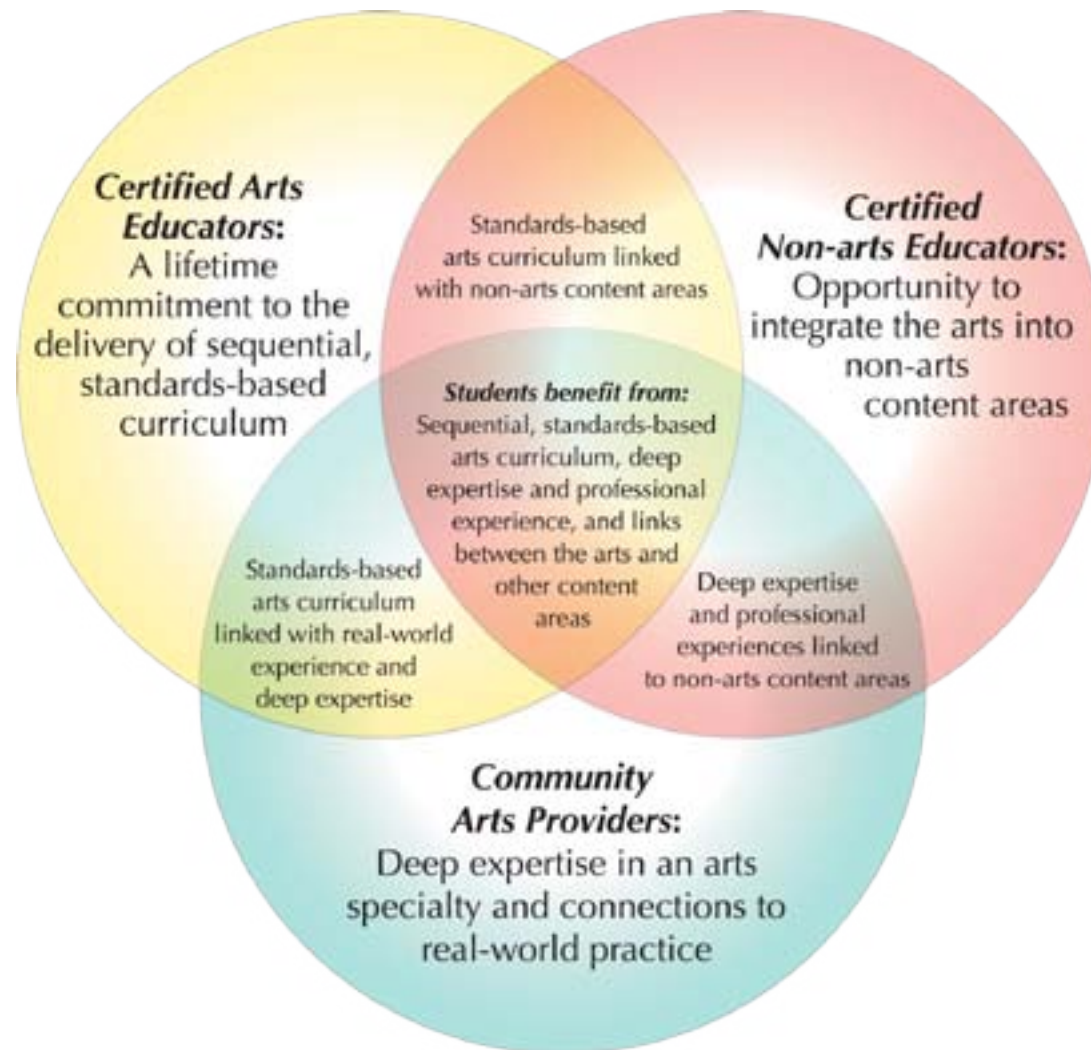
High-quality arts education requires high-quality arts educators. When America's public schools invest in certified arts educators, the students gain the opportunity for a substantial, standards-based arts education. Certified non-arts educators help students expand their opportunities for arts education by making connections between the standards-based arts curriculum and other subjects. Community arts programs and other cultural organizations help students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the arts by exposing them to a variety of art forms and expressions.

A summit attended by representatives of organizations—including NEA—concerned with funding and preserving arts education released the following statement:

**An education without the arts is inadequate. Therefore, we call on our public policy leaders to provide a systemic and rigorous arts education for all students in all schools by leveraging the resources of all partners involved in arts education. The signatories of this statement will support efforts to:**

- Advance policies and resources that ensure access to arts education for all students—delivered by certified arts educators—that develop artistic literacy through a sequential, standards-based arts curriculum.
- Ensure that all students have access to in-school and community arts learning opportunities that support and add value to a standards-based PreK-12 education.
- Encourage certified arts educators, community arts providers and certified non-arts educators to strategically enhance each other's work and teaching through collaborative activities that enrich high-quality arts education for all students.
- Foster proactive, long-term advocacy collaborations among certified arts educators, community arts providers, and certified non-arts educators that engage parents, school leaders, and other key stakeholders to support student access to high-quality arts education throughout the school and community.

# Figure 1: Three Partners Working Together



# Resources

The National Education Association compiled the following resources from the major arts education organizations to assist educators, students, and supportive community patrons develop their own advocacy campaigns.

## Educational Theatre Association

The Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) is a national nonprofit organization with approximately 90,000 student and professional members. EdTA's mission is shaping lives through theatre education by: honoring student achievement in theatre and enriching their theatre education experience; supporting teachers by providing professional development, networking opportunities, resources, and recognition; and influencing public opinion that theatre education is essential and builds life skills.

This Action Toolkit from EdTA provides sample ads, template letters, and other resources to help students, educators, and others develop their own arts advocacy plan.

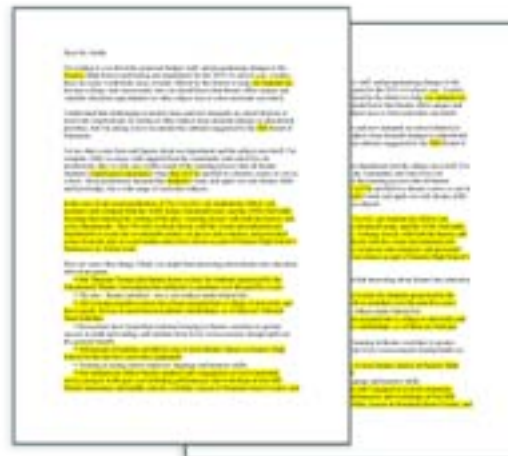
<http://edta.org/advocacy>

## Action Toolkit



### Theatre and the Arts

Ads for member conference and production programs



### Dear Ms. Smith

Template letters to school administrators



### The Advocacy Game

An improv game to help you "make your case" to decision makers





Thank, Explain, Ask  
School Board PowerPoint presentation



Defending Your Program  
Resources and advice to help you build your own toolkit

## National Association for Music Education

National Association for Music Education (NAfME), among the world's largest arts education organizations, is the only association that addresses all aspects of music education. NAfME advocates at the local, state, and national levels; provides resources for teachers, parents, and administrators; hosts professional development events; and offers a variety of opportunities for students and teachers. The Association orchestrates success for millions of students nationwide and has supported music educators at all teaching levels for more than a century.

Since 1907, NAfME has worked to ensure that every student has access to a well-balanced, comprehensive, and high-quality program of music instruction taught by qualified teachers. NAfME's activities and resources

have been largely responsible for the establishment of music education as a profession, for the promotion and guidance of music study as an integral part of the school curriculum, and for the development of the National Standards for Arts Education.

NAfME Advocacy Groundswell is an online community of NAfME members from across the country interested in participating in advocacy initiatives, engaging in discussions about advocacy and regularly digesting advocacy news.

<http://advocacy.nafme.org/>

# How-To Advocacy Guides



## Get the Message! Flyers

Different flyers to guide advocacy work with parents, principals (secondary and elementary) and school boards. Available for printing off the web.

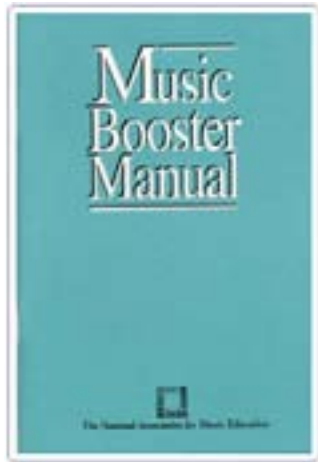
NOTE: these flyers are not available in paper form from NAfME

- Parents • Elementary Principals • Secondary Principals • School Boards



## Advocacy "Grab and Go" Flyer

A handy, portable flyer for getting started in music education advocacy. "How to" in a nutshell!



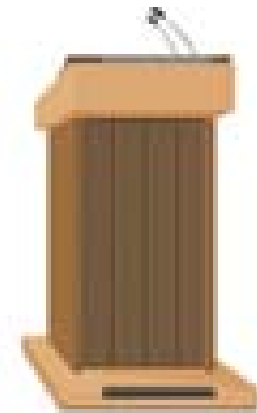
### Music Booster Manual

Excerpt from the NAFME publication on setting up and running a music booster program.



### Letter To Your Principal

Form letter to send to your school principal explaining how the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) Title I Funds can be used to fund school music programs. Contains a quote from Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan's August 2009 letter to education community leaders.



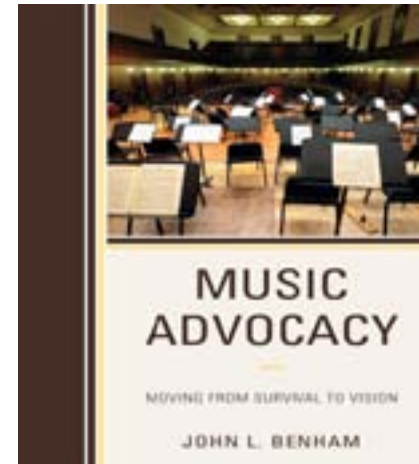
### Advocacy Concert Speech

Sample speech to be used to address the audience before your concert(s). Provides a means for informally advocating on behalf of your program to parents and friends in attendance.



### Music for All Students

A planning guide for state-level music education advocacy. Contains sample advocacy and thank you letters to state legislators.



### Music Advocacy: Moving From Survival to Vision

*Co-published with: The National Association for Music Education.* Benham's book is a compilation of research and experience gained from 30 years' experience helping save \$70 million in proposed music cuts equivalent to approximately 2000 teaching positions and 400,000 music students. Benham is one of the nation's most successful advocates for music education. His book provides the music educator, administrator, school board member, and community advocate with step-by-step procedures for saving and building school music programs.

## National Art Education Association

The National Art Education Association (NAEA) is the leading professional membership organization exclusively for visual arts educators. Members include elementary, middle and high school visual arts educators, college and university professors, researchers and scholars, teaching artists, administrators and supervisors, and art museum educators, as well as more than 45,000 students who are members of the National Art Honor Society or are university students preparing to be art educators.

NAEA's mission is to advance visual arts education to fulfill human potential and promote global understanding.

[www.arteducators.org/advocacy/advocacy-made-simple](http://www.arteducators.org/advocacy/advocacy-made-simple)

## Advocacy Made Simple



### Communicate a Clear Message

The message is the answer to the question: "Why is learning in the visual arts essential to education in the 21st century?"

- Use data.
- Tell compelling personal stories.
- Tap into your **NETWORK's** values and concerns.
- Make your message **VISIBLE**.

(HINT: NAEA has developed key messages including the overall theme of *Learning in A Visual Age* )



### Be Visible

- Make an advocacy plan.
- Get out of the art room/studio and into the community with your **MESSAGE**.
- Capitalize on the "visual" part of the visual arts.
- Show your **NETWORK** what visual literacy, 21st century college and career readiness, and engaged learning look like through exhibitions, media stories and community events.

(HINT: The work and "voices" of your students are the most compelling.)



### Activate an Advocacy Network

- Identify and build an advocacy network. Action requires committed people. Include media, legislators, education decision makers and parents.
- Work with your state/regional NAEA organization to partner with your state Alliance for Arts Education affiliate and your state's arts advocacy citizens group.
- Communicate your **MESSAGE** to your network.
- Leverage your network to impact policy and budget.
- Keep your network engaged by being **VISIBLE**.
- Activate your network in times of crisis.

(HINT: A parent network can be your most effective advocacy tool. Think social networking.)

# National Dance Education Organization

The National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement and promotion of high-quality education in the art of dance. NDEO provides the dance artist, educator, and administrator a network of resources and support, a base for advocacy, and access to programs that focus on the importance of dance in the human experience.

## Access NDEO's Online Advocacy Forum

This forum is dedicated to building a powerful and informed community of advocates for dance education. NDEO members come to the Advocacy

Forum to discuss pressing arts education issues and to learn how to best use the information and resources NDEO provides to empower you as a dance educator and advocate for quality dance education in the arts. To join the discussion, [click here](#). (Member login required to post comments on the Forum.)

[www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=2154&club\\_id=893257&item\\_id=5648](http://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=2154&club_id=893257&item_id=5648)



## Americans For The Arts

Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. As an advocate for the arts and arts education, this organization works to secure increased resources for the arts and arts education at the local, state, and federal level to influence public and private policy.

Tell Congress the Americans for the Arts have asked Congress to support a funding level of \$53 million for the Arts in Education programs within

the U.S. Department of Education. These programs support model arts collaborations with schools, teacher professional development, and arts programs for at-risk youth. Americans for the Arts also works to ensure that the arts are retained as a core academic subject of learning and improve national data collection and research in education reauthorization legislation.

[www.artsusa.org/get\\_involved/advocate.asp](http://www.artsusa.org/get_involved/advocate.asp)

# References

<sup>1</sup> Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title IX, Section 9101, 11.

<sup>2</sup> <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/standards.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/howdevelop.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> James S. Catterall, Susan A. Dumais, and Gillian Hampden-Thompson, *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2012), <http://arts.gov/research/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.