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With the inequitable distribution of funding in American Public Schools, music programs have less and less to work with each year. Many music teachers and their courses are not seen as a priority in a STEM-focused country. To counter this, it is important to develop close relationships with administrators and fellow teachers outside of the music department to advocate for the importance of music in the public school curriculum. In doing so, administrators and those at the bureaucratic level of school systems will be able to connect with what is being taught in the schools and see the importance of music education.

As an individual with a passion for music, learning, creating, and teaching, it is imperative for me to impress upon my administration the absolute importance of music in schools. Music allows children to develop skills that will serve them for the rest of their life in a variety of different settings. Being part of a music program, and learning how to read, write and play music can teach a child critical thinking, discipline, group work, and a litany of other widely applicable skills. However, music is more than just a means to an end; a tool to better serve them in the eventual other careers they will choose to pursue. This thinking leads people to think music is not the end goal, but just a step along the journey of a well-rounded individual.

To me, that is the completely wrong way to think about it. If you are resigned to advocating your music and your music education as a tool to benefit skills befitting a STEM path, then that is all you will ever impress upon yourself, your administrators, and the children you teach. Music Education will always remain secondary if music educators do not push themselves and their discipline to the forefront of the discussion. We must assert that we are a truly valid and valuable path for children to take in life.

To do this, we must choose priorities to focus on when attempting to acquire funding and setting boundaries for our music education practices. For me, the most important factors of being a music educator and running a successful music program are as follows.

- A successful music department must have the ability to learn and play music in a group and individual setting. This includes funding for instruments, sheet music, and a classroom space for the students to play and learn in.
- The music students must also have the ability to experience and listen to music in, and outside of the classroom. This would require funding to acquire recordings of music, electronic equipment to record and play back music to the students, and additional funding for occasional field trips to local concerts and community music events.
- As all music is created to be played, the music students must also have the ability to play for the community and share the music that is learned and created within the classroom. This would include scheduled concerts and recitals throughout the semester, with time and space allotted for both group and individual ensemble performances. This would allow the students to showcase their learned skills, and solidify their confidence in the technique they have built.

It's not only important to realize that these priorities are important to follow and strive towards, but in order to even make them happen, there first needs to be communication and connection with administrators and other local decision-makers.

The way I would go about raising awareness and connection with my administration and community would consist of the following.

- In order to connect with administrators, I would invite them into my music classrooms to listen and observe the teaching we do in the classroom. I.e rhythm exercises, rehearsals, and other activities. I might even ask them to participate in a simple activity to see the effectiveness of our activities.
- I would invite administrators and teachers to come to see our recitals and concerts and hold them both in the school and in the community, so that they may see the effect it has on the students and the community.
- I would plan to film and record a series of experiences involving the children to copy and give to the parents so that they may see the work we've been doing, and be able to keep a copy for their own posterity. Involving parents in the children's school life is a wonderful way to keep them invested in their children's future, and help them to connect with their children. This way, the parents would be more willing to involve themselves in the advocacy of music education and perhaps vote on music education-related issues with their school board.
- Outreach is important and I would make sure that we had an informative and interesting-looking website for the music program, and informational tabs full of information about our happenings and plans for the future. I would also make sure to send home pamphlets that include our activities so that parents can be informed.
- As a music teacher, I would try to do fundraising activities like free concerts and music-related events throughout the year, or on the weekends organize things like a community car wash with my students and I. Building a coexisting relationship with the community is a great way to gather involvement and investment in the music program and the public schools as a whole.