

# Conducting Advocacy

## PMEA District 1's Advocacy Newsletter

Written by Emily Wardle, Advocacy Representative

### A Season of Advocacy

For many music educators, the holidays are filled with concerts, community performances, special religious services, and recitals. Musical season has begun for some, and most of us are approaching the midpoint of our SLO work and differentiated supervision projects. Our off-school hours are filled with family engagements; cooking and baking; preparing gifts for coworkers, kids' teachers, private students, family, and friends; rescheduling private lessons to fit our own, our students', and the holiday schedule... the list goes on and on. It's exhausting just thinking about what needs done!

In this time of hustling and bustling, we often stop to think about the "reason for the season" and think about others before ourselves. This idea can be applied to our music classrooms and our advocacy efforts, too. Music educators put in countless extra (unpaid) hours of planning, work, and rehearsal for the *students'* benefit, not themselves. What is your "reason for the (ongoing) season" of teaching music? One of the many intangible gifts we give our students is a lifelong love of music, and this is something that must be protected and defended. What we need to gift our students with is the ability to advocate for themselves and their program; students self-advocating can be more effective and powerful than a teacher advocating and possibly being perceived as trying to protect his or her job. Let's extend this year's season of giving into a season of giving the community the long-lasting benefits of music-making from its children. Let's give our students motivation and methods so they can help give the community this gift, too.



This time of year is busy, but take a moment (maybe a day post-concert or before winter break) and discuss how your students can share their musical gifts with families, friends, churches, and communities during the holidays. Encourage students to play or sing concert selections. Suggest that bell-ringers sing carols or instrumentalists play for church services. Challenge students to discuss or analyze Christmas songs with family members while using musical terminology. The ongoing and sustained music-mindedness may be noticed in the home or community and allows your program, department, and teachings to speak for themselves. Although giving physical gifts is appreciated, giving our students the gift of self-advocacy simultaneously gifts the community with music for years to come.

Make this season of giving a season of advocacy!



### Advocate Spotlight

Jeffrey Leonhardt teaches General Music Grades 1-4 and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Chorus at Streams Elementary in the Upper St. Clair School District. Streams was selected to be an International Baccalaureate (I.B.) building about 12 years ago, which amongst other things means that Arts and Music curricula are strongly linked with units of inquiry studied in homerooms. Mr. Leonhardt works closely with homeroom teachers to align quality, valuable general music units with social studies units, for example. This collaboration and cross-curricular work advocates for the value of music education and that music education educates and nurtures holistically.

Mr. Leonhardt's personal philosophy on music education advocacy echoes I.B. program goals, as he stated that he always tries to "make sure our music program is an integral and vital part of our school and is visible within the Upper St. Clair community." He regularly schedules outreach concerts in nursing and assisted living homes. On Senior Citizens' Day, Streams invited members of Upper St. Clair's Senior Citizen's Group to share an afternoon of engagement by having performances from the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Chorus, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade String Students, and hands-on interactive looks into the building's classrooms and curricula.

Streams often hosts community-building programs that incorporate music, and Mr. Leonhardt and his students are involved in these when appropriate. Such programs include Veteran's Day Assemblies and a Star Spangled Banner 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, to name a few. Thank you for your valuable contributions to advocacy and music education in our community, Mr. Leonhardt!



**"The man who disparages music as a luxury and non-essential is doing the nation an injury. Music now, more than ever before, is a national need."- Woodrow Wilson, 28<sup>th</sup> President of the United States**

*Check out these sites for relevant advocacy and music education information:*

**"Music Lessons May Boost Poor Kids' Brainpower"**

Although the article doesn't tell us anything new, districts that are focusing on testing and achievement may want to read this. Be proactive for your students!

**"What Playing a Musical Instrument Does to Your Brain"**

This awesomely succinct and educational video explains the science behind musical engagement when an instrument is being played. Take a moment and watch it, and then share it with your students and community! Instant science correlation!

**Get to know your advocacy rep!**



**Emily Wardle**

Emily is a K-6 General Music/Choir teacher in the Washington Area School District. She attended PMEA District 1 events throughout her education at Belle Vernon Area and studied music education at Duquesne University. She earned a Curriculum & Instruction Master's Degree through Clarion University and is also the treasurer of PMEA District 1. Emily is committed to sharing positive music advocacy news and ideas with District 1's musical members!

Emily can be contacted at [emily.s.wardle@gmail.com](mailto:emily.s.wardle@gmail.com).

## **Five Minutes to Advocacy**

Take a few minutes out of your week to positively affect your music program and protect its future! An idea: write the task in your calendar so you'll be more likely to complete it. If you already do these suggestions regularly, spend a few minutes to improve your program via another action.

**Dec. 10** – Publicize your holiday concerts or holiday classroom activities in your surrounding community by putting a blurb in the newspaper, inviting a newspaper staffer, or even inviting a local politician. Putting up posters in “new” areas may reel in new audience members and increase the potential for new students, more support and funding, and a wider awareness of your program! It only takes a few minutes to send a few emails but the benefits could be long-lasting.

**Dec. 24** – You're probably tired of hearing me harp on this, but time is running out to respond to **"How Has Music Education Impacted Your Life?"** Our stories need to be compiled, printed, and prepared for distribution to legislators on Advocacy Day (in March). Please take a moment before the calendar year ends to help us help you!

**Jan. 7** – The **Annual In-Service Conference** may seem far off, but now is a great time to submit your conference request to administration. Even if you've been turned down in the past, it's worth the effort to put in a request and a letter explaining the value of your – or at least someone from your music department, preferably who teaches a similar strand – attendance.

**Jan. 21** – Inviting an administrator or school board member into your rehearsal space or classroom at a time other than a formal/clinical observation is a great outreach activity for this time of year. Seeing the early stages of concert preparation is educational and allows for active participation!

**Please feel free to share this newsletter with non-PMEA music teachers in your district and any other music supporters who may benefit from the information or ideas. Thank you!**