

Conducting Advocacy

PMEA District 1's Advocacy Newsletter

Written by Emily Wardle, Advocacy Representative

Everything I Needed to Know About Advocacy I Learned from Areta Kalogeras

Contributed by Mairi Cooper

When Emily asked if I would be willing to write about advocacy from the perspective of being 2015 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, I was really excited. However, as I thought about it more, my framework for advocacy in the arts was heavily influenced by my early conversations with Areta Kalogeras. Areta had one of the largest bags of tricks in the business. She had a fix for just about everything but behind her tricks were deep seeded beliefs and values. This is why her advocacy for the arts was practically foolproof. So, here are the lessons that I learned from Areta "Ms. K" Kalogeras.

1. Relationships, relationships, relationships

Everybody remembers the first time that they met Areta, whether it was at a PMEA festival or a football game. More importantly, we all felt that we had a connection to her that went beyond those initial meetings. With her students, her colleagues and even her administration, she built lasting relationships. Many of us would go to great lengths to ensure that we may someday get the famous baklava recipe. These relationships were paramount to her success as a teacher and to the support that she built for the music program in the North Hills. These relationships are the building blocks for advocacy in all of our programs.

2. Be a good member of your community

I doubt that Areta ever missed a major community event in the North Hills. All of us have been asked to have our groups perform in the most unlikely places and we frequently wonder if they are worth the time and effort to organize the kids, the music and the equipment. The answer is a resounding yes. Many taxpayers in our school districts do not have kids in the school system. Our school music programs need to be as relevant to them as they are to parents of our students. Playing at local retirement homes, libraries and spaghetti dinners make our programs visible to everyone who is supporting them financially. Consider it a musical thank you to the community at large.

3. Constantly educate those around you

I was always learning from Areta. In many ways, I felt as if I were her student when I was around her. I would watch her interact with her students, my students, colleagues and friends. I was always listening and she was always educating. I think that as music teachers we frequently forget that others might not value



what we do simply because they don't understand it. It is critical that we be able to articulate the importance of music education (and I believe the broader importance of teaching creativity and problem-solving) to those who might not always understand what we do.

4. The best advocates are your students and their families

Areta was larger than life but when she was with her students they took center stage. She highlighted them, cheering on their success and taking great pride in their growth. Her presence was simply part of the whole of the North Hills music experience. Her students and their families could express exactly why music was important and everything that they learned from her. She taught music but more importantly, she taught human beings. When students and families express the value of music education then the entire community listens. It is imperative that we help our students articulate the value that they place on music and offer them opportunities to speak about this publicly.

5. Stay five steps ahead of the game

There was never a PMEA festival held where Areta did not know the best shopping in the area. Her forms were always the first ones to arrive in the host's mailbox. It wasn't because she was on top of the game. It was because she was *ahead* of the game. The strongest programs project problems long before those problems ever surface. We all have to think five steps of our current situation. We have to pay attention to the demands that are placed on our administrators to balance budgets. We have to know what legislation has just passed in Harrisburg and how it will affect our school districts. In essence, we have to be prepared for the worst so that we can continue to produce the best... the best musicians, the best students... the best people. All you have to do is to meet one of Areta's students and you'll know that she never lost sight of this.



~ In loving memory of Areta Kalogeras ~

"I always loved music; whoso has skill in this art is of good temperament, fitted for all things. We must teach music in schools; a schoolmaster ought to have skill in music, or I would not regard him."

- Martin Luther (Protestant Reformation leader)

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

[National Arts Standards Conceptual Framework](#)

If you're still a little unsure about the new National Arts Standards, this PDF explains their connection to the old standards and to the Common Core as well as how they are more beneficial to students. Great to share with administrators!

"Imagine (Music Education Advocacy)"

This short video presents a world without music. It approaches the notion from varying perspectives, including a casual/recreational music listener. It can be a discussion-starter in your classroom or at a booster or school board meeting.

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.

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.

Feb. 4 – Valentine's Day is approaching! What better time to share your LOVE for music and music education than during this month? Do an activity that expresses your students' (and your) love for music, and have them share it verbally with family members or post it as a bulletin board or hallway work. Without having to do much stretching, you can do a seasonal project that advocates for music!

Feb. 18 – Familiarize yourself with the reauthorized [Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\)](#). It has many ramifications for education and, sadly, doesn't offer much for music education. Since this newsletter went to print, advancements may have occurred, and staying educated about what our politicians are discussing is crucial. Read anything that NAFME, PMEA, or PSEA sends out!

March 4 – Prepare for your [In-Service Conference and Advocacy Day](#) absence by maintaining musical fidelity in your sub plans. Craft them (for this absence, and for any absence, for that matter!) so students will accomplish something, even if it's reading- or math-heavy work with a musical connection or educational musical worksheets. When substitute music plans are always and eternally just "watch a movie" with no discussion or musical tie-in, it may send a devaluing message about what your course goals are and how you want music class to be viewed and treated.

March 18 – Check the new clearance requirements for educators, and make sure that you're current. Your districts are hopefully informing you of these new requirements and timeframes, but if they're not, you're still responsible for maintaining accurate and current clearances. Some training can be found at the [PA Child Welfare Resource Center](#), and you can find information about the updated requirements [here](#) and [here](#). Music teachers often spend a lot of time with students through extracurricular work and may be confidentes privy to information other teachers may not be given. Being a beloved music teacher also means being an advocate for students and their well-being.

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!