

# Conducting Advocacy

## PMEA District 1's Advocacy Newsletter

Written by Emily Wardle, Advocacy Representative

### Teaching Jazz: If You Don't Do It, Who Will??

**Teaching Jazz.** For some, the phrase itself causes cold sweats and nightmares, yet others improvise in their sleep and exude jazz. The reality is that most of us are probably scared of jazz because we don't want to teach, play, or do it "wrong" (which is ironic considering the nature of improvisation and the essence of jazz itself!). Maybe our own teachers were scared of jazz and we didn't get a thorough jazz education, leading us to be too "square" to later step into the uncomfortable and try jazz. Perhaps we're now embarrassed to admit that we're not able to blare out Dizzy Gillespie licks from memory or transcribe Charlie Parker solos.



If you relate to any of the above, you are not alone, and there are probably enough people like you to form a jazz support group. PMEA always seems to have conference sessions with topics to assuage jazz fears and nerves, further confirming my suspicions about how awkward we feel about our own country's musical creation.

So be honest with yourself: are you scared of jazz? Do you do anything, personally or professionally, for Jazz Appreciation Month in April? Are your ignorance or fear of jazz impacting your students?

If so, you're not too late to change the future for yourself or your students! Start listening to jazz and attend concerts to immerse yourself in jazz culture and language. Pittsburgh is always having [jazz nights in the cultural district](#), amongst other events that are free or cost very little. Once you feel more comfortable with listening to jazz, learn the language of jazz and attend PMEA sessions at the In-Service conference...and then pass this heritage on to your students.



Teach elements of jazz (i.e. basic improvisation and scat singing) as warm-ups, do rhythm warm-ups or body percussion to a jazz song, or just have jazz playing as students enter. Many things we already do can be injected with a little jazz or can be identified as jazz elements. Try a jazz unit with one grade level – I do mine when I do genre studies with 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The possibilities are endless, and you'll realize that jazz is so more accessible than you thought! Experiment and see what happens!



The start of the year is a great time to set a new goal for yourself, and incorporating more jazz elements in your daily activities is a great one to set. We need to find ways to improve and beef up our jazz programs and participation in instrumental/vocal jazz events.

The squeamishness surrounding jazz trickles up to PMEA; PMEA jazz ensembles are often some of the smallest applied for yet offer some of the most valuable and intense musical ensemble experiences that PMEA has to offer. If we are not more proactive about getting our students to appreciate and participate in jazz events and we don't advocate for jazz, jazz music programs will severely suffer, meaning that something essentially *American* will be lost. It's up to us to continue the jazz tradition that's been with our country for generations. If you don't teach your students about jazz, who will?

Now go outside of your comfort zone and get down and dirty with jazz! ☺ Happy swinging!

**"I think there are only three things that America will be known for 2,000 years from now when they study this civilization: the Constitution, jazz music, and baseball. They're the three most beautifully designed things this culture has ever produced." - Gerald Early (writer, professor, and American culture critic)**



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

[National Arts Standards](#)

This interactive, detailed outline of our new standards allows customization by grade level, art form, and discipline therein. A really cool site with which we should become comfortable!

[broader minded on Capitol Hill](#)

Following the “broader minded” introduction I presented in my [April/May newsletter](#), here is a YouTube video sharing what NAFME presented to the U.S. Congress in April. Although a lengthy video it’s a great source of information that you can use for yourself and your programs!

**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.

**Oct. 1 –** Our new NAFME music standards have arrived! Do yourself a favor and become familiar with them [here](#) (framework explanation) and at <http://nationalartsstandards.org>. The standards are written in Common Core-friendly language and include Essential Questions and Enduring Understandings. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel!

**Oct. 15 –** Take a moment to complete your own [“How Has Music Education Impacted Your Life?”](#) prompt for PMEA and spread the word to everyone you know! An Advocacy alert was sent out early in the school year about this initiative, so look there for more info. ☺

**Oct. 29 –** Elections are next week (November 4<sup>th</sup>). It’s a HUGE election for us in the education field, so do your part and [research candidates and their platforms](#) and [be in the know](#). Then, drag yourself out of bed early or take one for the team and go after work and VOTE!!!

**Nov. 12 –** Time is running out to sign up for the [District 1 Professional Development Workshop](#)! Sign up [here](#). Common Core is the overarching theme this year, and it will prove to be a day filled with information, resources, and cutting edge information.

**Nov 26 –** Be thankful. Take a moment and breathe. Think about the good things around you, your students, your profession, and that you are part of a bigger picture. Once you take that cleansing breath and step back, consider what it would be like if all of those things were taken away from you. Now go out and advocate for your students, yourself, and music education! ☺

**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!**