

MAKING AN ADVOCATE OUT OF YOUR PRINCIPAL: **Ten Things You Can Do Monday**

**Texas Music Educators Association Conference
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What Do Principals Really Think?

- 1. What I love best about my music teacher(s) is that he/she is. . .**
 - a. Passionate about music.
 - b. Orchestra and band teachers both love music, have the organizational skills, temperament, and communication skills to bring out the best in the students
 - c. Great with kids. They know that he honestly cares about each one of them. They have fun with him and learn a life long skill and appreciation for the fine arts. In my previous life at high school, I loved the intense dedication of the choir, band, and orchestra people. It takes that kind of commitment to ensure a quality program.
 - d. (They are. . .) continually positive and encourage students constantly-despite their exceedingly high student enrollments. Band director has functioned a majority of the year without an assistant.
 - e. The intensity of the choir director, which is obvious in performances and ratings.
 - f. (They) LOVE KIDS!!! They (band and orchestra) love music, but more importantly, they love to see their students grow musically. [Feeds e.]
 - g. Band: professional, kid friendly, creative, loves what he does
Orchestra: talented, creative
Choir: Creative, talented
 - h. Truly understands music and how to teach students how to sing!
 - i. Dedicates his/her time for students to become the best possible student. I am always amazed at how much extra time they commit.
 - j. Work together as a strong team planning their programs. They are there to assist each other. All three of them are passionate about performance, and they push their students to practice, which leads to a high quality of success.
 - k. Spends great amounts of time before, during and after school with students in order to make them feel confident with their music.
 - l. Choir and Band Teachers are enthusiastic, flexible, and organized.
 - m. All the music educators at my school are great because
 1. They work well together to produce an outstanding department.
 2. They teach "music" not just "songs."
 3. They expose students to diverse music styles and performances.
 4. They set a high standard for both themselves and their students.
 5. They are always "pushing the envelope" to do more, to reach higher.
 6. They embody our school motto, "Commitment to Excellence"

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- n. Is the best "orchestra" teacher in the district! She is a caring, dedicated, and a responsible teacher, always working hard to promote her program on behalf of the students and the school. (My band teacher is also dedicated, caring, responsible, and works hard to promote her programs as well.)
- o. Their dedication, passion and love for children first, music second (but a close second! :))
- p. They have such positive relationships with students and motivate them to excel. Our teachers allow students to love and appreciate music.
- q. Inspire kids, build self-esteem, add to our school's overall perceptions, and are generally wonderful for kids.
- r. (Choir Teacher) is full of life, always upbeat and energetic. He laughs with the students not at the students. They feel comfortable and cared for. They know he is helping them to be better performers.

2. What troubles me most about my music teacher(s) is that he/she. . .

- a. Gets so involved, that some of the now-required details get left on the second burner. Take care of business!!
- b. The transience of the student population inhibits the formation of the team building or the group due to group dynamics changing.
- c. What troubles me most about my music teacher (choir) is that she puts kids in a performance without proper preparation and kids are then embarrassed. Not acceptable. Lack of organization and late paperwork also part of the dysfunction.
- d. Our orchestra teacher has difficulty communicating with administration.
- e. Choir, Band - Out of the building too often. Kids miss too much school; however, nothing negative about their programs.
- f. (Choir) Does not have a vision of the excellence they could achieve. They could be so much more than good. [Feeds e.]
- g. Band: nothing
Orchestra: too emotional
Choir: does not seem to enjoy the middle level, but does a good job
- h. Never smiles and does not seem to like kids. His biggest solution to problem students is "Get them out of my class" and he does not even attempt to communicate with parents about concerns with students.
- i. Overall, they are very good. The only area that is a concern constantly is in organization (band) and in understanding the big picture (more than just band, orchestra, etc.) exists at a comprehensive high school.
- j. They do not have rooms large enough to meet their needs. The equity is not there, when one looks at the music rooms in the newer schools vs.- the rooms at our school.
- k. May experience "burn" out since they invest so much time and energy with hundreds of students on a daily basis.

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- l. Orchestra is disorganized, has difficulty planning and maintaining classroom management.
- m. Truly, nothing "troubles" me about our music educators except I worry about their health from time to time because they are so active.
- n. Although she works long hours above and beyond anyone else in the building on behalf of her choir program and feels the "passion" for her subject, she seems to be the only music teacher with the most student management control issues (although there has been a tremendous improvement this year).
- o. They are so "right brained" :) Actually, nothing! I love them all! One of them has a slight temper condition which flares its ugly head just before any major musical event.
- p. He/she sometimes does not think globally or about the "big picture" of student life.
- q. No Response
- r. They all have trouble writing appropriate lesson plans. All they want to do is list the music that will be rehearsed. I would love some samples of good daily lesson plans for music that I could share with them.

3. In order to improve my school's music department, I would ask my music teacher(s) to. . .

- a. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Keep admin informed of all activities, calendar, etc. Work with boosters, BUT communicate with parents.
- b. Incorporate school wide vocabulary and reading objectives into their daily instruction.
- c. In order to improve my school's music department, I would ask my music teachers to analyze the right and wrong of their program. I would ask that they bring in others to critique and conduct. I would ask each teacher to sell his or her program! I would ask them to ask me for whatever help they need to partner to improve for the kids. What is right for kids should be the watchword.
- d. Help administrators find a way to lower their class sizes without turning away students.
- e. Continue to work with feeder middle schools all year - at their location, at ours, combined performances, etc.
- f. (Choir) perform more difficult music [Feeds e.]
- g. Coordinate with each other the activities they plan. Contact parents more frequently with regard to student progress.
- h. Work closely with parents to improve the quality of the music program.
- i. Develop a strategic plan to determine how you will recruit and retain students in the programs.

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- j. I know that I have three wonderful music teachers, and I just want them to keep on doing what they are currently doing. They are giving their best, and I love the student outcomes.
- k. Collaborate with each other more frequently, share their art with core curriculum teachers on an ongoing basis, and not fundraise so much!
- l. Extend learning into the community, link outside programs and concerts to the music classroom, require attendance/awareness of performances in the community, develop partnerships, implement student performances for businesses that assist the school.
- m. All I ask is that they continue the great jobs they are doing. They are truly inspirational.
- n. I would ask my music teachers to promote their programs via the school's parent newsletter, students' newspaper, daily announcements, posters about the building, and so forth. We have a lot of students succeeding in all 3 programs and we should do a better job letting others know!!!!
- o. Continue to produce a great musical product, and find more ways to have the kids perform.
- p. Keep doing what they have started, work together, and always expect excellence.
- q. Continue their exemplary level of teaching and involvement with students. They go above and beyond!
- r. Develop programs of pride, implement effective teaching strategies, look for opportunities to perform.

Additional Comments:

- s. The music dept adds so much to the overall school morale. What a positive atmosphere. What neighboring states sponsor such a vocal jazz festival OR what do you think of us sponsoring one? (start small and grow)
- t. Love my teachers individually. So glad they work so well as a team!!! [Feeds e.]
- u. Fundraising aspects of the music department is somewhat of a double edge sword. It takes so much time away from a teachers focus ... I wish I could just get the money they needed....I am working on that through corporate sponsors.
- v. The following are from one principal.
 - At-risk schools such as ours maintain a high attendance percentage. Ours being at times as high as 98%. This is with a 33-35% transient rate. Approximately 95% of the students who are involved in our music programs are not on the retention list.
 - Large percentages of our students who are actively involved in our music programs have fewer disciplinary referrals.
 - One-third of our student population is active in a music program. (Band & Orchestra)

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- It encourages parental involvement. Band concerts have had to be divided into divisions because our gym will not seat or accommodate the number of parents that attend. It enhances community involvement and instills school pride. Our Band plays for various occasions and locations. It builds character and a feeling of responsibility to a team or group. Many of our students rent their instruments because they cannot afford one.

What have you done to make an advocate out of your principal?

- a. I always **keep my principal informed** of upcoming events and always mention their presence at performances. I also ask for their opinion on big decisions (even if I already made up my mind) so they feel that they have some "input" (administrators love to control things!). I also simply check in with them regularly to update them on what the program is up to. **(Communication)**
- b. About rapport with principals, I've found **having small ensembles always available to perform** for special events the principal may be hosting is a big plus. A **positive attitude** is another tip I would suggest in developing a rapport with principals. **(Advocacy, Positive)**
- c. I think the relationship between _____ and I actually started warming up when I **invited her and a faculty choir to perform** at my Christmas concert. _____, deep down, really is a ham and the staff choir was the hit of the night. **(Collegiality)**
- d. _____ appreciates receiving **copies of all correspondence** and calendars I send home, and likes to be **invited to all performances**. I involved her in EVERY decision including choice of uniform. It probably hasn't hurt that I send a little gift at holidays and birthdays. **(Communication)**
- e. All the great stuff you send us about how important music education is - I copy and give to my principal. I have also given them "stuff" from the Music In Our School Month - like pencils, paper, stickers for all the students in school. Anything sent from Dr. Tim - I copy and give to both assistants and principal. I also talk to her. _____ is very supportive and it is enjoyable to be able to share with her how great the kids are doing. I inform her of every performance and rehearsal that is extra - any guest speakers that come in and all the great para-pros that I have. Many times she'll stop by and see what's going on. She's attended most of our performances. **(Communication)**

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- f. MY new principal is a golfer. So I asked him to go golfing. You know what's really strange? He won! Huh...I wonder how THAT happened? Anytime I speak in public about our school, I mention how incredibly supportive he is of the arts and how our success would not be possible without him. He's a sucker for kind words! =-) Aren't we all!! (**Collegiality**)
- g. I have always worked 110% at whatever choral "job" I have undertaken...obviously this is the first step in establishing an excellent relationship with one's principal. I believe that **FLEXIBILITY** in all areas is very important. A principal wants a hard working, knowledgeable, kid friendly, team player teacher who doesn't bother him/her with insignificant everyday details. I believe a principal respects and appreciates an **ORGANIZED** teacher who follows through with the appropriate paperwork for trips, performances, etc. I do believe that clear, concise **COMMUNICATION** is extremely vital in one's relationship with one's administration. There is never a time in a choral teacher's life to "rest on one's laurels." One always should be striving to improve and develop (even after 23 years in my case!)

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1. Ask your students to complete the sentence, “Music makes the difference because. . .” (Students could be asked to come up with 5 responses) Use their responses as follows.
 - a. In your upcoming concert programs
 - b. In your school newspaper’s “music corner” (Don’t have a “music corner?” You know what to do!)
 - c. As copy for making banners/posters to display around the school
 - d. As copy for recruitment fliers and posters at feeder schools
 - e. As copy for your **TMEA** publication
 - f. As copy for a publication about your school’s FANTASTIC music program

2. Retrieve information about the value of studying music and quote it in any of the above outlets but especially on any recruitment information you may be preparing for next year. Parents love to read good things about programs they are considering for their children. (The MENC publication, *The Gifts of Music*, is a wonderful source for great quotes about music education from a variety of notables [Aristotle to Paterno].)

3. In your next concert program, include an insert designating each attendee as a member of the newly-formed, *Mozart Middle School* Coalition for Music Education/Music Boosters Club/Committee to Promote Music Education--choose a name which works best for you). The point of designating an interest-group is as follows.
 - a. To help make the program better for those they love
 - b. To help establish the program as a school-wide entity using a positive approach
 - c. To establish “buy in” from those who have the most to lose
 - d. To have someone else to speak on the behalf of the children in your music program
 - e. To ensure equal representation for your program in the PTA
 - f. To ensure equal representation for your program in your school’s Parent Advisory Committee
 - g. To help disseminate information (the good news!) pertinent to music education

Parents are the ones who have the most important interest at hand. It is, after all, their child’s music education. They can become your voice, if needed. (See sample program insert letter below.)

4. Design letterhead, memos and concert programs which include the Standards. (See sample memo form below)

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5. Stay informed!
Refer to the following websites for the most up-to-date information on research
 - menc.org
 - supportmusic.com
 - amc-music.org; menc.org
 - smartz.org
 - music-for-all.org
 - childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy
 - schoolmusicmatters.com
 - mustcreate.org
6. Discover who prints the daily announcements and ask them to “screen” music education promo material/logos (10-20% shading) onto the paper used to post announcements--especially during MIOSM. (See sample below)
7. Arrange for a performance for the school board, principal’s meeting, city council, state legislature, etc. They will appreciate the “good news” for a change. Your Parent Organization can help you with setting up these performance “showcases.”
8. Come up with a clever version of a “Happy Birthday” song to serenade your school’s staff on their special day. They will love you for it! You could also give away a pencil to each honoree with the name of your organization on it.
9. Create a web site and communicate, communicate, communicate. Share the Good News!!!!
10. See your principal/mayor/congressional representative on Monday (or have one of your students do this) to ask him/her to present the Opening Remarks at your next concert. (It puts him/her in a position to commit to Music Education in front your greatest allies--the parents!) THEN, be sure to praise that person for their commitment and do something SPECIAL for them at the concert. (Present them with a framed print with all of your student’s signatures with brief “thanks!”)

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FOR PROGRAM INSERT: (Thank-you to the state of New York!)

**Mozart Middle School
Music Department**

Congratulations!

You are now a member of the Mozart Middle School (Coalition for Music Education/ Music Boosters Club/Committee to Promote Music Education).

Because of your intense interest in the development of this program, we would like to add your name to our brand new mailing list so that you can be kept informed about all of our music news and department activities.

Simply complete this form and pass it over when the students come down the aisles to pick them up from you.

Thanks for your interest in the Mozart Middle School Music Program. We look forward to seeing you at all of our events.

Sincerely,

Name
Director

Name _____ Phone (H) _____

Preferred E-mail _____ FAX _____

Street Address _____ Zip _____

Place of Business _____ Phone (W) _____

Name of Contact (Student) in Music Program _____

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**MOZART MIDDLE SCHOOL
INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

TO:

FROM:

DATE:

SUBJECT:

MUSIC
CONTENT
STANDARDS

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
5. Reading and notating music
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
7. Evaluating music and music performances
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Mozart Middle School

Celebrates

Music In Our Schools Month

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