

Snoqualmie Valley School District (SVSD) Music Coalition: Advocating for Music Education

A Coalition vs. Booster group:

The primary function of a booster group is fundraising—assumes the existence of a music program. The primary function of a coalition is political, long term, special interest group to ensure music education in our schools.

Assumptions:

1. The goal of the school board and school administration is to balance the budget – spend no more than money allocated
2. We can't take for granted past support for music education.
3. Presenting a unified, organized, data based approach to school board and administration will allow them to make a better decision and to defend their decision about what NOT to cut
4. It is not about saving individual jobs, individual programs or schools—it's about music education.
5. It's not about music versus sports
6. It's important to develop a positive relationship with the school board, admin.

Mission of our coalition: To ensure every child has equal access to music K-12

Effective advocacy is:

- Accurate information
- Clear communication
- Long range strategies

The Process:

1. The collection and interpretation of data
 - a. Have someone there at every school board meeting – understand the process, the board members and what their particular interests are:
 - i. Were they in music/do they have kids in the music program?
 - ii. What is the current philosophical direction and financial status of the district
 - iii. Understand the terminology used in talking about budgets and education process (i.e. FTE's)
2. The preparation of the proposal
 - a. Gather data related to the music programs
 - i. # of students participating in each area of music (general, band, choir, other)
 - ii. # of students participating in each grade in each aspect of music
 - iii. Attrition rates
 - iv. Actual number of FTE assigned to each area of the music curriculum
 - v. The FTE value of the average music performance teacher compared to the classroom teacher – this is key!
 - vi. The financial loss that would be incurred if large music classes are lost because of the full or partial elimination of the elementary feeder system
 - vii. The impact (loss of students) if any specific area of the curriculum is unavailable, and the effect that will have on class size increases in non-music courses (reverse economics)
 - b. Create a status report on music in the SVSD district schools

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- i. Recent research
 - ii. Significant events/recognition of the programs, regional, national or international recognition and awards. Includes teachers and student achievements
 - iii. Any previous cuts and the cumulative effect of any current proposed actions that may negatively impact the program.
 - iv. Administrative proposal: summarize what is being proposed by administration—include cuts and possible hidden cuts.
 - v. Assumptions/long and short term impacts of proposed cuts.
 - vi.
3. The presentation of the proposal – never done by music teachers/administrators
 - a. Identify the key players
 - i. School board – they are elected and can only act on information provided. To not show up is a vote no.
 - ii. Administration:
 - iii. Music teachers- public verses private participation in the process
 - iv.
 4. Follow-up

Guidelines for the functioning group:

1. Build relationships with those who are key decision makers, decision influencers.
2. Work from data, with knowledge of the process and lingo
3. It is a strategic and planned approach
4. Must be a united front—they will look for the cracks in the armor and take advantage of it
5. Never suggest a budget cut—it will be used against you and you will be blamed
6. It's never sports vs. music
7. Provide information to appeal to all learning styles

Marketing Music :

Develop an annual report – helps establish the validity as a core value in the community

- List significant recognition of individual faculty: honors, awards, publications, and other milestones
- Identify the # of FTE in each area of the curriculum
- Summarize the student-faculty ratios in each area of the curriculum
- List significant accomplishments of the performance groups (festival, contests, tours)
- List significant accomplishments of individual student performers (solo/ensemble contests, scholarships to graduating seniors, etc.)
- Summarize general academic success of music students (honor roll, average GPA, SAT/ACT scores)
- Summarize student completion of curriculum competencies; performance events – curricular and extracurricular
- Summarize enrollments in music classes; average class sizes; % of student participation by grade and school; attrition rates that exceed 15% between any two grades as areas of concern.
- Summarize results of exit interviews of students who drop music
- Economics:

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- Determine the FTE value of the average music performance teacher
- Summarize the expenditure of budgetary funds
- Demonstrate need for budgetary funds in coming year
- Communication:
 - Coalition prepares report with cooperation from the teachers
 - Coalition presents an abbreviated oral report at a public meeting of the school board based on the formal written report
 - Express appreciation to the key players for accepting the report and past support.

8 Strategic Errors – don't make these mistakes!

1. Limiting the scope to one school, curricular component or a single year
2. Limiting the organization to fund-raising activities
3. Limiting advocacy activities to music teachers or control by music teachers
4. Limiting our advocacy efforts to reactive strategies
5. Procrastinate
6. Suggesting alternate cuts or compromise
7. Becoming involved in a battle of music vs. athletics
8. Resorting to personal attacks

Remember

- Beware of hidden cuts
- Don't let admin conquer and divide: The greatest detriment to the advancement of music education is often the disunity of our own profession
- The motivation of the school board and admin: to balance the budget—that's their job
- The largest single factor affecting decision makers is their perception of prevailing public opinion
- The decision belongs to those who show up
- Make it easy for people to do the right thing
- Be student centered—what will be the long term affect be on students? Impact statements is the answer to any proposal detrimental to music education.

Resources:

Menc.org

Supportmusic.com

Aep-arts.org

[Music Advocacy](#) by John L. Benham

SVSD Music Coalition on FaceBook