

# Arts Education Advocacy Kit

The best way to build support for any school district arts education program is to develop a strong, well-rounded program with administrative and community involvement all along the way. Such an effort takes a significant amount of time. However, with a coordinated effort making reasoned arguments and clarifying misinformation, any obstacle can be overcome.



## How to affect change

- 1. Analyze the Situation**
- 2. Organize for Action**
- 3. Recruit Help**
- 4. Implement your Program**
- 5. Continue the Support**

# 1. Analyze the Situation

**Gather or contact a small group** (5-7) of key stake holders to review the issue. This group might serve as the steering committee. If this is a district-wide issue, a representative from each school in the district may be necessary.

**Clarify and define the issue.** Get the facts straight. Don't act on unfounded rumors. If the issue involves the school or district budget, make sure you understand the budget process.

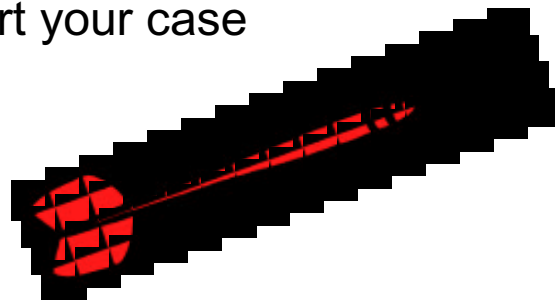
Determine who has the power to enact the change you wish to occur and therefore to whom you will take your message

- Parents
- School Board
- Superintendent
- State School Board
- Local Businesses



Identify potential allies to support your case

- Educators
- Arts educators
- Parents
- Artists
- Retired art teachers
- Private art teachers
- Arts-related businesses
- Higher education representatives
- Print and broadcast media
- Local school board members



- Students
- Arts organizations
- School administrators
- Community groups
- Business and religious leaders

## 2. Organize for Action

- **Assess the strengths** of the group that you have assembled. Use the enclosed *Volunteer Information Form*



- **Select a coordinator** to lead the effort
- **Develop a case** from several different points of view focusing on the ones that will convince your specific targets
- **Gather support materials**
- **Create a Fact Sheet** that addresses your specific issue and contains general arts education advocacy information
- **Decide on a campaign sound bite or slogan** for a unified message
- *Include the change you want to enact and a brief reason why*
- **Be aware** of any opposing efforts such as other school programs vying for funds or other groups who believe that the arts are a “frill”. Be prepared to counter their arguments. However, argue only for the arts, not against other subjects. Strive for a well-rounded and balanced curriculum
- **Decide which campaign tools you will use.** Assign one person to be in charge of each tool
  - **Phone Calls**
  - **Letter Writing**
  - **Personal Meetings**
  - **Group Presentations**
  - **Publicity**

## 3. Recruit Help

Hold a meeting to recruit

workers and supporters



### Before the meeting

- Personally invite people and call them before the meeting
- Provide childcare, if you want parents to attend meetings or help with mailing, this will increase the participation
- The children can also help personalize letters or artwork enclosed with your letters or advocacy kits
- Involve students in all aspects of your advocacy efforts, from planning to implementation

### During the meeting

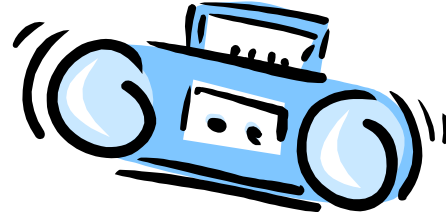
- Introduce the importance of arts education
- Use language that makes it acceptable for people not to know anything about the arts. Encourage their questions.
- Pass out the fact and information sheets you created
- Have the attendees complete a Volunteer Information Form
- Have interested people sign up to help with a specific task before leaving
- Remember that Small Tasks + Many People = Results, so ask people to do something manageable: make twenty phone calls, address a hundred envelopes, write a letter, talk to a principal, help raise money, or host a meeting at home. Never overwhelm your team members.

## 4. Implement your Program

### Phone calls



- call potential supporters
  - use a phone tree or e-mail
  - review the information on your fact sheet
  - ask them to call or write the decision makers
- call key decision makers



### Letter writing

Write letters to key decision makers and to potential supporters.

### Personal meetings

Coordinate personal visits to each decision maker by those who have the most influence

### Group presentations

- Arrange brief presentations at meetings of community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, churches or social clubs.
- Pass out fact sheets and a sample letter with school board member's names and addresses, at school arts performances, booster club or other meetings, and open houses.

### Publicity

- Have a newspaper article written on an exciting way the arts are used in classrooms, on class field trips, or in special class projects or presentations.
- Use media contacts to generate articles, interviews and other coverage of your campaign.
- Raise community awareness through the following: public service announcements to radio, television and newspapers; action alert flyers to students and parents; student-generated posters; articles in organizational or school newsletters, or placing arts activities on the school lunch calendar; buttons.

### Tips for your phone calls, letters and meetings

- Be brief
- Designate one person to speak, if in a group
- Begin with an overview of why you are there
- State your case in full with supporting information
- Use language that makes your case accessible for people who do not know anything about the arts
- Use personal or local examples of the impact of the arts
- Repeat your campaign slogan throughout the meeting
- Encourage letters and phone calls to decision makers
- Thank them for their time
- Leave information on your case, contact information on the decision makers and contact information on you and your group

## 5. Continue the Support

**A good issue never dies.**



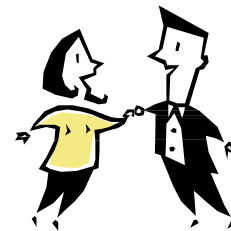
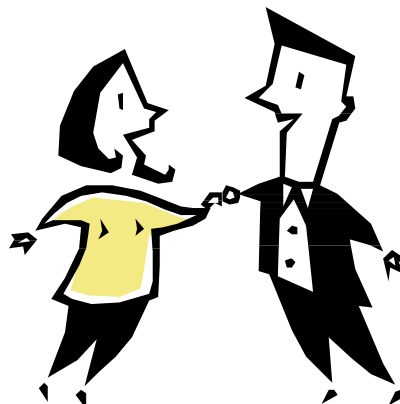
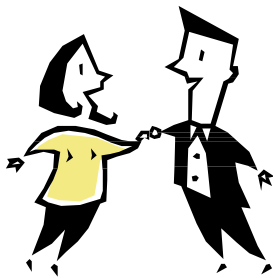
Even after you have made your effort, the issue will continue to exist.

To keep the ground you have gained and to continue to effect change you will need to

- monitor the district's budgeting effort,
- attend school board meetings
- and develop on-going relationships with decision makers.

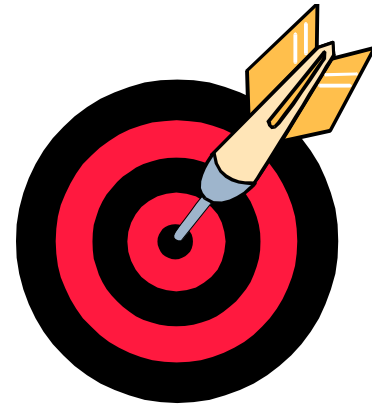
Please remember to **stay in touch with your campaign leader**, for you never know when the perfect moment to effect change or abate a crisis will occur.

And remember to make sure you thank all your supporters and the decision makers who took the time to hear your case.



# Target Decision Makers List

This form may be used when identifying the decision maker(s) for a particular issue. Select the category or person(s) who are making the decision in your situation, and complete the information.



For each "decision maker" note the individual(s) from your supporters who may have the ability to positively influence the decision maker. Educate your supporters on your issues and ask them to place a call to the decision maker.

## Potential Decision Makers

## Who Can Influence

### Local School Board

President:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Members:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### School District Personnel

Superintendent:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Curriculum:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School Principals:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Others

PTO/PTA Presidents, Civic Leaders, Spouses, etc:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State Senator:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State Representative:

Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

# Phone Tree

In a telephone tree, the initiator calls the “branch” contact people with a message that they write down and read back (to check for accuracy). Each “branch” contact person then calls everyone on their list to read the message.



**Initiator**



**Contact Branch**

**Contact Branch**

**Contact Branch**

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

Contact

# Volunteer Information Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Interests/ Abilities

- Helping to plan the arts education effort
- Speaking at public or organization meetings
- Talking with neighbors, parents or teachers about the effort
- Writing news releases
- Organizing mailings
- Helping with mailings
- Hosting a meeting
- Understanding and analyzing the school budget
- Raising money for the arts education effort
- Contributing money to the arts education effort
- Distributing flyers
- Organizing a letter writing campaign
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Contacts *(please mention specific names)*

- School board \_\_\_\_\_
- School administrators \_\_\_\_\_
- Community/ civic groups \_\_\_\_\_
- Local business leaders \_\_\_\_\_
- Local artists/ arts groups \_\_\_\_\_
- Media \_\_\_\_\_
- Other key contacts \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(or "FOR RELEASE ON (date)")

For Further Information: (Name of contact person  
and daytime phone number)

(title)

(Body should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins on 8 ½" X 11" paper. The first paragraph should contain the most important facts : who, what, when, where and why. Include the rest of the information in descending order of importance in any following paragraphs. Keep it short and simple. Avoid jargon, slang, inside information or any other material that is likely to be misunderstood by the reader. Write in complete sentences and keep the language lively and clear. Limit the release to one page, if possible. If you need two pages, type "MORE" at the foot of the first page, and head page two with a short title in all capital letters and the words "ADD ONE".)

### (indicates end of release)

## Other Pointers

- Attach a personal note to the release to call attention to it.
- If possible, the media should have the release at least one week in advance of when you want it printed.
- Releases to broadcast media should be similar to the one above and be typed in all capital letters and triple-spaced. When the release is read aloud it should be either 30 or 60 seconds long and use a more conversational tone.
- Follow up your mailing of the press release with a phone call.

**INSERT  
KEY  
STEM MESSAGES  
PAGE**



# Compelling Responses for Common Excuses



## **1. Scheduling/Lack of Time**



**Response:** A number of scheduling alternatives exist and are being used by schools. These alternatives include switching from a six-period to a seven-period day, offering courses on alternative days, or block scheduling. There is always a way to make time for the arts.

## **2. Need to Concentrate on Raising Math and Science Test Scores**



**Response:** The arts help to build critical thinking skills that are useful in math and science.

## **3. Lack of Community Support and School Board Support**



**Response:** Point out how the arts fit in with the school district's mission statement and educational philosophy. Recruit parents of arts students to advocate for your cause.

## **4. Need to Cut Programs to Balance the Budget**



**Response:** The average student load of arts teachers is greater than that of other teachers. By cutting an arts program, a district might actually have to hire more teachers to handle the student load.