By providing key information to those in government, school administration, and the general community, music education advocates have gained recognition for music as part of the core curriculum.

Former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said, “Knowledge is a form of capital, much of it formed by government investment in education. ... Politics has become a process that deliberately seeks to effect such outcomes as who thinks what, who feels how.” In this statement, Moynihan verbalized the reason why music education needs to be its own advocate. Advocacy is the way that we as music educators can explain to policy makers, as well as to the general public, the reasons why our profession is important and why we need their support to continue serving the needs of society. As advocates, we need to tell the nation that music education is vital and dynamic. The apparent simplicity of this message belies the expertise and sophistication required to ensure ongoing support for the profession. Because many important developments, curricular and otherwise, result from public policy—laws, government policies, and regulations—advocacy is indispensable to music education. For as long as music has been a curricular subject in the United States, its direction and focus have been subject to controls imposed by public policies created by local school boards, state education agencies, and the federal government. Advocacy must ensure that such policies are crafted by informed judgments based on knowledge.

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Advocacy for school music goes back at least to Lowell Mason, who persuaded the Boston School Committee to include music as a curricular subject in 1838. Since then, countless other advocates have built on Mason's success in cities, towns, and villages, as the practice of including music in the curriculum spread across the country. Boards of education began to accept the threefold rationale advocated in Boston in 1838—music as intellectually, morally, and physically good for children.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, educators began searching for more effective curricula, methods, and materials to prepare students for effective citizenship in a rapidly evolving society. The constant threat created by the cold war, the technological advances affecting all Americans, the civil rights movement of the 1960s, a growing economy, and other societal factors required an educational system capable of keeping up with continuous change. The need to respond to these conditions spawned a school reform movement that continues to this day. The cause of music education, a force that has been an active participant in this reform, will only merit continued economic support to the extent that policy makers know the advantages of music in our schools and why these advantages are so valuable.

A Formal Public Relations Program

Formal advocacy efforts began in 1966 when, in anticipation of its forthcoming Tanglewood Symposium, MENC appointed Joan Gaines as director of its new public-relations program. Gaines traveled extensively, spreading the message of music education to the public and coaching music educators to make their own public-relations efforts more effective. MENC print advertisements and radio and television announcements blanketed the country, and its publications included *Approaches to Public Relations for the Music Educator* in 1968 and the January 1972 issue of *Music Educators Journal*, which focused on public relations.

MENC's efforts were especially critical at a time when the worldwide economic recession of the early 1970s forced education policy makers to severely ration their limited resources. The high cost of music instruction proved too much to bear in some school systems, especially those in which the rationale for arts education was not convincing to policy makers. Fortunately, professional arts education organizations, especially MENC, were already becoming effective in communicating their stories to those responsible for allocating precious funds. At that time, MENC began to refocus its efforts from public relations to government relations, although it has continued to maintain a strong public-relations program as well. (See the sidebar for a list of advocacy resources.)

**Advocacy is the way that we explain to policy makers, as well as to the general public, the reasons why our profession is important to the needs of society.**

**Communicating with Government Agencies**

MENC began its government-relations efforts by working with legislators and their staffs and by presenting government-relations training to state and divisional MENC units. Training sessions have become a routine part of national, regional, and state music education conferences ever since. Once again the focus shifted, this time from government relations to advocacy—a term that encompasses a wide variety of activities. By the 1980s, MENC had acquired considerable expertise in advocacy, had participated continuously and actively in legislative agendas, and had taken formal positions on a number of diverse federal issues. Several MENC presidents served the organization well by testifying on Capitol Hill.

Gradually, economic conditions improved, and music programs gained a stronger footing—thanks in part to MENC's advocacy efforts. Its 1986 briefing paper to the arts education community stated:

> Clearly, the advocacy movement is on the cultural formation scene in force. The arts education community must relate to the advocacy movement as positively as possible without giving up the intellectual ground on which the whole notion of serious education in the arts disciplines is based.  

In 1986, MENC and the American Council for the Arts (ACA) invited thirty-one leaders of arts and education organizations to a meeting in Philadelphia, where they formed the Ad Hoc National Arts Education Working Group. A product of the meeting, "The Philadelphia Resolution," presented a unified statement on the need for arts education and for effective advocacy: "A broad cross section of national arts organizations agree ... that we pursue development of local, state, and national policies that result in more effective support for arts education and the professional teachers and artists who provide it."

In 1988, an ad hoc coalition consisting of MENC, the National Association of Music Merchants (now called NAMM: The International Music Products Association), and the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences became the National Coalition for Education in the Arts (later called the National Coalition for Music Education), with the mission of developing and monitoring policy affecting education in the arts. In 1990, this coalition created the National Commission on Music Education, which heard testimony in public forums in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Nashville and at a 1991 national symposium in Washington, D.C. The list of commission members included many familiar and respected names, such as Steve Allen, Leonard Bernstein, Ernest L. Boyer, Dave


Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education (KCAAEN). Schools, Communities, and the Arts: A Research Compendium. (www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaaen/)


Note. For more information on many of these resources, consult the MENC Web site at www.menc.org or call 800-828-0229.

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In that same year, MENC published the Commission’s report, Growing Up Complete: The Imperative for Music Education, which was distributed to Congress, the White House, parent groups, arts and education organizations, major corporations, advocacy groups, and individuals concerned about the role of the arts in education. Growing Up Complete became a key element in advocating for the inclusion of arts education in the important legislation entitled Goals 2000: Educate America Act, a Congressional act that had originated with the six National Education Goals established by President Bush and the state governors in 1990. Congress passed the Goals 2000 act in 1994 during the Clinton administration.

The most significant music education project in which the federal government has participated is the establishment of the National Standards for Arts Education. The National Standards and assessment are products of Goals 2000. The arts were not among the core subjects in the original bill; it was only after extensive advocacy efforts that Secretary of Education Richard Riley agreed to include them. This achievement is the most consequential, far-reaching result of the MENC advocacy program to date. The inclusion of world-class standards in legislation demonstrates the high level of sophistication of MENC’s advocacy program.

Following the triumphant conclusion of the advocacy effort that produced the National Standards, the National Coalition for Music Education sponsored a 1994 music education summit in Washington, D.C. Representing forty-eight organizations involved in a variety of music education interests, the participants discussed cooperation on a wide range of issues. More than seventy-five organizations sent representatives to a third summit, held in 1998. Agreements and vision statements produced at these summits have been used in a variety of advocacy activities.

**Advocacy at the State Level**

State music education associations have also been involved in advocacy for many years. Many have formed statewide coalitions, following the lead of the national coalitions. These organizations endeavor to educate policy makers—such as state legislators, school board members, and principals—about music education. State coalitions also undertake specific issues that affect music education within a particular state.

**Other Advocacy Efforts**

Professional arts education organizations are not the only advocates for arts education. In 1979, the prestigious Arts, Education, and Americans Panel, chaired by David Rockefeller, Jr., published the book Coming to Our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education: A Panel Report that described the status of arts education at that time and offered a dire warning for the future of American culture if the arts were not taken more seriously. Rockefeller wrote:

> If we want our world to be still, gray and silent, then we should take the arts out of school, shut down the neighborhood theatre, and barricade the museum doors. When we let the arts into the arena of learning, we run the risk that color and motion and music will enter our lives.

**Coming to Our Senses** is a powerful reminder that arts education in the United States needs attention if the arts are to remain a vital force in our culture and our lives.

The list of members on the National Commission on Music Education reflected the practice of enlisting notables in many fields to speak for music in the schools. During the last forty years, spokespersons have come forward from the entertainment industry, as well as the corporate, political, and military fields, among others. Recently, former President Clinton spoke about the necessity for music education:

> Learning improves in school environments where there are comprehensive music and arts programs. They increase the ability of young people to do math. They increase the ability of young people to read. And, most important of all, they're a lot of fun.

Former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education Richard Riley also shares a strong conviction regarding music education:

> I have long believed in the important role that music can play in helping students learn, achieve, and succeed. Music—as well as theater, dance, and the visual arts—are wonderful forums to exhibit and explore what makes us uniquely human—our creativity. And allowing children to explore their creativity and that of others is an important part of teaching and learning.

As past MENC president Paul Lehman made clear, the role of advocacy by arts education organizations is important:

> The standards project has given arts educators control of the agenda in the debate over arts education. It has enabled arts educators to lead the discussion. This was not the case previously. In past years, for example, initiatives in arts education were routinely taken by advocacy groups or other organizations with no competence or experience in arts education, and not surprisingly, nothing worthwhile or permanent happened. But now MENC has seized the initiative and has proven that it’s a major force on the Washington scene. Don’t underestimate the significance of that achievement.

**What Do Advocates Advocate?**

This historical overview of music education advocacy begs the question
of what advocates say when they speak to the public and to policymakers. Music educators sometimes disagree on the content of advocacy statements, which might include various music education philosophies, arguable results of research or premature interpretations of research, or bumper-sticker-type slogans. The question of what advocates actually advocate is beyond the scope of this article but should be of central interest to all music educators.

Conclusion
Advocacy for music education has been an unfolding story of communication by professional leaders as well as by highly recognized figures in many other fields. Advocacy does not drive the profession; rather, it reflects music educators’ beliefs, purposes, and accomplishments. In this way, advocacy has continually informed the nation of the value of music education and has been responsible—at least in part—for the continued success of the profession. Advocacy helps us fulfill our role in the democratic process—ensuring that we have the opportunity to inform policy makers of why they should sustain their support of music education.

Notes


6. For example, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Arts Education Program; the establishment of the cabinet-level Department of Education; the 1979 White House Conference on the Arts; the Career Education Act of 1978; legislated authority to conduct a baseline survey of the status of arts education in the schools, which resulted in the National Endowment of the Arts’ Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1988); and the White House Conference on Education in 1980. MENC has also provided expert witnesses to testify at numerous Congressional hearings.


13. David Rockefeller, Jr., Coming to Our Senses, back cover.


15. As quoted in Michael L. Mark, Music Education: Source Readings, 292.