

ADVOCACY message from MENC:

With the midterm elections now behind us, the time is right to remind local school board members that in spite of the changing political climate across the country, one constant remains: for today's students to succeed tomorrow, they need a comprehensive education that includes music taught by exemplary music educators. In order to assist you with spreading this message, MENC has prepared a letter template for you with language that speaks to the value of music education. Please feel free to customize and tweak the template as you see fit for your needs. We recommend that you share a personalized version of this letter, signed by you - the music teacher at your school (you may also chose to have it co-signed by a Nebraska Music Educators Association Executive Board member). We encourage you to distribute it to your local school board members. If you have any questions or comments concerning the content or purpose of this letter, please feel free to contact Chris Woodside, MENC Assistant Executive Director, Center for Advocacy and Public Affairs, at chrisw@menc.org. Thank you for all you are doing on behalf of music education.

Elizabeth W. Lasko
Assistant Executive Director, Center for Members & Constituency Relations
MENC: The National Association for Music Education

For today's students to succeed tomorrow, they need a comprehensive education that includes music taught by exemplary music educators.

SAMPLE LETTER:

[DATE]

Dear [INSERT NAME],

Now that election season has come and gone, it is time to get back down to business and make some important decisions about education. During this time of political turnover and climate change, we urge you to encourage a well-rounded, well-balanced educational experience for students by including music instruction in schools.

The mission of MENC: The National Association for Music Education is to advance music education by encouraging the study and making of music by all. The arts are an important factor in achieving academic excellence. The importance of music education, however, does not stop with success in school. Success is achieved in developing intelligence, in society, and in life.

According to a 2006 Gallup poll, 94% of respondents believe music is part of a well-rounded education, and that schools should offer instrument music instruction as part of the regular curriculum, and 85% believe participation in school music corresponds with better grades and higher test scores. These beliefs are further supported with evidence from The College Board, Profile of College-Bound Seniors National Report for 2006, which found that students in music appreciation instruction scored 62 points higher on verbal and 41 points higher on math than students with none.

To receive the full benefit of music education, students must begin at a young age. Christopher M. Johnson and Jenny Memmott published a study in the Journal for Research in Music Education, (Winter

2006) of Elementary Schools and Middle Schools, showing elementary school students in top-quality music programs scored 22% better in English and 20% better in mathematics than students in low-quality music programs. The same can be said for middle school students. Students in middle school with excellent music programs had higher test scores in English and mathematics across the country than students in schools with low-quality music programs.

Music programs have everlasting effects on today's youth. The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation, by The National Governors Association (May 2002) states, "For at-risk youth, that segment of society most likely to suffer from limited lifetime productivity, the arts contribute to lower recidivism rates; increased self-esteem; the acquisition of job skills; and the development of much needed creative thinking, problem solving and communications skills." Students involved in school music programs are more attentive, organized, are more likely to say "no" to drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and overall live happier and healthier lifestyles. All of this leads to higher high school graduation rates (90.2% versus 72.9%, Harris Interactive poll of high school principals, Spring 2006).

We hope you will remember these powerful words when presented with difficult budget decisions concerning education and the arts. Former president Gerald Ford said it best, "Music education opens doors that help children pass from school into the world around them – a world of work, culture, intellectual activity, and human involvement. The future of our nation depends on providing our children with a complete education that includes music."

Sincerely,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]