

# Advocacy Guidelines: What Parents Can Do

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Attitude Concepts For Today

Parents are often willing to help, but may not know what to do or where to begin. Here are a few starting points:

1. Ask school board Members about their views on arts and music education. Be positive. Do not be defensive if an administrator or school board official opposes arts education. Simply get the facts, preferably in writing. Ask questions.
2. Organize your parent group. If you are an independent group (not under the auspices of PTA or other parent groups), you'll need to develop by-laws, appoint a board of directors, and apply for charitable deduction status.
3. Attend school board meetings. Observe the process, personalities, and effective persuasive techniques. Always be polite and cordial to school board Members.
4. Work with the music staff to develop a mission statement. Keep children's education as the focal point, not entertainment events or music trips.
5. Organize and print a calendar of local music events for all nearby schools. Include all school concerts, festivals, as well as professional groups appearing in the area. Send the calendar to school board Members, administrators, all school parents, and government officials.
6. Assemble the concert program for the music director. Offer to enter type on a computer disk, or take responsibility for producing the entire program. Be sure to include the correct spelling of every student, director, administrator, and custodian who helped with the event. The music director may also provide composer backgrounds and program notes to be included in the concert program.
7. Invite officials to speak at concerts. Develop a rotating schedule with the music teacher, and include administrators, school board Members, community leaders, and government officials. Write thank you notes to every person who speaks during a concert.
8. Start an after-school lesson program. Offer scholarships for first- or second-year students to study with local or area teachers.
9. Help establish a student mentoring program. The music director might want to "pair up" an elementary or middle school student with a high school student. During post-concert refreshment time, mingle with elementary and middle school band parents, and make them feel they are a part of the band family.
10. Call the music teacher(s) regularly, and simply offer to help. Often, there is typing to do, ticket sales, bookkeeping, distributing uniforms, arranging trips, helping with

props for musicals, etc. A number of important tasks always await the music teacher.