



NYSSMA®

A State Unit of NAFME, National Association for Music Education

Alan's Albany Tips 2020

Here are my thoughts and ideas for how to make the most out of your 47th Joseph R. Sugar NYSSMA Day in Albany.

I feel that our visits to legislative offices have to accomplish four basic things.

1. First and foremost, our visits are about creating relationships with our Senators, Assembly members and their staff. We will be asking for support on the "Same As" bill S5770/A9660 (hoping to find a better name soon). These bills would never exist if it wasn't for the long-time relationships developed over the years by myself, our NYSSMA Advocacy Chair Lori Orestano-James, our past NYSSMA and NAFME Eastern Division President Marc Greene and many, many other NYSSMA members who have made the "trek to the Hill" an integral part of their yearly schedule. Also, these visits, while taking place towards the end of our school years are really the beginning of our legislative efforts. 47 years ago, Joe Sugar could not have known that March would be the month that the State Budget would have to be finished and that the chances of meeting with our legislators would be difficult. That is why everyone must follow up with visits at local offices with their actual legislators, not just staff members. These visits are much less formal and much more productive. Get to know your elected officials. As Joe would say: "they're just like us. They put their pants on in the morning one leg at a time".
2. Ask 1. S5770/A9660 is the most significant legislation proposed for the arts in our time. Right now, music is a Regulatory subject administered by the State Education Department. By changing music and art's subject status to Statutory, they become regulated by the State Legislature, just like Math and Science. They fall in line with Federal standards in ESSA that create Music as a stand-alone subject. making it eligible for Title I, II and IV funding in ways that never existed before. They complete the mission of the New York State Standards of the Arts, which were basically created by a team of NYSSMA's best and brightest minds. And, with numbers already

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assigned, asking for support is easy. We must also ask Senators and Assembly Members to join their colleagues and sign on as bill sponsors.

3. Ask 2. We continue to ask continued support in always supporting high quality, sequential music programs in our schools, pre-K-12 taught by certified, qualified music educators. This year I have added the following list after the word sequential: “general music, band, orchestra chorus, modern band and emerging ensemble taught by qualified, certified music educators”. You should feel free to add any other areas of music education that take place in you schools to this list when you discuss Ask 2.
4. Ask 3. We must proudly “brag” about all NYSSMA has accomplished in the legislator’s district during the year(s). I’ve given a page, NYSSMA-Who we Are with many facts, but let them know specifically what you have been accomplishing in your districts, not only NYSSMA accomplishments but your own exciting initiatives. This is the part of your conversations where you should consider bringing a list of the dates of important concerts and events you will be producing and INVITING the legislator to them!!!! Sometimes, they just come to be the introductory MC and don’t stay for the whole event, but what politician wouldn’t want the opportunity to stand in front of a large group of their constituents in support of their children?

I could probably go on and on, but these are my thoughts after preparing all the documents for our Day in Albany, so I share them with you as you look at the pages and discuss your team strategies for your visits to your legislators. Wishing you all the best, and a wonderful, productive Day in Albany.

Best regards,
Alan

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