



NYSSMA®

A State Unit of NAfME, National Association for Music Education

Saturday July 18, 2020

Dear Chancellor Rosa and Interim Commissioner Tahoe:

I am writing with significant concern regarding one aspect of the NYS Department of Health's and New York State Education's Reopening Guidance. This document *recommends* twelve feet of separation "*while participating in activities projecting the voice (e.g. singing), playing a wind instrument, and during physical education.*" This recommendation is inconsistent with research that is being conducted around the world and if perceived as mandatory could be devastating to music programs around the state. If enforced, it would jeopardize both music education and the social emotional wellbeing of the students of New York. I was fortunate and honored to participate in all four regional meetings that consistently emphasized the importance of music education.

Research studies examining aerosol rates produced by wind instrumentalists, vocalists, and actors are currently being conducted at the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of Maryland. Preliminary results of these studies have just been released and they confirm that the CDC recommendations of six feet of social distancing are consistent in the classroom as well as in the music rehearsal room. NYSSMA has been a participating organization in these studies and I am happy to share these findings with you, the Board of Regents, and the Governor.

Music education is both social and emotional. Music incorporates both right brain and left brain learning. Music students learn and work together, forming deep and personal bonds with each other, while exploring a multitude of ways to express their emotions, expressions that are often deeper and more powerful than any other form of communication. If schools cut music programs because of these *recommendations*, there will be a loss for children that may never be recovered.

On behalf of the five thousand members of the New York State School Music Association, I want to express our fear that schools across New York State will not have the facilities to accommodate this unnecessary guideline for twelve feet of separation in the music classroom and will therefore abandon a program that is so very important to their students.

We agree that nothing is more important than the physical health of our students and teachers and are committed to providing schools with factual information to keep music students safe. We have built several resources for schools on our website and have referenced numerous studies being conducted around the world. Please click onto our [reference page](#) for information about music education and the studies and ad-hoc committee work we have done.

We believe that this one particular aspect of the guidelines from the Department of Health is unfounded, not based on fact or scientific research, and reckless. I urge you to discuss this with the Department of Health to find out how they came to make this recommendation. If you find it appropriate to do so, retract and revise that one particular guideline as it refers to music education in our schools. Interestingly, I found it baffling why the State Education document took out the verbiage "participating in gym classes" but kept the music portion intact. Please do

this for the benefit of the millions of New York students who will be dependent upon their music education when they return to school in the fall.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Board of Regents
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