



NYSSMA®

A State Unit of NAfME, National Association for Music Education

My dear friends and colleagues:

I hope this letter finds you as well as can be expected during these times. I thought it prudent to send you a quick letter detailing everything we are doing at the state level on your behalf. My daughter has started to read Harry Potter so I have been reading along with her and right now I wish her toy wand truly worked so I could magically make this all go away. But alas, I can't and the best I can do is advocate and work for you.

As a Superintendent I am working tirelessly to get our children back in the fall and give them an in-person education and of course one that is inclusive of music and the arts. That is not so simple right now because of the guidance from the New York State Health Department, Department of Education, and the Board of Regents. The Guidelines that have been presented are there to recommend and sometimes mandate what we need to do in order to open our doors. We have to protect our music programs more than ever and honestly, the interpretation of these guidelines is the component that could "inform" a superintendent to forgo music this year. **WE CAN NOT LET THAT HAPPEN.** Here are some important thoughts (some are mine and some are borrowed from great music thinkers across the state.)

1. As stated in my Cyber Notes I have written a letter to the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, and the Board of Regents asking them to rescind their recommendation of 12 feet distancing. The studies we have seen do not inform us that this is necessary. Remember these guidelines have recommendations and mandates and this one is a recommendation and your administration may need reminding of that.
2. Please remember we teach a curriculum and teach to the New York State Standards and we are integral to the well-rounded education the children of New York deserve. (Whether we are in person, hybrid, or remote). These curricula ensure an equitable and sequential standards-based instruction taught by highly qualified and certified music teachers.
3. Our ensembles may not look the same this year and we have to be empowered and still provide opportunities for children. As we teach to the standards the process may look different but the outcomes can be the same. When we are told they can't put 120 band students in the room we say, "of course not, but we still teach them the concepts needed to succeed." Each of us need to have solutions to create a place where children can have music education, social distance, and be safe and healthy. We can do this. The concert may or may not happen but the learning will continue. If you need assistance with this there is a great Q and A from the *Futures of Ensembles* NYSSMA Ad-hoc Committee which can be found on the home page of NYSSMA.org or [here](#).
4. Social and Emotional Learning is a concern across the state and music is integral to the SEL health of all children. These children are going to be moving less and struggling with stagnation in the classroom. For them to be socially and emotionally well they need music in their lives and in their education which again needs to be provided by a certified music teacher.

5. USE the advocacy contacts in your area. Another NYSSMA Ad-Hoc committee was created specifically for advocacy. We have assigned at least one person in each zone as the contact person when you need advocacy. The Ad-hoc committee meets regularly and are collaborating for all of the unknowns we are facing right now. If your person doesn't have an answer someone else will. It is a large think-tank of advocates working together to give you any tools needed to support you, your program, and your children. Their page is [here](#).
6. So what if you are not sure how to teach in this pandemic? Our last Ad-Hoc committee has been researching the many ways to teach in a different way. They have looked at the [Best Practices](#) in music education. They have links to hundreds of ideas of teaching outside of the box, teaching remotely, teaching in a hybrid model, and teaching with COVID-19 restrictions. Each of these groups has contact people to help guide you if have ANY questions.

You are your best defense. You know your art, you know your community, you know your administration, and you know your children. We are here to guide and help any step of the way and I hope this has helped you understand more of what we have been doing and will continue to do to guide you through this time.

Sincerely,

David

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