

# NYSSMA® Ad-Hoc Committees:

In the weeks that have passed since schools closed in mid-March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NYSSMA President Dr. David Brown has created three ad-hoc committees. These committees were tasked with the mission of addressing the needs of NYSSMA members as they began the process of navigating online learning, the future of ensembles and advocacy.

## Advocacy in the Time of COVID Ad Hoc Committee Report

**Lori Orestano-James** – NYSSMA State Advocacy Chair & Ad Hoc Co-Chair

**Mike Mastrangelo** – NYSSMA Advocacy Ad Hoc Co-Chair

**Russ Faunce** – NYSSMA President-Elect

**Advocacy**, as music educators, has always been a constant. It is part of what has always been necessary to keep our programs relevant to what we do for students. This pandemic has created new challenges as remote learning and budgetary concerns have become the norm in our schools. We find ourselves needing to fight for what should be a priority: ensuring quality, standards-based, well-rounded music education for ALL students. The difference is that we are now fighting for its survival.

When the advocacy ad-hoc committee was designed, committee members were asked to create and generate resources for all NYS music educators that would help struggling teachers adapt to the changing environment in New York State music education. Much thought went into what vision and goals would best serve our membership. Knowing our membership was facing diverse challenges due to the pandemic, we knew that many unique scenarios would need to be addressed.

The first order of business was to provide local support in the advocacy area. Consequently, zone advocates were chosen from each NYSSMA zone to serve as the local conduit to the advocacy committee.

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Local support was important because we realized that individual teacher and school district needs could be addressed better when there is a committee member from the same area. This committee member would have a better understanding of the politics and community than someone from outside of the area. Based on the feedback we have received thus far; we have found this process to be more productive and streamlined in aiding the communication needs of our NYSSMA members and NYSSMA member schools.

Secondly, we developed the tier approach with strong advocacy leadership at the helm.

- Advocacy Committee Co-Chair – Lori Orestano-James
- Advocacy Committee Co-Chair - Mike Mastrangelo
- NYSSMA Advisor - Michael Brownell
- NAfME Advisor - Marc Greene
- NYSSMA President-Elect – Russ Faunce

This was done so the zone advocacy representatives would have the support they needed to help serve music educators locally. Each Zone Advocacy Representative received training to make sure they felt confident in the information they were sharing. The vision was always to provide support and communication in the hard work that lay ahead. As schools planned and implemented structure as to what the 2020-2021 school year might look like, we have worked by your side to help you each navigate any rough waters.

The reality is, we need to make sure our voices are heard so that the value of what music education brings to our students can be understood by our administrators, fellow educators, parents, community members, Board of Education members, governmental leaders and most importantly, our students.

The advocacy committee is committed to:

- Remaining current with the guidelines so we can help answer your questions.
- Directing you to state and national advocacy resources
- Offering you guidance on how to dialogue with your administrators and stakeholders.
- Sharing alternative ways to deliver program that remains compliant to what is required.

In short, we support all music educators with advice and guidance on how to keep New York State music programs strong.

We remain committed to:

- Safeguarding Music Education in New York State.
- Providing guidance so you have the information you need to educate yourselves and others as to best assist your district in its needs and options.
- Making sure ALL students receive what they are legally entitled to, no matter what model (in-person, remote, or hybrid) is being implemented by your district.

Lastly, the advocacy committee conducted a survey to find out what concerns are facing you as we move forward. The outcome of that survey will be presented in the October SMN. Until then, remember to engage students as best you can, visit the website for updates and information and, of course, reach out to our committee members to assist you in any way we can. And most of all, stay safe and healthy. We will get through this together.

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# Best Practices in Music Education Ad Hoc Committee Report

**Robin DeSantis**– NYSSMA® 3rd Vice President

President Dr. David Brown asked me to oversee the NYSSMA 2020-2021 Best Practices in Music Education Ad Hoc Committee, along with Co-chairs Gina Costanza (NYC) and Meghan Cabral (Zone 10). The establishment of this committee brought together music educators from all 15 zones for representation throughout the state.

The purpose of this committee was to create a library of resources for music teachers across the state. Our goal is to provide access to high-quality lessons, activities, articles, and websites to help inspire music teachers no matter what teaching model their school or district adopts this school year.

We hope you will be able to call upon this resource library as you teach in-person, with a hybrid/blended learning model, or remotely this year. You may notice that many of our resources are geared toward general music or core music. Many of us may not have performances, assemblies, or concerts this school year. We view this as an opportunity to recruit new students into our programs and for us to focus on the New York State Arts Learning Standards that are sometimes overlooked while focusing on concert repertoire.

Choir teachers may now have the time to focus on teaching concepts like expression using American Sign Language or teaching their choir members how to read an octavo. Orchestra teachers may now have the time to focus on helping students enhance their musicianship through ear training or by having students compare and contrast performances by different string ensembles. Traditional band and modern band teachers may now have the time to focus on composing music using programs like Soundtrap or to build community after the trauma of a lost concert season.

General music or core music teachers may use this library to help them try something new or to help their students explore different genres of music. The library of resources is ever growing, so be sure to check back frequently.

Our committee is an amazing group of music educators, and I want to thank all of them for all the continued hard work. The committee would like to thank Samantha McShane and Stephanie Jones for all of their knowledge and help in the music technology world. But, most of all, we would like to thank Kris Gilbert for building this wonderful user-friendly website. You can view our website at the link below.

<https://sites.google.com/view/nyssmabestpractices/home?fbclid=IwAR241NH7fqqGO7DRHOTyi6Cy3rv6IBZ-jAn2Ky8bNSqMpC8jqcWhxt26bO-o>

Thank you to all the music educators who kept your music programs going during a difficult time for our profession. We appreciate every little thing you did to make that possible. We wish you continued success in the coming school year. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to the co-chairs of the committee or myself, Robin DeSantis.

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# The Future of Ensembles Ad Hoc Committee Report

**Michael Salzman** – NYSSMA® Immediate Past-President

In May 2020, President David Brown asked me to co-chair an ad hoc committee that would look at research around ensemble practices in the era of COVID-19. I decided to set up separate subcommittees for band, orchestra and chorus. Dr. Brown asked for representation on the committees to come both from the Executive Council and the membership at large.

The following people accepted our invitation to serve as co-chairs for their respective areas of expertise: Monique Campbell-Retzlaff (chorus), David Beck (orchestra) and Zone 5 Representative Jonathan Hunkins (Band). In consultation with each of the co-chairs, we reached out to other NYSSMA® members to serve on the subcommittees. Those members were: Band: Michael Struzik and Michael Cordero; Chorus: Norman Zogaib and Carrie Zuglelder; Orchestra: Catherine Birke and Hana Walton.

Each subcommittee was charged with the task of reviewing research that was being conducted around the world and to identify questions that they felt would be most pressing on the minds of NYSSMA® members.

## Scope of work

Collectively, we decided to present our findings in the form of a Q&A document, starting with the most important question: Is it safe to hold musical ensemble rehearsals during the global pandemic? Our work helped us to reach the conclusion that while it would be impossible to completely eliminate all risks, there were many steps that could be taken to significantly mitigate those risks.

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# The Future of Ensembles Ad Hoc Committee Report *continued*

Our work continued on to look at aspects of ensemble performance such as instrument cleaning, social distancing, mask usage, room usage, ventilation, scheduling, bell covers, aerosols and droplets, sharing instruments, and much more. In finding little information available regarding the cleaning and disinfecting of string instruments, the orchestra subcommittee reached out to numerous luthiers to draw upon their expertise. They put together a document reporting their findings and linked it to the committee's final document.

We pushed ourselves very hard to do a significant amount of work during the month of June because we anticipated that school districts would begin working on their re-opening plans in July and believed that our findings could be used to inform decisions related to ensembles in our schools. In the end, our work seemed to be very well received and appreciated. We consider the document we developed to be a "living document" as we continue to update it as more research studies release their findings. The document can be found in the COVID-19 Resources section of the NYSSMA® web page.

I want to thank Dr. Brown for entrusting me with this work, and I want to thank each of the co-chairs and committee members for their tremendous efforts.

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