



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Service

Dr. David M. Brown – NYSSMA® President

Happy Holidays to everyone! This article is dedicated to “Service.” So often people have talked to me about my journey and how I became the president of one of the largest state organizations, and, honestly, I am not sure sometimes. But one thing I do know is that I asked a lot of questions. I became involved and I volunteered. My good friend and colleague, Michael Brownell, Past President of NYSSMA®, was our Zone Rep when I moved to Zone 3. “What can I do to help?” I asked. “Oh, there is so much to do,” he said, and I got busy. Thank you, Michael for the nudge.

So often people will say, “Oh, you are one of them,” but truly I am not. I have gone on a strange road to this success. The first sitting school district superintendent to be NYSSMA® president. The first president from Zone 8. The first, the first, the first. Not really. That old adage, “I put on my shoes one at a time like everyone else” is how I live. That is why I hoped to be the Membership President. Not to increase membership (of course every music educator should be a member of his or her professional organization) but to get the voice of the membership. Alas, now I think I will be remembered as the COVID President. So be it.

Through COVID I think I actually have engaged the membership even more. Our Ad-Hoc Committees have members at large. Finance Committee has a member at large, and shifting my chairs to increase participation. When I became president, I wanted to make sure people did not sit on multiple committees. Not because I didn't want their great insights but because I wanted more insights. I may have bruised a couple of people asking them to step down if they had multiple positions, but I did it to get more people involved. Each person who was asked to step down from one committee is still on a different one.

So how do you get involved? What

can you do? That is what this article is about. Here are some ideas and places where your talents and passions can be shared. It could take the entire *School Music NEWS* if I reviewed everything, so this is a highlight. Maybe there is a committee that doesn't even exist. If so, let me know and we can consider it for the future.

NYSSMA® Manual

So often people ask me, “How do I get involved with the manual?” That is easy; you make suggestions. If there is something you would like considered for a future manual, all you have to do is e-mail Katie Struzik, our manual chair, at manual@nyssma.org.



I spoke to her earlier this week and she said she takes every recommendation seriously and will forward it to our committee chairs. Maybe you would like to be on the committee to sift through new music. If that is the case, let your voice be known. You would reach out to Katie and let her know your desire to help.

We are working on diversifying the manual. What does that mean? Exactly what it sounds like. What are we lacking? Composers of color? Of course! Gender? Yes. I remember wanting to do an entire concert of female composers with my treble choir and struggling. We are looking at every angle of inclusion and representation.

NYSSMA® Awards

Did you know that NYSSMA® gives out awards every year at our winter conference? My school district was awarded the Presidential Citation for Excellence a

few years ago. The community, Board of Education, and staff were honored with this designation, and people talked about it at concerts and public events. One strong component of advocacy is to get your name out in your community, and this is one of those great ways to put your school, teachers, and program on the map.

I have heard great programs in my years and I have told the teacher or director, “You should apply for an award.” Often, they say they couldn't compete with large schools who are designated. Hogwash, I say. It is not about size, it is about quality. Never underestimate your talents and hard work. For a list of all awards you can link to <https://www.nyssma.org/committees/awards-and-recognition-committee/>

There are two new ones this year so make sure you come back to check the page in the future. If you are interested in sitting on the committee that reviews applications, reach out to Sue Weber at awards@nyssma.org or myself as we are looking for a couple of new members for that committee.

Become a NYSSMA® adjudicator!

As I continue this article, I woke up this morning reflecting on my path in NYSSMA®. Teacher, adjudicator, all-state adjudicator, all-state selection committee, zone representative, arts administrator, COMEA Chair, and President. If you asked me 32 years ago, I would say, “No way,” but I kept working and dedicating. You can do this too. Find a place that excites you.

One the greatest things I did was to give back to my profession by becoming an adjudicator and, honestly, I became a better high school choral/vocal teacher because of it. I remember my first year in DeRuyter sending students to do NYSSMA® solos and calling everyone I know to make sure I was ready. Once I became an adjudicator my students did so much better because I was part of the process. I

learned by doing. Isn't that how we teach? If you are interested, reach out to our Director of Adjudicators, Michael Robertson.

Curriculum Committee

I love curriculum and standards. As part of advocacy I see curriculum as a direct correlation. So often people use the word CORE against us. According to ESSA, we are core. I took the word out of our vernacular in school. Our job is to educate the well-rounded child inclusive of music and the arts. But you need to understand the standards and teach a curriculum. We can be our own worst enemy.

If you love curriculum, reach out to Fred Weingarten our Curriculum Committee Chair to get involved. All of these contacts are available on our website. Know your standards so you can speak your standards.

Speaking of the website – use it. Have you spent time just navigating it? The most used part is the jobs section. Did you know anyone can post a job there? What do you understand about our website? If you have questions once you navigate it, you can reach out to our Web Editor, Terry Nigrelli, at webeditor@nyssma.org.

A place for everyone

NYSSMA® is a place for all music educators. Another good reason to navigate our website. I am asked by many people, "What can NYSSMA® do for me?" Tons. We are here for every level and every genre. We work with NAFME to provide opportunities and learning experiences for all.

My point here is classroom music. Our annual conferences have an entire portion of the conference for our elementary teachers, and we provide special elementary mini-conferences and, of course, The World's Largest Concert.

Our Classroom Music Committee, which is chaired by Kerry Mero, would love to hear from you and what is happening in your classroom. We have an entire section in the upper left-hand side of the home page of our website detailing how to teach in the pandemic (Best Practices). If you would like to be a voice in classroom music, reach out to myself or Kerry. We are always looking for new voices for future openings.

People always say, "Is NYSSMA® just about festival and conferences?" Hell, no! We are so much more and will continue to reach out of our boundaries. Classroom music is looking at modern band, electronic music, standards implementation Pre-K-12 and much, much more.

NYSSMA® collegiate membership

NYSSMA® has one of the largest components of collegiate involvement. We actually have a voting member of council from the collegiate contingency. We know how important it is to hear from the future music educators in all policy procedures and implementations. If you are a college student reading this, it is time to get involved NOW. Be part of your professional organization today and forever.

We need to know what is going on in your world as you prepare to enter the profession. You can reach out to Dr. Keith Koster, Collegiate Advisor, or even better, to Daria Barteldt, NYSSMA® Collegiate President. Make sure you read her page in this edition too.

NYSSMA® Composition and Improvisation Committee

Did you know we have an entire committee on composition and improvisation? Dr. Robert Deemer chairs this committee and has a long list of college and public school members creating ways for children to learn and show their talents in composition.

Do you have a student composer? There is a way for students to have their music recognized. Maybe you don't know how to start a composition program but have a passion for it, just reach out and get some tips for starting. Information is on our website.

NYSSMA® Constitution Committee

Our Constitution is in the beginning of our NYSSMA® Manual. Laurie Faunce is our Constitution Chair and we regularly update when times change and the need comes into focus. If you have any input, suggestions, or an interest, reach out to Laurie. E-mails are all in the masthead in the back of the *School Music NEWS*.

GRC and Advocacy

Speaking of language, law and the con-

stitution. Did you know we have a Government Relations Committee (GRC)? Every March is Music in Our School's Month and includes Joe Sugar Day. This is when our amazing GRC Chair Alan Orloff follows in the great stride of the original GRC Chair, Joe Sugar.

I know Joe would be so proud of what Alan continues to do. We are near our 50th anniversary of the historic Joe Sugar Day (2022). We need you! I sit here writing this with three days until what is most likely the most influential election of my lifetime. Fittingly, that is what we do every Joe Sugar Day. Fight for our lives with our legislators in Albany.

Now more than ever we have to be a united front and fight for music education. We are seeing devastation around the state, which is why I created our Advocacy Ad-Hoc Committee to help in all 15 zones. Please check out that section of the *School Music NEWS* detailing the advocacy happening in New York and stay tuned to hear about our 49th Joe Sugar Day in March of 2021. If you have immediate need in reference to advocacy, you can reach out to Lori Orestano-James, our Advocacy Chair.

So, you can see we want your voice and have a large number of ways to get involved (trust me, this is just a small number). This idea that NYSSMA® is only for the officers or council could not be further from the truth. It is one of my strongest platforms. We need and I want your voice. That is why every article says if you need anything or just want to tell me something, my door is open. E-mail me at president@nyssma.org Don't be shy; be involved.

I know how busy you are, trust me. I wasn't sure how I could manage my presidency with my superintendency and several boards that I sit on, but it is possible because I love music and love music education even more. We are a team to support and defend the future of music education. Let's do it together! ||

"Music enhances the education of our children by helping them to make connections and broadening the depth with which they think and feel. If we are to hope for a society of culturally literate people, music must be a vital part of our children's education." – Yo-Yo Ma, Cellist