

Dr. David M. Brown – NYSSMA® President



# Make Them Hear You

"Go out and tell your story, let it echo far and wide, make them hear you" is the beginning lyrics of this song from *Ragtime*. This article is littered with songs from musical theatre as I speak about our organization, my philosophies, goals, and dreams for our future.

I write this article with 7/8ths of my Presidency in the rearview mirror. This is my final article, and I am humbled to have been elected to do this work. We all know it is not what I expected but I felt your strength as I led us through these strange two years.

As I have said in all facets of my life, We Are Better Together, and this is one thing I want to leave you with more than any other. It is so easy in the hustle and bustle to do it alone, but please reach out to each other or your professional organization and Do It Together and Raise Your Voice. You need people around you in order to prosper. I could not have succeeded without the officers these past two years. Thank you to all of them.

### Our progress continues

Right or wrong, I have given you my "everything," and I hope we look back and see this as such. At the *End of the Day*, we can only ever ask of ourselves that we give our heart and soul. You do this with your children each and every day. Music teachers give a part of themselves. Our passions are presented in our lessons. That is why we chose music, or why music chose us. So please, shout from the mountains and *Spread the Love Around*.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) were words that have come to the surface these past two years. I have

created a task force to look at our organization through the lens of DEI. The committee is in its infancy and is small (seven members). We will be updating council in December on our work and hope to get a statement out to the membership in the near future.

I will be handing this committee over to Mr. Faunce and he will take the reins. He and I have discussed the future of DEI and its importance and I am confident he will be taking it forward.

*We will always be here for you*

Our committee will probably grow once we have our charge. Stay tuned for more information on DEI. This is so important and we will not rush it, but know that we will be *Putting It Together* with many voices. I encourage you to continue to look through this lens as you educate our children.

When I walked into this role, the newest manual was already in process. Because of the pandemic, we postponed the manual for at least one year. I had an opportunity to look through this lens and ask our NYSSMA® Manual Chairperson to work with her committee members to look at our new materials and be purposeful in adding good music but music selections that are from underrepresented composers, and remember there are many facets to what is underrepresented.

We are also creating a committee to look at a digital manual in our future. While a digital manual was something I was hoping to have started, my plate was full with other organizational needs, so I send this one off to the future as well. But know it is on our radar and we have heard you all and we will start this work in 2022 and I expect (no promises) that the new manual could be our last paper-only manual.

### Make a difference

Please, please, please get involved. *Raise Your Voice*. Start at the local level, become a leader in the county, run for Zone Representative, or even run for President of NYSSMA®. It is one of the proudest moments of my life. There is so much you can do with and for this organization. *Go the Distance*.

Did you know there are several annual awards that are given each year? Check out the website or e-mail our Awards Chair, Sue Weber, at [awards@nyssma.org](mailto:awards@nyssma.org). You can make a difference and showcase a person or school. Without You, there is truly no purpose to this work and organization. Ask your colleagues in your buildings and in your counties if they are members? This organization has been working tirelessly to advocate for music education, especially through the pandemic. We will always be here for you. It isn't easy though; it is hard work, and takes us all. Join us! *I Want to Make Magic*, and now invite you to be the magician's assistant or, like I said, become the magician.

I hope you will allow me to spend some time in this article to say thank you to several people. And if I miss

someone, I thank you here globally. It is my last chance to have a voice and I just want to take this opportunity. So many people allowed me access to this presidency, and these two years have taken me away from so many other aspects of my life. Understand, I am not saying I wish I didn't, I am just saying I am honored and privileged and still sometimes pinch myself that you all voted for me and hope I fulfilled that trust you placed in me.

This journey is and was not possible without the *Spark of Creation* from Sr. Marian Dimino who was my high school music teacher who gave me the passion and desire to make music an important aspect of my life. To the Board of Education in DeRuyter who allowed me to be your President. I have been working two full-time jobs and I hope neither place ever felt me giving more, or less, than the other. It was my intention to give 100% to both.

To Sandy, my administrative assistant, you are amazing and saw and heard me give that 200% and I could not do it without you. Sandy, you also were my strength all those 14-hour days when we juggled NYSSMA® and DeRuyter. Melissa, Sophia, and Nick are my rock. Can you imagine being a Superintendent, President of NYSSMA®, and a husband and father of a 12-year-old and 10-year-old? Nope, it is not possible but it happened because of the strength, love, and support of Dr. Melissa Brown and our children. You gave me this possibility and support. You are three amazing people and I love you! They never stopped believing in me.

To my friend and colleague, Russ Faunce, I wish you all the best in your presidency. You are going to do incredible things. Michael Salzman, Immediate Past President, left me with tools and understandings that I needed to navigate these last two years. I hope I have given Russ what he needs, but truly he has the tools to fly! Russ, I will be here for anything you need and as it is said in *Candide*, continue to Make Our Garden Grow.

## The fight continues

Finally, there is so much I am sure I have left undone and unsaid. You have received my heart and soul and sometimes I may have been too honest, but know that I have been dedicated to changing music. As I said in my first article, I have fought for everything. Music can be a challenge, music (especially vocal/choral music) can be considered non-essential or non-curricular. Music is Curricular. I am the curricular leader in my district and never allow someone to say it is less than anything else. I will never stop speaking my truth and advocating for music education.

I have no idea what my next step is but know I am always going to fight for this incredible journey of music education. For any one of the thousands of students that I have taught, and more important that have taught me, *You, Are My Children*, as sung in *Fame: the Musical*. No words were ever so true.

To the membership of NYSSMA®, *Thank You for the Music!* Best wishes to one of the greatest organizations. Music is one of the oldest forms of communication and has given me opportunities I never would have imagined. Keep singing NYSSMA® and keep bringing the joy of music to hundreds of thousands of New York State children.

Every article these past two years ended with a quote from a famous person. I asked my superintendent colleagues to send me a quote about music education in their districts. Here are a few of them. Music changes lives, music creates opportunities, music educates, but mostly, *Music is Eternal!*

*In all the history of human existence, music has been and will forever continue to be the quintessence of life's remarkable journey. For each of us emanate, whether in happiness and joy or sadness and loss, an accompaniment to our story that in summation is the opus of our existence. The culmination of all that we are is indeed*

*heard and felt in the musical masterpiece of one's life work. To me, music education fills the soul with the courage to live each day that my symphony will be one of hope and love. Hallowed are the teachers of music for the solemn pride that is theirs to share with the world, this magnificent embodiment of being alive.*

Michael Eiffe, Superintendent of  
Chittenango CSD

*Throughout all of the challenges, you have been there for us and for our students. I am forever grateful for your leadership in the performing arts. During some of the most challenging times in my life, music has helped to revive my spirit and keep me going. At the end of last school year, our choral director and instrumental music director were able to pull off a brief concert to showcase the work of our students. I remember standing in the back of the auditorium as our chorus sang Coming Home and I felt a sense of calm, peace, and relief that we could safely return to performances and celebrate the performing arts.*

Jeremy Belfield, Superintendent of  
LaFayette Schools

*By providing high-quality music programs in our schools, we fuel the creative spirit of our students and offer a positive outlet for emotions. As a result, we round out what could otherwise be a very angular education experience.*

Melinda McCool, Superintendent of  
McGraw Schools

*Music was what kept me grounded in high school. My choral teacher, David Rudari, had such an impact on my life that I will forever keep the arts alive in any district I serve in.*

Rebecca Stone, Superintendent of  
Marathon Schools