

Cover Story

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can't afford to rent or buy an instrument. Like Shauberger, Hauer says it helps the dealership as well as the students. "A school board will support a bigger band, so the more instruments you can get into the hands of kids, the stronger the program will be," he said.

Macro-management

The success of music programs, and of local music dealers, rests on more than the current popularity of music programs. A number of dealers stressed that dealers need to play a role in preparing the next generation of music educators, getting them ready for all aspects of running a successful music program.

Road reps from the Draisen Edwards New School of Music teach methods courses at local universities, concentrating on music store and administration relations.

Heid said he addresses classes at about five colleges every year, and thinks it's something every local music dealership should consider. Too often, he said, graduating music educators know all about theory and performing, but nothing about operating successfully in the modern school environment. "Some of

the most important things about surviving in today's world, they are never taught," he said. "They don't know how to do business." Heid suggested courses dealing with such mundane but vital issues as filling out purchase orders.

Taking on the school board

But what if, despite mentoring and recruitment drives and instrument donations, one of your school boards goes ahead and puts a music program on the chopping block? Then, it's time to seek professional help.

The Internet has a number of sites offering a wealth of information, and ammunition, to launch and win a campaign to save a local music program. Some of the best are listed in the info box on page 14.

Before going up against the board, rally some forces. The most determined budget cutters will find it difficult to face down a booster club made up of the parents of enthusiastic and dedicated music students.

Hickey's Music Center in Ithaca, New York, got involved when one of its local districts was considering cutting the music budget. Co-owner David Zimet said they used information gleaned from Internet sites to put together a battle plan. The dealership then underwrote

mailings to organize parents into booster groups ready to lobby the school board in support of the music program.

One of the districts brought in Dr. John Benham, a well-respected music education advocate, to address the board. Benham provided a cost-benefit analysis demonstrating that by the time it had replaced a music program with the teachers and classroom space needed to occupy such a large number of students, the district would realize no savings from the cut. It worked, according to Zimet. "A combination of public outcry and showing them the numbers—that it would cost more to eliminate the music program than to keep it—saved the program," Zimet said.

Haggerty's Musicworks of Rapid City, South Dakota, also worked with Benham and parents to save a local music program. "Benham explains that it's fiscally and educationally irresponsible to eliminate school music," said Tim Haggerty, president of Haggerty's Musicworks. Benham showed the board that they would save no money by eliminating the music program, and that their test scores would go down if they went through with the cuts.

"We were successful," Haggerty said. "We overthrew the old-regime school board and replaced it with a pro-music school board five years ago. Now the topic doesn't come up at the school board meetings anymore. There are school band directors and pro-music parents on board. We overcame the coaches." •

Bring in a professional

Dr. John Benham is a renowned expert in the field of music education advocacy. He sometimes is available to address school boards that are considering cutting back or eliminating music programs. Benham may be contacted at: (651) 635-8015 or j-benham@bethel.edu

His blog runs on Support Music and can be found at <http://www.supportmusic.com/drjohn/archive/2006-01-24.mhtml>