

Part 1

SUPPORT AND AWARENESS

THREE REASONS YOUR MUSIC PROGRAM IS VULNERABLE TO CUTS

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In the face of what appears to be a national trend to eliminate or reduce music programs, music teachers, parents, advocates and students are finding themselves without jobs or opportunities in music education. Unfortunately, notice of cuts in most cases is either without prior warning or with so little time that it appears there is no way to prevent or reverse the decision.

Listed below are several attitude types which indicate the potential vulnerability of the music program in your school district.

The first of these types is *denial*. This person is easily identified. His character generally conveys an attitude which says, "It can't/won't happen in our school district, because . . ."

" . . . we have a very supportive administration."

" . . . our district has a history of strong arts programs."

" . . . our program is guaranteed by teacher 'prep' time."

" . . . our district is in a state of growth."

" . . . our school board members/superintendent all have children in the music program."

" . . . something will happen to save the program."

" . . . the board/administration is just bluffing or trying to get an excess tax levy passed."

" . . . our district is adopting the site-based

management model and they will help prevent music cuts."

The second attitude type is *apathy*. This person is often difficult to find because he is normally not present or participating. This person will probably exhibit either or both attitudes from *denial* and *resignation* and may include teachers as well as community members. They often convey the attitude, "I don't care," but may really be saying . . .

" . . . I am only a year or two from retiring anyway."

" . . . I won't be cut because I have too much seniority."

" . . . I don't have time to get involved in another project."

" . . . I'll just find another job."

" . . . If I help, I may end up having to serve on a committee."

" . . . There are others who will be much more able to help than I."

" . . . If we help pass a levy, the school board/administration will just put all the money into teacher/administrator salaries anyway and we may still lose the program."

The final attitude type is *resignation*. This person often fails to get involved because of his sense of powerlessness, as expressed in the statement, "There is nothing I can do, because . . ."

" . . . the school board/superintendent will never listen to us. They just let us vent our feelings and then do what they want anyway."

" . . . it won't help. The school board is just a rubber stamp for the administration."

" . . . it's too late now. The decision is already made."

" . . . there really is an enormous shortage of funding."

" . . . our district is going to the middle school concept and there will no longer be any room in the schedule for music."

" . . . our district is reducing the number of periods in the day."

" . . . our district/state is increasing the graduation requirements."

Read all of the "excuses" for non-involvement listed above again, this time taking notice how many of them are (self-) adult-centered. In fact, few of them really demonstrate a student-centered concern for opportunities in music education.

Lest this all seem too cynical, please understand that these are statements which are used regularly in the face of music cuts. In the last ten years, while we have stood and watched, 44 orchestra programs were eliminated in the state of Minnesota and there are 60,000 less students in instrumental music programs in California because of program cuts there. The scenario is becoming too common around the country.

It is time to discard our reactive, adult-centered position and move into the pro-active, student-centered realm. As teachers, we must encourage/remind parents and advocates that the school district really belongs to them. We need to train them in school politics and assist them in returning policy to the people to ensure student-centered decisions.

You may even be able to demonstrate that cutting the music program will have a reverse economic effect. In other words, the long-term budgetary effect of cutting a music program will be more costly to the district than saving it!

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