

The Business Side of Teaching School Music: Maximizing Fiscal Opportunities

Whether you are a supervisor or a one-person music program, *money is the fuel that keeps the program going*. Try incorporating these strategies and procedures *to maximize your fiscal resources*.

Tips for Community Fund-Raising

- **Make sure the community is well-informed of the need.** A preview article in the local newspaper documenting the need for additional funds for your program is very valuable. If the funds are for a specific purpose (uniforms, travel, instruments, etc.), it is important that the community knows exactly how the money will be spent and that the need is well-substantiated. An article with a picture is great to draw the reader's attention.
- **Make provisions for recognizing donors.** Donors can be recognized with inserts to concert programs or ads in the newspapers. Be creative. Donations can be made "in memory" or "in honor" of someone. Thank you notes sent to donors by students are a must! People are more likely to contribute again if they are thanked the first time.
- **Try to find a unique fund-raising idea.** Lots of groups sell fruit, candy, wrapping paper, etc., but don't be afraid to get more creative. One high school instrumental program held a raffle in which a \$1,000 cash prize was awarded at the beginning of each halftime show. It was a great way to start each performance, and the publicity was wonderful.
- **Ask a good cross-section of parents to help.** You cannot organize and hold a fund-raiser on your own. Make sure all segments of the community are included in the process. Everyone needs to feel included.
- **Do not conflict with other fund drives in the community.** Communication is the key. You do not want to cause bad feelings by "stepping on toes." Do not duplicate an idea already used by other organizations. Everyone will gain by working together.
- **Don't forget.** Your booster group should do more than fund-raising. Booster group members can hand out music education information to other community members, give a presentation before a civic group or help in organizing the activities mentioned in the advocacy materials. Information kept to yourself doesn't help anyone—including your students.

Grants

- **Make sure you are getting the full story** as to who can apply for a grant opportunity or for the grant dollars received by your district. A grant to improve reading, or for interdisciplinary instruction, may be able to be used for music. You must know how your content area fits into the bigger academic picture, or how it can support other academic areas. Be especially cognizant of technology funding opportunities.

- **Read the specifications carefully** to see how you can and cannot use funds.
- **Answer the grant questions concisely** and specifically. Follow instructions and meet deadlines.
- **If your district doesn't have a grant writer** and the task falls to you, work with a colleague who has been successful—a grant mentor!

Important Program Practices

- **Maintain a detailed**, accurate and up-to-date inventory of instruments, uniforms and your music library.
- **Have a written instrument and equipment maintenance and replacement program.** This is best accomplished by having a 3–5 year plan, which includes annual amounts for repair budgets, identifying instruments that need to be replaced due to age or condition, and new instruments that need to be added due to growth or changes in the emphasis of your program. The plan should be based on the educational needs and priorities for the music department. Identifying real needs will not only facilitate expenditure of public funds for the program, but will also prepare you to address your program needs when private funds may be available.
- **Consolidate resources and share** within the district or across districts. Partnering with others can make sure you all have the equipment you need. Many grant opportunities require such partnerships or cooperative efforts.

Additional Resources for Music Programs

Parental and Community Support

These are invaluable resources.

- **Don't take this support for granted.** Thank people for their support, including their contributions of time, both publicly and privately. Work to get more people involved to spread out the work equally. Otherwise, the same few will do all the work and burnout will set in. Don't forget to ask parents who no longer have children in the program to continue to support your current students' efforts.

- **Think long-term.** Build relationships and be careful to not burn bridges. You never know what you will need, when and from whom.

Working with Your School Music Dealer

- **The goal of a committed school music dealer is to help music educators** build strong music programs. Collaboration between the school music dealer and music educator can enhance the quality, size and importance of a music program, thereby leading to success.
- **View your school music dealer as a resource.** Some services often provided to music educators and music programs include volume discounts, music folders, quality and timely repair service, emergency loaners, advocacy materials, regular visits and insight into the “ins and outs” of the workings of the school district and community.

More Resources to Access

- **School District Initiatives** (as an example, link into your district's technology program)
- **Booster and Parent Groups**
- **Concert Revenue**
- **Paid Performances**
- **Sale of Tapes and Videos** (Know the copyright law.)
- **Curriculum Consultation for Other Districts**
- **Sale of Equipment** (Check district procedures.)
- **Donations: Parents and Community**
- **Connect to Your Parents' Networks** (Many businesses have foundations that as employees, parents can access.)
- **Service Clubs**

Want more tips for keeping music strong in your schools?
Visit the site devoted to all things music advocacy: www.supportmusic.com

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