

Annual Reports

John Benham

(Editor's Note: Successful public school music education program advocates continually highlight the positive impact these programs have on students. Now more than ever, consider presenting an annual report to administrators and school board members. When done on an annual basis, it offers an opportunity to highlight achievements and evaluate progress made. This article by Dr. John Benham elaborates.)

There are two primary reasons why your music education coalition should create an annual report about the music education programs in your school system:

1. **Marketing:** Developing an Annual Report is simply the best way to keep your administration and school board informed about the importance and status of your music program. It can help establish the validity of music education as a core value in the community.
2. **Assessment:** An Annual Report will give you a more accurate picture of what your music education program really is accomplishing. It will provide you with the information you need to move your program forward.

What Are The Key Elements of An Annual Report?

Your report should contain information on various components of the program, achievements, and any issues related to the current status of the program and its potential for growth. Some suggestions are categorized below.

Faculty

- List significant recognition of individual faculty such as awards, honors, publications, years-of-service milestones
- Identify the number of FTE in each area of the curriculum (See [CounterPoint November 7, 2005](#))
- Summarize the student-faculty ratios in each area of the curriculum (See [CounterPoint April 2, 2008](#); [May 1, 2008](#))

Curriculum (See [CounterPoint January 24, 2006](#))

- List significant accomplishments of performance groups: festivals, contests, tours
- List significant accomplishments of individual student performers: solo and ensemble contests, scholarships to graduating seniors
- Summarize general academic success of music students: honor roll, average G.P.A., SAT/ACT scores
- Summarize student completion of music curriculum competencies
- Summarize the performance events of the year: co-curricular, extra-curricular

Student Participation (See [CounterPoint November 28, 2005](#))

- Summarize student enrollments in music classes: general music, band, choir, orchestra
- Summarize the average class sizes in each area of the curriculum
- Identify percentages of student participation by grade and school
- Identify attrition rates that exceed 15% between any two grades as areas of concern
- Summarize results of exit interviews of student who drop music performance classes
- Summarize the average class sizes in each area of the curriculum

Economics (See [CounterPoint April 2, 2008](#); [May 1, 2008](#))

- Determine the FTE value of the average music performance teacher
- Summarize the expenditure of budgetary funds
- Demonstrate need for budgetary funds in the coming year

Music Coalition (See [CounterPoint – December 1, 2008](#))

- The Administrative Liaison Committee of the Music Coalition should prepare the report in cooperation with the music teachers.
- The Administrative Liaison Committee should present an abbreviated oral report at a public meeting of the school board, based on the formal written report.
- The report should summarize the activities of the Music Coalition and its contributions to the district, including fundraising.

Finally – don't forget to express your appreciation to the administration, board and community for accepting the report and for their past support for the program!

-- Dr. John Benham is a leading music education advocate, consultant and teacher, who served two terms on a Minnesota school board of education.

In [Part 1 of this article on reverse economics](#), I showed you how to collect and analyze district-wide data related to student participation in music programs. Many school board members assume that eliminating elementary music education programs will ease present day budget crunches, as well as longer-term budgetary constraints, with little detrimental effect on student participation in music in the upper grade levels.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

We already know the intrinsic value of music education for students: this article shows that maintaining strong elementary music education programs offers long-term fiscal value as well.

Extensive national case studies indicate that when the grade 5 elementary instrumental and/or choral feeder system is eliminated, the subsequent decline in student participation at the secondary level will be a minimum of 65%. Within four years this decline in participation is

incurred at the high school level. [Note: This has to do with the well-known concept of "windows of learning" opportunities that reach their maximum level between ages 10 and 12. See the last line on the chart from [Part 1, Student Participation in Band](#), (7 - "Eliminate Grade 5,") to see the anticipated impact on band enrollment in subsequent grades.]

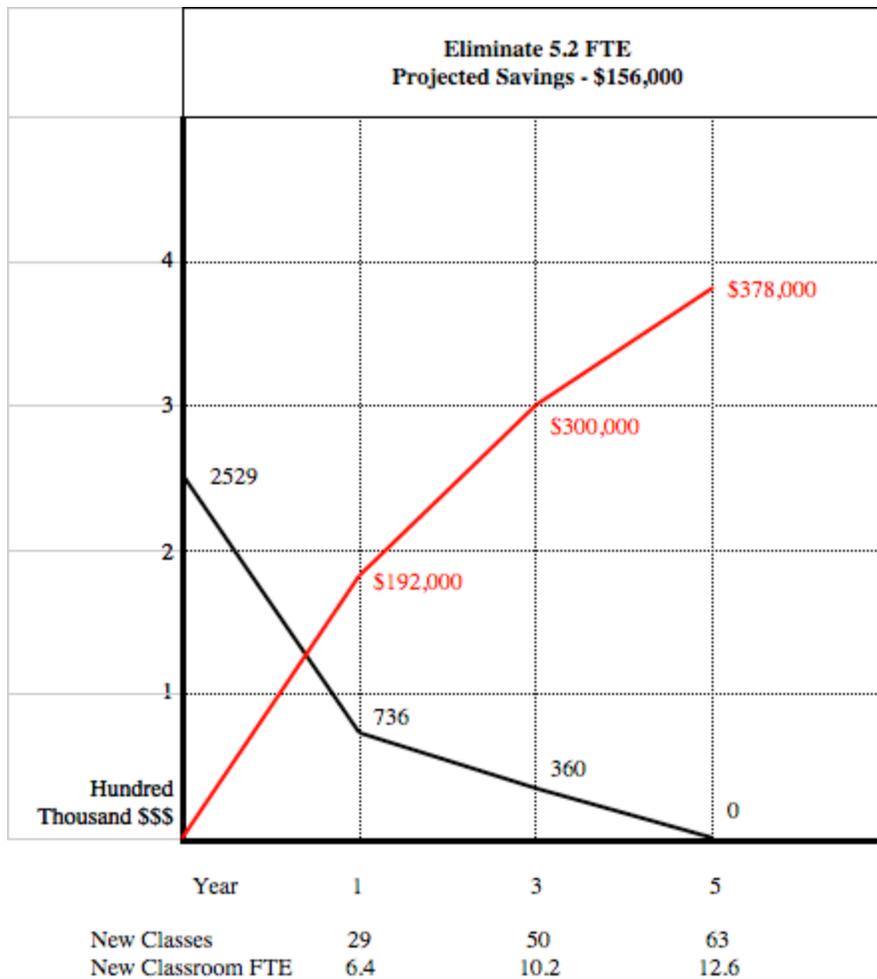
Any circumstance that causes a decline in student enrollment or prevents students from participation will have a negative cost effect on the district budget. In the chart above, the anticipated long term loss of 380 band students (caused by the proposed elimination of grade 5 band) would necessitate the eventual employment of 3.3 FTE secondary non-music class room teachers (380 students/116 student load average), while maintaining an appropriate number of music performance FTE to continue the program of those students still electing participation.

The elimination of an elementary music performance "pull-out" program only delays the reverse economic effect for a year or two until those (former or potential) students reach the secondary school level. At that point, the temporary "solution" becomes the cause of an even deeper financial crisis.

Eliminating Music Programs: The Financial Effect

A second case study, represented in the chart below, illustrates the financial effect of cutting music programs. In this district the administrative proposal was to eliminate 70% of the orchestra staff, and 48% of the band staff (initially equated to 7.8 FTE). However, the district indicated that they would only cut 5.2 FTE band and orchestra positions for an anticipated annual savings of \$156,000 (based on an average salary figure of \$30,000, excluding benefits.)

What they didn't do is calculate the impact on student enrollment. In the following chart, there were originally 2,529 students in band and orchestra in grades 4 through 12, including two high schools, four middle schools, and eight elementary schools.



In the first year of these proposed cuts, all instrumental students in grades 4, 5 and 6, approximately 1800 students, would be eliminated from participation in band and orchestra. No new students would be started in either band or orchestra until grade 7. In addition, enough middle students would have been eliminated so that the district would have needed to open 29 new classes and hire 6.4 FTE classroom teachers to replace the 5.2 FTE instrumental teachers to teach former instrumental music students (6.4 FTE x \$30,000 at a cost of \$192,000).

By year three, since no new students would have been started during those years, more non-instrumental students would have moved into the upper grades, and senior classes would have been graduated, the district would have been required to hire 10.2 cumulative FTE for 50 classes at a cost of \$300,000. Only 360 combined band and orchestra students would have remained in the program for the 14 schools.

By year five, for all practical purposes, the band and orchestra programs would have collapsed. The district would have needed to hire 12.6 cumulative classroom FTE for 63 classes of former instrumental music students at a cost of \$378,000. Added to the anticipated savings of \$156,000 this would have amounted to an annual budget miscalculation (reverse economic effect) of \$534,000.

Using Data & Concept of Reverse Economics Can Save School Music Programs

In this district, thankfully, advocates in the music coalition were able to use data and the concept of reverse economics to show that the long-term effects of eliminating the music program would cost more than the initial savings anticipated. Perhaps you're not surprised to find that, when presented with this information, the board overruled the administrative proposal to cut the music programs and reinstated all of the instrumental music positions.

Should you need further information, please write to me at <jlbenham@gmail.com>

A financial crisis always exposes the underlying educational philosophy of your school district.