

News Releases, Media Alerts and Photo Captions Templates

TARGETING MEDIA FOR ACTION

Remember, the media's job is to report activity, not to take a specific side on an issue (the exception to this is described in "Editorial Board Meetings," below). Craft strong, clear messages about the community's desire to support and sustain the music education program, then direct those messages at the media, and share them through private communications networks.

If programs need to be defended, consider using the following media activities (in addition to those previously mentioned):

Letters to the Editor. Community members can express their opinions about proposed music program or budget cuts in letters to the editor of their local newspaper; letters can also be in response to feature or news stories on overall education funding cuts or inequities that include cuts in music program support.

Editorial Board Meetings. A group of 3–5 people representing music education advocates in the community can request a meeting with the editorial board of the local newspaper. The purpose of the meeting is to request a specific response or endorsement from the newspaper that would appear on the paper's editorial page urging

school administrators and leadership to maintain support and funding for music education in the community. It is important to prepare carefully for the meetings (e.g., provide summaries about the importance of music education in the community and the anticipated negative impact of proposed program or budget cuts) in order to make them as effective and successful as possible.

The local media is a valuable channel for communicating about advocacy and can be a powerful ally. These sample press releases, which should be personalized with contact information and program specifics, will inform the media about school musical events and community information sessions—and will advance your advocacy message.

Note: Press releases are most likely to be noticed and stories assigned when news is new or provides information about an upcoming event. The samples below help you inform the media about music activities in the school and district together with music research facts and activities of the local advocacy group.

Tip: Be sure to send press releases whenever a school music event occurs — and use that opportunity to promote the benefits of a high-quality music education.

Generic Press Release Template

No. 1: For School Music Event

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

(Your name)

(Your organization)

HEADLINE [State school program or program that you are promoting]

Example: District ABC Music Students gather for annual elementary band festival

Example: Public Elementary School ABC celebrates student achievement in music [your town and state]

Lead your release with vital information.

What is the event?

When will it take place? Include date and time.

Where will it take place?

Who will perform, and who is invited to attend?

Why is it important? Include information about the benefits of music education and its vital role as part of a complete, high-quality education for all children. Include research factoid as follows:

"This recent research supports what parents and teachers know in their hearts — that music education is a vital part of a complete education," commented [your name] of [your organization], a local group that advocates music in school curricula. "Once parents understand how music can help their children grow, they become strong supporters of our school music programs. This is a national trend that we're happy to see here in our district."

One study revealed that young children who received a year of musical training showed brain changes and superior memory compared with children who did not receive the instruction. "It is very interesting that the children taking music lessons improved more over the year on general memory skills that are correlated with nonmusical abilities — such as literacy, verbal memory, visiospatial processing, mathematics and IQ — than did the children not taking lessons," said Laurel J. Trainor, researcher of the study at McMaster University in Canada. *Fujioka, Ross, Kakigi, Pantev and Trainor. Brain, a Journal of Neurology. Oxford University Press, September 2006.*

A study of rural and urban inner-city schools found that arts programs helped schools in economically disadvantaged communities develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills; create more opportunities for intellectual and emotional exploration; increase student self-esteem, self-expression, interest in school and engagement with others; promote school-wide communication and collaboration and increase parental involvement and teacher creativity. *Stevenson and Deasy. Third Space: When Learning Matters. Arts Education Partnership, 2005.*

Parents and others interested in finding out more about music-making and healthy development can contact [your name] at [your phone number] or go to www.SupportMusic.com

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Generic Press Release Template

No. 2: For parent and/or community member advocacy activity including public hearing or presentations to the school board or parent groups

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

(Your name)

(Your Phone Number)

HEADLINE:

Example: (Your group) SPEAKS UP FOR (DISTRICT OR SCHOOL NAME) MUSIC PROGRAMS

What is the event? (Is it a school board meeting, parents' meeting, parent info meeting?)

When will it take place? Include date and time.

Where will it take place?

Who will speak, and who is invited to attend?

Why is it important? Include information about the benefits of music education and its vital role as part of a complete, high-quality education for all children. If applicable, address potential cuts or threats to the quality of the music program and access for all children. Include the research factoid as follows or browse research facts and select those that are appropriate at supportmusic.com.

A study in fall 2006 revealed that young children who received a year of musical training showed brain changes and superior memory compared with children who did not receive the instruction. "It is very interesting that the children taking music lessons improved more over the year on general memory skills that are correlated with nonmusical abilities — such as literacy, verbal memory, visiospatial processing, mathematics and IQ — than did the children not taking lessons," said Laurel J. Trainor, researcher of the study at McMaster University in Canada. *Fujioka, Ross, Kakigi, Pantev and Trainor. Brain, a Journal of Neurology. Oxford University Press, September 2006.*

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Stevenson and Deasy. Third Space: When Learning Matters. Arts Education Partnership, 2005.

[Your group] is a group of concerned parents and local citizens who are working to assure that all children have access to a music program as part of a high-quality education. The information available in the presentation intends to make the public more aware of the benefits of music-making in the school curriculum.

"Once parents understand how music can help their children grow, they become strong supporters of our school music programs. This is a national trend that we're happy to see here in our district," commented [your name] of [your group].

[Your group] is planning activities to heighten awareness of the scholastic benefits of music-making among parents of school-age children and local officials. Parents and others interested in finding out more about music-making and brain development can contact [your name] at [your phone number] or go to SupportMusic.com.

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Media Alert Template

[Date]

To: Assignment desk [name of newspaper, radio station, newsletter, or other media target]

From: [Your name, your group]

Re: [Your school district] school board presentation

MEDIA ALERT

WHAT:

School music performance or presentation about music education benefits to school board or other music education advocacy activity.

- For student musical performances, include program names and titles of musical pieces that will be performed; also include names of featured soloists or groups in the program
- For music education advocacy presentations, provide names of presenters and their school and community affiliations; underscore why this person (or persons) is stepping forward to speak about the benefits of music in the community's educational offerings

WHO:

[Performing group information or name of advocacy group or individual offering presentation]

WHERE:

[Name of facility]
[Address of facility]

WHEN:

[Date]
[Time]

CONTACT:

[Your name]
[Your phone number]

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Photo Caption Template

(For use in providing photos and captions to members of the media for post-event news placement.)

Photo enclosed. (Or, send via e-mail with caption enclosed in the body of e-mail)

Caption information:

- Present information as a 3- to 4-line narrative that includes all of the information
- Describe what is occurring in the photo and when and where the pictured event occurred
- Describe who is in the photo, identifying them from left to right (be sure you have secured parental/caregiver permission for photo placement of minors)

Provide contact information, including name, affiliation, phone and email address.