

# Speak Out for the Arts!



Ready to step up and lead in supporting your program? Here are some quick tips to get you started!

## DO'S

***Do Be Proactive*** – Rather than waiting to respond to cuts, start sharing your story now. Thank local leaders for what you learned from the arts. Acknowledge their past support for music and the arts.

***Do Get Informed*** – Know the facts. Talk with your music/arts teachers to find out what the current situation is at your school. Are they exploring the elimination of a position or the entire program? What is the rationale? Is it funding related? If cuts are made, are they equitable across all subjects? Music and arts education is required in most states and should not be singled out. Once you have facts you can make a plan.

***Do Get Organized*** – Make a plan. Proactively reach out to other students who share your concerns. Develop ideas to raise awareness in your school and community about the proposed changes you oppose. Develop plans for how to get your message across. Including: letters to local newspapers, social media posts, videos, plans to communicate with the administration and board of education - either through messages or by attending public meetings.

***Do Be Honest*** – Use facts and be truthful. Facts are your friends. Cite your research too (you'll impress educators). A citation identifies your original research source.

## DON'TS

***Don't Wait Until There Are Cuts*** – You want to build up your support across your community BEFORE anyone even thinks about cutting anything. Or as Harvey Mackay would say, “Dig your well before you're thirsty!”

***Don't "Wing It"*** – Going into an advocacy effort without a plan is a plan that will fail. Know and share your primary point. In the words of Stephen Covey, “Keep the main thing, the main thing!” If you have multiple points to make, keep it three or less. Better yet, have two other people make the other two points. Always look for ways to bring more people in on this!

***Don't Ramble*** – If you are making a post or presenting at a meeting this is critical. Plan to make the case for your program by just speaking from the heart in the moment. However, if not intentional and focused, it could lead to a rambling commentary that will confuse listeners and possibly hurt your cause. Know your main points for support.

***Don't Make Things Up*** – Presenting false information will only hurt your effort. Don't go by rumors. Don't make things up. Act on facts and real personal experience.

**Do Talk to Your Parents** – Tell your parents how important music and arts education is. Your parents want the best education for you. Let them know the benefits. Getting them involved will help the overall cause.

**Do Be Specific and Concise** – Make sure the points you want to communicate in your local campaign are well refined and very clear. What do you want to have happen? Be specific. Make your arguments tight and to the point. It's not about what you say, it's how you say it.

**Do Be Courteous, Firm, and Confident** – Being respectful is key. People will respond well to students who are respectful but firm in making their points. When appropriate, use salutation, first, and last names (e.g. Mr. Wayne Smith).

**Do Focus on YOU** – This is YOUR education! These educational decisions will impact YOUR life. This should not be about jobs or other adult issues. This focus should be on the your needs and your access to a well-rounded education. You have every right to be passionate about what happens next.

**Do Tell Your Story** – Clearly state the importance of the program on YOUR personal social and emotional development. What has it meant to you? What will it mean if it is taken away? How will this decision impact your access to experiences that influence your development?

**Don't Exaggerate** – Making things up or exaggerating will only lead to a loss of credibility. Don't even "stretch the truth!"

**Don't Be Too Casual** – How you present yourself to decision makers will influence their thought process. Gaining decision makers respect in a time like this will help be extremely beneficial down the line. In other words, dress professionally whenever appropriate.

**Don't Argue or Make Threats** – No one wants to get into a back and forth discussion. Make your case. Nothing will turn off the people you are trying to get on your side more than threats.

**Don't Lose Your "Why"** – Persistence pays off in life, in leadership, and in community action. The more you share, the more different people from your community share, the more you ALL share, shows how much you care.

**DON'T give up!**...No matter what! Play the long game with your efforts and remember even long after you graduate, your words as an alum can impact the community you grew up in. Consider reaching out to past alumni for their stories and support. Online, in-print, in-person, or all three!



For more tips, information, and ideas on how you can create more impact in your community, be sure to check out...<https://www.younison.org/student-advocacy>