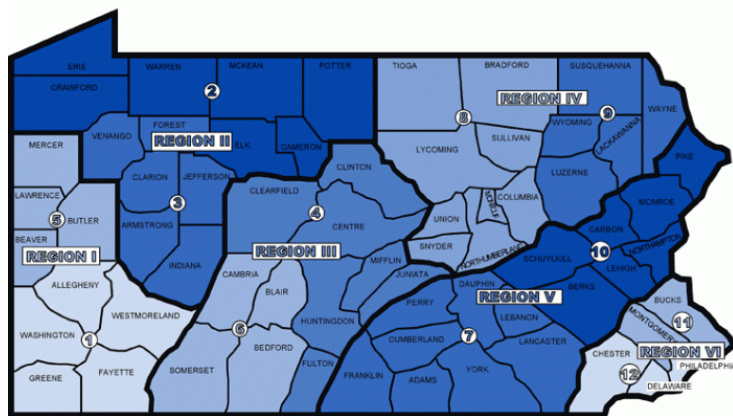




2025 POLICY PLAYBOOK

The Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) is a statewide nonprofit organization of over 3,700 members dedicated to promoting the musical development of all Pennsylvanians. The present membership evolved from a small group of band directors dating from 1933. Today, the organization includes those engaged in music instruction at all levels, from preschool through college and university, as well as those in the music products industry. The association promotes and supports quality music education, learning and performance as well as promoting and supporting music education in schools and communities. PMEA is affiliated with The National Association for Music Education, NAfME.



The association is made up of twelve geographic districts and six geographic regions serving the needs of members and students in their area.

Vision

We envision a world of engaged musical citizens where a deep desire to learn, teach, connect through, and experience music is advanced.

Mission

The Pennsylvania Music Educators Association advances comprehensive and innovative music education through promoting effective instruction, providing meaningful learning experiences, and ensuring impactful and equitable music engagement for all.



Pennsylvania Music Educators Association Fundamental Beliefs

PMEA believes music and the arts effectively:

- Engage students in their creative, cultural, aesthetic, intellectual, social, physical and emotional development—indeed, in the development of their identities as students and citizens
- Develop students' skills critical to 21st century learning for success in school and life
- Develop skills integral to the economy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States
- Develop social and emotional learning skills
- Provide a place for students from all backgrounds, genders and races to find community and belonging

All pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students in Pennsylvania must be guaranteed:

- Adequate and equitable funding for schools that allows for all students to receive a well-rounded education
- That music and arts education is offered as core curricula
- That the music and arts curricula being offered to them are based on a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential pre-K-12 standards-based music and arts education
- A music and arts education taught and assessed by certified music and arts educators

PMEA State Policy Priorities and Recommendations

In order for PMEA's fundamental beliefs to become reality for all Pennsylvania students, PMEA encourages the legislature, the Governor, the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the State Board of Education to be proactive in ensuring that all school districts and charter schools receive adequate and equitable funding, adequate policy support for the well-rounded education of every student (which includes music and the arts as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act), and support for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

The following seven policy recommendations represent the current policy landscape and current issues as of February 2025, for which PMEA is advocating.



1. Increase in Basic Education Subsidy Funding

The **Pennsylvania General Assembly** should work with **the Governor** to increase the Basic Education Subsidy and adequacy payments through the Ready to Learn block grant program. By increasing these subsidies to school districts, Pennsylvania would serve students more effectively by allowing school districts the discretion to use the money as they see fit. During the past ten years, we have seen the General Assembly and the Governor work together to provide consistent and meaningful increases to the Basic Education Subsidy. We hope Governor Shapiro and the General Assembly will see the impact of this funding increase and continue to provide meaningful increases to education funding especially in light of the February 2023 Commonwealth Court decision which ruled that Pennsylvania's school funding system is unconstitutional and must be reformed. Any increase in funding should consider the rising mandated costs school districts are facing. Beyond the 2025-2026 budget, the General Assembly must provide annual state funding to school districts in an amount, and distributed through a formula, that supports the principles of equity, adequacy, accountability, and predictability.

Context:

PMEA continues to ask for an increase to the basic education subsidy year after year as do most education groups visiting Harrisburg. At one point, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provided over 50% of funding to school districts. That percentage has significantly dropped over the years and school districts are required to make up the difference with local tax dollars, which causes great inequity among school districts. The state's share of total district spending is 38%, which puts the burden on school districts to make up the difference. Because of that, Pennsylvania is ranked fifth highest in the nation for local spending on education.

When the state does not pay its share, a burden and pressure is put on schools and communities to make up the difference and fund their school through property taxes. The great inequity of tax bases across Pennsylvania creates funding disparities. School districts with wealthier tax bases spend, on average, \$4,800 more per student than districts without a healthy local tax base. Even with a funding formula in place for state dollars to account for issues like local tax base – inequity still exists. Providing more dollars to schools, distributed through the Fair Funding Formula, is a starting point to remove funding barriers at the local level.

Governor Shapiro has proposed a second-year investment in K-12 education based on the work of the Basic Education Funding Commission through adequacy payments distributed through Ready to Learn block grants. His proposal adopts important principles including targeted funding increases through a new adequacy formula. The proposal also updates the current funding formula to improve predictability of funding.

In Pennsylvania, we know that only 90% of students in public schools have access to arts education because only 86% of those schools offer arts education. It is unacceptable for 10% of Pennsylvania public school students to not have access to arts education. Increases in funding from the state will help schools with little or no arts education programs to support the continuation or creation of those programs.

While some may view music education as costly, a recent [NAMM Foundation study](#) found this is not the case. Among key findings were:

- The average per student spending for music programs was \$251 when counting all students, not only music students. When counting only music students, expenditures averaged \$368 per music student. **On average,**

districts spent 1.9% of their total operating expenditures on music programs.

- Most music program spending, 85.4%, was for music educator salaries. The next three largest spending categories, totaling less than 10% combined, were for materials and supplies, administration and contracted services.

This information is important to share with decisionmakers at the state and local levels to provide context **that while music education is relatively inexpensive in the scope of an entire school district budget, it is crucial that schools across Pennsylvania are providing adequate funding so schools do not have to make tough decisions that adversely impact staffing and materials for music education programs.**

2. Support the Educator Pipeline

The **Pennsylvania General Assembly** should increase funding for the student teacher stipend program.

Context:

Currently a system is in place, funded at \$20 million, to support future educators. The program provides stipends approved through budget-related legislation. Student teachers are eligible for \$10,000 stipends and can earn an additional \$5,000 if they work in a district with high turnover. Governor Shapiro has proposed a \$20 million increase to this program to support future educators.

3. Fair Charter School Funding

The **Pennsylvania General Assembly** should adopt a funding formula for brick and mortar, and cyber charter schools that allows these schools to maintain their original intent – a place for innovative education that can be shared with traditional public schools. PMEA calls upon members of the General Assembly and Governor Shapiro to rethink the current charter funding structure to allow all charter schools and all traditional public schools to thrive through a funding formula that supports the principles of equity, adequacy, accountability and predictability for charter schools and school districts. We support Governor Shapiro’s proposal to establish a statewide cyber charter tuition rate of \$8,000 per student.

Context:

Several years ago, PMEA worked to advocate for a fair funding formula for school districts. We see the charter school funding system the same way. Charter schools can provide a valuable alternative for students. However, some charter schools have come under scrutiny for a variety of reasons including: financial mismanagement, receiving more special education dollars than actual incurred costs and an imbalance in the amount of funding cyber charter schools receive. These concerns not only hurt students in charter schools but also students in school districts that are forced to pay charter schools higher amounts of money per student than actual costs.

We feel it is in the best interest of all parties for the Governor and members of the General Assembly to come together to discuss ways to create a system that provides equitable funding for school districts, brick and mortar charter schools, and cyber charter schools.

In Governor Shapiro’s budget request, he has proposed a cyber charter school tuition rate of \$8,000 per student. We support this policy. In addition, we feel a fair funding formula for brick and mortar charter schools can be created in a similar way that a fair funding formula was created several years ago for school districts. All stakeholders should be brought together to find an equitable and workable solution.

4. Increase Support for Higher Education

The **Pennsylvania General Assembly** should continue to increase funding for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and state-related universities. These schools are a valuable resource to Pennsylvania. Some of the finest music teacher preparation programs are housed in these universities. It is critical to provide funding to support adequate resources to prepare the next generation of music educators.

Context:

Pennsylvania ranks 48th for higher education affordability and 49th in spending per capita. Pennsylvania relies heavily on the PASSHE schools to develop students in many career areas – and we know that some of our strongest music education programs are at PASSHE schools.

Much like the work we do for K-12 education, we want to ensure that institutions receiving state monies as part of their normal funding stream are adequately funded. In the 2022 and 2023 Pennsylvania budgets, PASSHE schools received boosts in operating money – currently funded at \$585.5 million. Continued investments are necessary to allow for PASSHE schools to do what they originally set out to do – provide an affordable college education.

As Pennsylvania taxpayers, we own the PASSHE system and it is important to protect our investment.

Any funding increase to PASSHE should represent and benefit all students and prevent tuition increases in the short term and reduce tuition costs in the long term.

PMEA recognizes the need for more music educators to enter the profession. Making higher education more affordable and removing barriers to entry is essential to that goal. Pennsylvania can achieve that by continuing to fund the PASSHE system to reduce tuition costs to students.

5. Licensure of Professional Music Therapists

The **General Assembly** should support the licensure of professional music therapists in Pennsylvania.

Context:

Having a license would increase access to music therapy services for many Pennsylvanians, protect consumers, and ensure that Pennsylvanians are receiving quality music therapy services. Increased access may lead to more equity, eliminate barriers, and ensure quality music therapy services across the Commonwealth.

Currently, Pennsylvania is the largest exporter of musically trained therapists due to lack of licensure capability. Post graduation from our Pennsylvania higher education institutions, these Pennsylvania trained therapists end up relocating and taking up clinical practice in our surrounding states of Maryland, Ohio, New Jersey, and Virginia.

While the Commonwealth hosts the largest number of universities with music therapy programs in the United States, with ten collegiate programs, including masters and PhD level, the number of students graduating and leaving the state is rapidly increasing over time.

According to a state survey sent to music therapy faculty in 2019, 40% of music therapists graduating from a Pennsylvania program leave the state to practice. Today that percentage has increased to more than half, or 60% of graduates relocating to our surrounding states with licensure.

Music Therapy Licensure is safe, effective, and has been adopted by 12 states across the country to date. The established health profession is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals of all ages. The use of instrumental and vocal music strategies to facilitate changes that are non-musical in nature.

Currently over 80% of counties in Pennsylvania are deploying some form of music therapy across an estimated 49,000 individuals. These individuals are seen in multiple health and human services environments including direct in-home care, health and education facilities, i.e., senior centers, nursing homes, hospitals, rehabilitation clinics, behavioral/mental health centers, developmental disability programs, early intervention and schools.

Music therapy is a cost-effective treatment option. The potential for job growth due to migration to the state of new professionals (or return of board-certified former residents) to work in the profession of music therapy would be made possible by regulation. Furthermore, state facilities supported by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who provide music therapy services by a music therapist may, in fact, enjoy cost savings as evidenced by the impact of selected music therapy interventions on important cost drivers, e.g., length of stay in the NICU, or medical procedural efficiencies in the perioperative environment.



Issues six and seven below are supported by PMEA but will not be included on the document distributed to members of the General Assembly. We continue to work on these issues with appropriate stakeholders and will bring these issues to legislators when/if it is appropriate.

6. Support Alternative Credit for Marching Band Participation

The **Pennsylvania General Assembly** should pass legislation allowing students who participate in high school marching band to receive an alternative course credit. Other states ([Alabama](#), [Florida](#), [Illinois](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#), [Nevada](#), [Ohio](#), [Tennessee](#), and [Texas](#)) have policies in place that allow for at least some credit for student participation in marching band (in these states the credit counts toward physical education requirements). Local boards of education would determine if their local education agency would offer such a credit.

Context:

Students participating in curricular based high school marching band programs are physically active and learn valuable life lessons through participation. These programs typically last at least one semester (if not two), yet some students are unable to participate or can only participate during a regularly scheduled music class for a limited time because of scheduling issues and other school-based requirements.

As Pennsylvania has standards in all subject areas, any legislation should require the adherence to them for any marching band credit to be awarded. Local education agencies would have the option to decide if they would offer this credit in their schools. This credit would be in addition to course credit the student receives for participation in a curricular based music class that includes marching band as a component. A blanket state mandate is not our goal, rather we hope the General Assembly would give schools the option to decide to implement this credit program as they see fit.

One goal of this proposal is to ease the burden on music students who are often forced to make a choice between music courses and other areas of study because there is a limited amount of course time during the school day. By allowing marching band students the option to receive some additional course credit for another subject (while fulfilling the requirements of that subject through marching band participation), the students will have more opportunities to study other courses offered in their school. Implementing an alternative credit option would work best if all educators involved can work together to ensure education acquired through marching band are used as an activity reflecting other required standards.



7. PDE Arts Content Advisor / Liaison

PMEA supports reinstatement of the funded Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) staff position that supervises the development of curriculum and standards in five content areas: *Music, Visual Art, Theatre, Dance, and Media Arts*.

The **Pennsylvania Department of Education** should work with the **Pennsylvania General Assembly** to reinstate this staff position that was removed from the PDE Curriculum staff in the 2011-12 state budget. PDE leadership is encouraged to review key pieces of federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), for ways to fund this position by way of federally available money. Specifically, Title IV, Section 4104 of ESSA addresses such a possibility.

Context:

The essence of this ask is to make sure the arts have someone available to support and disseminate information from the state level to arts teachers. Other content areas have advisors already in place. This position has been vacant but is necessary to provide support, professional development and technical assistance to educators across the state and to colleagues within the PDE. Some roles of the PDE position include:

- Curriculum support, solicitation and review of materials and resources on the SAS portal
- Implementation guidance and support of content specific curriculum as it relates to development of the Student Learning Objectives design to be used for teacher evaluation
- Active representation in the State Education Agencies Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) including direct access to the NCCAS arts assessment item bank
- Development and review of arts specific professional development
- Support to arts education organizations regarding Act 48 professional development offerings
- Development, monitoring and support professional online learning communities

There is currently a part-time contract position at PDE serving this purpose. We feel strongly that this should be a full-time staffed position.

How To Advocate

Your voice is important to advocate for music and arts education. Your voice is crucial to ensure music and arts programs continue as part of education for every child in Pennsylvania.

Conversations in your local community are crucial to future success. Making school administrators aware of the good things happening in music and arts classrooms is the best form of advocacy you can do. Advocacy is marketing. Remember these points as you market your program:

- Know your audience. What will resonate with them?
- Arts are important on their own – it's important to create well-rounded citizens who can appreciate culture
- Promote the academic benefits, but also promote those benefits that can't be measured on a test like teamwork, self-esteem and problem solving
- Tell stories of student successes
- Use different communication channels - social media, websites, emails to parents, emails to administrators and communication with your local media are all important ways to communicate the value of your program
- Even in the face of adversity in your school, your program and/or your classroom – it is important to stay relentlessly positive about your program

Visit advocacy.pmea.net There you can learn about current funding opportunities in Pennsylvania. Learn about opportunities and how to work with your administrators to access these funds.

While you are at advocacy.pmea.net, you can take action on some of the policy issues raised in this document. PMEA makes that process easy by asking you to enter some basic contact information and you'll be able to send a pre-written letter to your representatives in the Pennsylvania General Assembly. PMEA will send out email alerts when those opportunities are available.

For national funding and advocacy issues, visit the [NAfME Grassroots Advocacy Center](http://NAfME.org).



- Resource for PMEA Members
- Designed by PMEA Members
- Ideas To Promote Your Program
- Customizable Marketing and Recruiting Templates
- Images To Use in Program Books and Other Marketing Materials



MUSIC
EDUCATION

**MARKETING
TOOLKIT**



advocacy.pmea.net/marketingtoolkit



**56 SOUTH THIRD STREET
HAMBURG, PA 19526
WWW.PMEA.NET**
