

Texas Music Educators Association: The Art of Legislating Arts Education

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Describe the legislative process as it relates to arts advocacy.
- Articulate the types of procedural hurdles faced when organizations lobby for new arts legislation.
- Recognize the role of community and legislative partners in pushing an agenda, anticipating ways of mitigating potential obstacles.
- Analyze the political situation surrounding arts in the public education. Who has a stake in these decisions and why?
- Explain the different functions of a state's legislature and its school board with regard to educational policy (and where they may overlap).

Topics For Discussion

- **Legislative Process and Lobbying**
 - ♦ Lobbying is a crucial activity for the TMEA as a means to encourage policy change in the arena of music education. Part of the “art” of lobbying is rooted in building relationships with legislators and others involved in the legislative process. There is also churn in personnel over time. How can TMEA address turnover among elected officials and staff who will have an effect on arts education in Texas?
 - ♦ In the proposed scenario outlined at the end of the case, TMEA is advocating for a bill that removes the lexical distinction between “foundation” and “enrichment” subjects in Texas’ curriculum. Some state lawmakers have indicated that the proposed bill would project a weaker profile for the foundation subjects of Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts. How can these objections be addressed?
 - ♦ As the case explained, framing issues is an essential lobbying skill.
 - State Legislators deal with multiple issues concurrently. For this reason, a compelling and distilled argument is crucial to present to elected officials. What arguments can be made directly to legislators in support of the new bill?

- Considering the legislative hurdles for this bill, how can the proposed legislation be framed for other agencies and constituents to rally support? How can TMEA expand the lobbying efforts seen in the journey to pass SB 815? Are there additional actors who can be enlisted in this cause?
- As it prepares the bill, should TMEA concentrate on this policy change exclusively or pursue multiple distinct agendas in the legislature? Would the latter spread the organization too thin? How should TMEA proceed if the proposed legislation is stalled or unsuccessful? Is the status quo acceptable? Identify the potential possible unintended negative consequences of pushing for this change.
- Are there other ways to achieve similar ends? Should TMEA simply aim to move fine arts from enrichment to foundation curriculum?

• Preparing for Future Outcomes

- ♦ The Texas Education Code is overdue for a “rewrite.” Should TMEA wait for the next rewrite of the Texas Education Code to pursue the question of the distinction between “foundation” and “enrichment” subjects in the state’s curriculum? What are the risks of waiting or is there potential for greater gains? How might TMEA be able to shape a larger policy shift toward arts education during this process?
- ♦ Scrutinize **Appendix 3**, which consists of the best practices developed by TMEA Executive Director Robert Floyd. What were crucial points that paved the way for the passage of SB 815? What areas could be mobilized in support of the proposed legislation on the question of “foundation” versus “enrichment” subjects?

• Collaboration

- ♦ Combining forces with other organizations who share overlapping agendas and interests was crucial in moving SB 815 through the legislature. Of the lobbying groups and associations mentioned in the case, which would be best suited to partnering with TMEA in pursuit of “tearing down the wall” between foundation and enrichment subjects? What objections to the legislation can be anticipated from these organizations?
- ♦ In the run-up to the passage of SB 815, grass-roots advocacy played less of a role than is typical for a piece of legislation. In general, popular support for a measure increases the likelihood that the legislature will give proposed legislation a hearing, an important step for any bill. Other than encouraging parent and teacher involvement at the local district level, how can—or should—the public be mobilized to understand and support this new issue that TMEA? How could “products” of arts education be marshalled to advance the new legislation at the local level? What would a social media strategy look like for this bill?