



## **Ideas for Consideration while Planning for a successful Music Advocacy Day at Your Capitol**

**by Kelly Knedler, KMEA Advocacy and Government Relations Chairperson**

The Kansas Music Educators Association has sponsored a Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol in Topeka, Kansas at the Capitol Building for five years. This day coincides with Music in Our Schools Month (MIOSM) and is part of our Advocacy and Government Relations programs. The purpose of the Music Advo Day is to create opportunities for conversations with Kansas Legislators about Music Education's role in our students' lives. Understand that there are many ways to focus this day. However, it should focus on as much music education discourse as possible. We also believe that you will create more conversations by going to your Legislators, rather than hope they will come to you. Remember, the more your Legislators know about how your state MEA, the more they will value your voice. We hope this day will become an ever-expanding music education advocacy event. However, we must ask, "will it help to convince legislators, board of education members, school district officers, administrators and stakeholders?" This will be determined in time. We seek to proactively promote music advocacy in all Kansas communities.

Our State Legislators need to hear about and see successes in Music Education. Through a Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol we have the unique opportunity to stand up for all of our underfunded school districts by bringing purpose, information and performance to our state decision makers. And, we will be able to work both at the state and the local level all in one event. In the brief moments we get the one-on-one conversations, we need to have our information ready-to-go and very easily understood so they do not have to take time trying to find our point. And let's face it, sometimes we need something to capture their attention so they look and stop to have these conversations in the first place! We believe we need to engage each of our Legislators and Board of Education members in great thought about every community and the importance of Music Education by educating our non-musicians as well as our musicians of the importance of music education in the lives of their community and their students!

There are several key areas to consider when you are planning this day. This is "our" timeline and planning schedule, you may have a different version.

### **The KMEA Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol Agenda (Current)**

KMEA Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol Events:

- **Kansas Legislator Breakfast:** Catered Breakfast for all Kansas Legislators and their Office Staff, as well as the Kansas Board of Education members. Catered locally with expectation of about 60-80 participants.

- **Kansas Tri-M Chapter Representation:** Members of Kansas Tri-M Chapters are invited each year through the KMEA state Advisor. These are high school students from a strong Kansas chapter.
- **Kansas NAFME Collegiate Leadership Representation:** The NAFME Collegiate Presidents have joined the Music Advocacy Day to give the collegiate perspective as they will soon join the Kansas Music Education workforce.
- **Personal Meetings with Kansas Legislators:** KMEA Leadership has set-up meetings with their Legislators from their districts. And, brief impromptu meetings with those legislators, which participate in the Breakfast offerings.
- **Personal Meetings with Board of Education Members:** KMEA Leadership set-up meetings between Kansas Board of Education members and usually an annual meeting with Kansas Education Commissioner Dr. Randy Watson and his office staff.
- **Kansas House of Representatives Committee Meeting Appearance:** KMEA Leadership join the agenda for the KS House of Representatives Education Committee to inform them of what KMEA does in the state and for Music Education.
- **Kansas Senate Committee Meeting Appearance:** KMEA Leadership join the agenda for the KS Senate Education Committee to inform them of what KMEA does in the state and for Music Education.
- **Music Performance in the Kansas Capitol Rotunda:** Each year one or two groups have joined from the High School or Collegiate level to present an hour or music performance in the Rotunda of the Capitol from Noon to 1:00pm. This past year both choirs participating joined together to perform the Mark Hayes arrangement of “Home on the Range,” the Kansas State song!

### **How KMEA hopes to expand the Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol (Future)**

New Goals for Expanding the Kansas Advocacy Day @ The Capitol:

- **Expand the Area of the Capitol Used To:**
  - We hope to invite KMEA Leadership to create a booth for information to give to Kansas Legislators. We will highlight the many things KMEA does for Kansas Music Education.
  - Expand the Budget for the Legislator Breakfast to make it more accessible to all Legislators and Staff.
- **Work with the Country Music Association Foundation to bring an Artist to the Day:** We wish to bring in a CMA Recording Artist from Nashville to perform with a Kansas performing group or two for a Noon performance in the Rotunda. Also, would like to give the CMA Recording Artist a little time to speak about the importance of Music Education in the artist’s life.
- **Give a Stipend to performing schools:** This would be to pay for the mileage and lunches for students participating, so that we can use students from other districts than the Topeka, Kansas districts only. This will allow us to highlight more student achievements in the state.
- **Purchase signs for the Music Advocacy Day:** We hope to create several signs and banners to put up for the advertisement and presences of the Music Advocacy Day.
- **Purchase Printed Materials:** We will create several letters and publications to give to Legislators in *impromptu* meetings at the Breakfast, and nicer “slick” publications and Folders for the Committee Meetings and individual meetings with personal legislators.

- **Create Jump Drives for Legislators:** We will include Music Advocacy information for the Legislators to see the importance of Kansas Music Educators Association.

### **Food**

A great idea for getting the Legislators to come to you so a quick-informal conversation can be created is to have a Legislative Breakfast (Check your Capitol's policies and rules). In Kansas, we contract with a local Coffee Bistro to cater a breakfast beginning at 7:30am in the Capitol on the morning of our Advocacy Day. We end our Breakfast by 11:30am. The food items include coffee, juice, pastries, and muffins. It should be simple items which Legislators and their staff members can easily pick up and go. You will need to plan with the caterer as to what they will provide and what you need to provide. For example, cups, plates, utensils, table coverings, tables, etc. can be considered.

In the area you host your Breakfast, make sure to have information packets, fliers, business cards or brochures with information highlighting your MEA and how it supports Music Education. Make sure to include information about music education in your state, rather than the "glossiest" national talking points. Please see the Information pages we used at the end of this article.

### **Space**

You may have 2 or 3 spaces to deal with on your Music Advocacy day. Contact the Capitol Administrators to see what the space will be like and what you will need to supply for it. First the Breakfast...You may need tables, chairs, easels etc. What time can the caterers and you begin set-up. Are there certain food items not allowed? Check to see if you can actually hang posters in this area of the Capitol Building.

Second, the performance space is important, especially size and acoustics. Talk with Capitol Administrators to find out if you can have risers, chairs, music stands, pianos, microphones, sound systems, podiums and posters. Consider where your audience will stand, and what their space will look like. Remember, you may have limited space, so know your performance groups too. Also, the performance groups may not be able to pre-set, so plan that into your performance time.

The third area you may need might be the space you use to set up displays for the Advocacy Day highlighting the different areas of your MEA such as, Mentoring, Advocacy, Collegiate, Tri-M, Band, Choir and Orchestra Teacher organizations, etc. Know what groups can and cannot display. Do you need tables and chairs, easels?

### **Entertainment**

A performance is a nice way to give back to the crowds at your State Capitol Building and it shows your Legislators "the good" in your state. The performance should be kept to an hour or less and highlight some excellent performance groups from your state. I would encourage your MEA to keep this to K-12 or collegiate. The Legislators want to hear from students in the state. Kids can make a huge impact on decisions being made.

Check with your Capitol to see if there are rules for performance groups such as time, place and numbers of performers allowed in the space you are given to perform. Also, consider the instruments used in the performances too. For example, large percussion instruments under a 5 story rotunda may have too much ring and reverberation.

I would suggest having no more than 2 performing groups for this entertainment, and make sure to create signs announcing the performance groups' names, times and the performance space. Programs for the performance are not necessary, because it will be an *impromptu* performance. Also, you might contact the performers' parents, friends and other relatives to come and watch the performance (Nothing creates wonder and excitement like a crowd).

I would highly suggest that you do all of the work for the performing groups by making all arrangements once at the capitol such as a meeting place, and number of chairs, stands, mics, podiums, sound systems needed. Make it easy for them to perform. Give them clear direction as to what, where and whom they are performing and for.

Another idea...KMEA Advocacy hopes to work with the Country Music Association Foundation to bring an Artist to the Day. We wish to bring in a Country Music Association Recording Artist from Nashville to perform with a Kansas performing group or two for a Noon performance in the Kansas Capitol Rotunda. Also, we would like to give the CMA Recording Artist a little time to speak about the importance of Music Education in his or her life. Also, this artist could speak to both the Kansas House of Representatives and Kansas Senate to tell them why music education needs to be continued to be funded. We feel that music advocacy coming from someone who has made their career beyond a classroom really gives a strong point to our message. So, by partnering with the Country Music Association Foundation to bring a Nashville Country artist in on the KMEA Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol, we help promote music in our communities as well as commercial music in the minds of the legislators, office staff, Board of Education members and passers-by. These people see success in two forms when we work together from the top and the bottom.

### **Message**

Folders: We give each member of the Education committees a Kansas Music Educators Association folder with information about our organization. We use many photographs and print our material in color to enhance the professionalism of KMEA. There are three pieces we always include in this folder:

1. KMEA in Kansas, which highlights the events we have organized during the past year or two.
  - a. Our partnership with Kansas State Department of Education
  - b. Our Advocacy Program
  - c. Our Mentoring Program
  - d. Our Professional Development opportunities
  - e. Our annual Hill Day with NAFME in Washington, DC
  - f. KMEA Future events
  - g. Our Delegates
2. KMEA In-Service Workshop, which highlights our annual state MEA Workshop.
  - a. Our Mission Statement
  - b. What our workshop is about
  - c. Who attends our In-Service Workshop
  - d. All State Performance Groups and Numbers
  - e. Vendors who attend
  - f. Dates of the annual workshop

3. KMEA Delegates “ASKS,” which are requests we will ask our legislators to consider as they vote on the future of education; especially music education.
  - a. Our thoughts on Education Bills
  - b. Our thoughts on Education Funding

Other information can be added to the folder to highlight any special events, which might not be covered in the other sections. This could include music advocacy poster or fliers; advertisements your MEA has created, etc.

Jump Drives: Create external Jump/Thumb/Flash Drives for Legislators to include Music Advocacy information for the Legislators to see the importance of your Music Educators Association. On each of these drives include students from each of the district divisions in your state, but in particular students from within the district division which a legislator presides (Meaning a lot of individual work). The messages we have recorded and will expand are both audio and video testimonials about why music is important to that specific student and his or her school. We may record some of these from All-State students at the KMEA In-Service Workshop. We can easily determine their legislative Districts through our collected information from KMEA Auditions. The format for this video on the drive is to create a general advocacy section that has scenes from the convention, including All-State performance groups, for a few minutes at the beginning of each video, then 1-3 students speaking to the legislator. Some student messages could be the same for a representative in the House of Representatives and a representative in the Senate where Districts overlap. These need to be only a few minutes long to keep attention focused on music education and we can use these at the state level as well as the national level.

Signs, Information and Letters: We design and purchase signs for the Music Advocacy Day to create an artistic visual to our organization. These signs and banners are put up for the advertisement and create a presence of the Music Advocacy Day for all to see in the Kansas Capitol Building. We also purchase signs for each booth of an affiliate member presenting (if we choose to have presentations) and we help with cost to print the affiliate member’s literature too (limited). We also create several letters and publications to give to Legislators in impromptu meetings at the Breakfast, and professional-looking “slick” publications in folders for the Committee Meetings and individual meetings with personal legislators. We can distribute these folders and professional publications to our National Legislators representing Kansas, when we take our annual trip to Washington, D.C. for Hill Day and the National Assembly for National Association for Music Education...So, we get a two-for-one and do not have to completely re-invent the wheel at each event.

### **Contacts**

Who do I contact at the Capitol? Call your capitol and ask questions. Start by calling a general line to your capitol and ask, “Where do I start?” Ask what you will need to do and who you need to speak with to plan for a Music Advocacy Day at the capitol. You may need to refer to a website for forms to fill-out, or you may need to speak to a particular office. In Kansas, it is required to have a Kansas House of Representative or Senator sponsor the Music Advocacy Day at the Capitol. It is possible a fee for renting space or tables, chairs, podium, microphone, easels, sign hanging, or sound system may be needed. Start by asking questions...And, keep a good list of who you spoke to and when, because nothing makes people like your MEA more than when you are organized!

Who should I involved in the Advocacy Day? Start with your Executive Council: President, President-Elect, Past President, Executive Director; Advocacy Members, Collegiate President and a Tri-M Group. Then, as

your day expands you can include other affiliate council members of your MEA. Too many people there could create an overwhelming area for a legislator to step into for a short period of time. So, limit your numbers to essential leadership and expand when and where needed. Also, legislators love to hear for student in music, so include some students through a Tri-M Chapter and your Collegiate President. A very wise former KMEA President and NAFME division president once told me, "The legislators would rather hear from the students in music, not the gray hairs." True! They hear from people like us, who advocate for your discipline. The legislators want to hear what music is doing for the students who are in the learning process now!

### **Our Timeline**

Organization and Promotion will be the key to success. So, KMEA Advocacy works hard to promote Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol and through it's many resources including email and Social Media. The KMEA website ([www.ksmea.org](http://www.ksmea.org)) promotes it too and it is heavily advertised at the annual KMEA In-Service Workshop, which usually occurs 2-4 weeks prior to Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol.

#### **October (5 months out)**

- Contact the Country Music Association Foundation in Nashville, TN to schedule an artist to come to Topeka, KS for Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol in March

#### **November (4 months out)**

- Check the new year Kansas Legislative Calendars and begin formulating a date for Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol in Topeka, KS
  - Look for late February (not KMEA-ISW) or Early March (before Spring Breaks)
  - Kansas Legislative calendar: <http://www.kslegislature.org/li/>
- Call Representative or Senator for Kansas to ask them to sponsor the Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol event and choose a date.
  - Kansas Legislators can be found: [http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2019\\_20/members/](http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2019_20/members/)
- Contact the KMEA Executive Council to ask about available dates in March for Music Advocacy Day @ the Capitol
  - [executivecouncil@ksmea.org](mailto:executivecouncil@ksmea.org)
- Update all KMEA Leadership

#### **December (3 months out)**

- Call local Catering Company in Topeka, KS to check for catering date at the Capitol.
- Contact Capitol Administrator at KS Capitol to set-up permission to hold the Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol
  - Usually work through the assistant to the office
- Order all Jump/Thumb/Flash Drives
- Create and Request Printing for all Banners and Posters
- Update all KMEA Leadership

#### **January (2 months out)**

- Book all hotel rooms for KMEA leadership who will attend.
  - President, President-Elect, Vice President, Executive Director, Collegiate President, KMR Editor, Advocacy and Government Relations Chair, and any V.I.P. we may contact and invite.

- Contact Capitol Events Coordinator for permission to have a performance in the Capitol in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor Rotunda area.
  - Write and send letter to request permission to perform in the Rotunda.
- Contact two Schools for performing groups at the Capitol.
  - High School, middle school, elementary, college, or National Guard organization
- Contact Collegiate President to invite them to be part of the day
- Contact MEA Tri-M Advisor to invite a Tri-M Group to be part of the day with members of a strong High School chapter
- Send a letter inviting all State Legislators to the Breakfast and performance at Noon on Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol.
- Late January, contact CMA Foundation for all updates of CMA Artist information.
- Update all KMEA Leadership

#### **February (1 month out)**

- Contact Printing Office or Company to begin printing the publications for the Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol
  - Use a School District will to print it at a lower cost
- Printing finished by mid-February
- Contact all Performing Groups or Music Schools as a follow-up for updated information
- Late February, contact CMA Foundation for all updates of CMA Artist information
- Create agenda for the Day and send to all involved
- Promote the event at your MEA In-Service Workshop through:
  - Websites
  - MEA In-Service Workshop Booth
  - MEA In-Service Workshop Brochure
- Complete all Banners and Poster
- Complete all Paper Printing products
- Update all MEA Leadership attending

#### **March (The month of)**

- Early March, contact all members involved with the final timeline of events for the MEA Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol.
  - MEA Leadership and Attendees
  - CMA Foundation
  - State Representative or Senator who is the sponsor
  - Local Caterer
  - Capitol Administrator Office
  - Capitol Events Coordinator
  - House Education Committee Chairperson
  - Senate Education Committee Chairperson
  - Board of Education Office
  - Commissioner of Education's Office
  - Music Ensembles which are to perform
    - Usually 1-2 school music programs
  - Tri-M Sponsor
  - MEA Website or Magazine Editor(s)
  - MEA Chairpersons attending for Booth Promotions
    - 2-5 Chairpersons
- After the event "Thank You's" and Follow-Up letters to all involved.

## **Budgeting:**

### Budgeting Outline for Advocacy Day:

- The KMEA Advocacy program use both KMEA Budgeted money as well as CMA Foundation Grant Funds in creating our Advocacy Day. Monetary considerations are:
  - Hotels for Leadership a
    - 6-8 Hotel Rooms
    - Ask for a Government or Group Rate
  - Mileage for Leadership
    - 6-8 mileage reimbursements
  - Food for Legislative Breakfast via local Catering Company
    - Sandwiches, Rolls, Yogurt, Danish, Coffee, Juice
  - Performance Group Stipends + Mileage
    - Up to \$250.00 for each group to pay for mileage or lunches
  - Banners and Posters
    - Banners and Posters for the groups participating at the Day
    - Banner or Poster for booths to clearly label who is there and their function within your MEA
  - Paper Printing Products
    - Printed materials to give to Legislators at the Day
      - Includes folders and Colored Printed materials
      - 100 + sets of materials possibly
  - Jump/Thumb/Flash Drives
    - Purchase of Drives
    - Transfer of Data stipend
    - Professional Photographer stipend
      - Local Photography company
      - High School Photography class might save some money

Note: Consider using a high school graphic design class to create your banners and posters for your event. You will need to speak with the instructor well-in-advance to make this part of their curriculum. It could save your MEA a lot of money.

## **Capturing Media:**

KMEA loves to capture media at our events. This media we capture allows us to use it in other Advocacy Areas too! This helps capture the attention of our Communities by creating Music Advocacy Posters for posting at the KMEA In-Service Workshop, Schools and in our Communities. We use created Memes for getting Communities, Parents, Students, Teachers, Administrators, and Legislators involved in Music Advocacy. Likewise, we use this information on the ever growing KMEA Advocacy website [The AdvoAngle www.AdvoAngle.com](http://www.AdvoAngle.com).

## **Measuring Your Success**

We measure our success by the following:

- Closely watching that our “Asks” for Music Education funding is funded based on what we present at our Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol

- We watch key educational bills presented for school funding
- Strengthening of our Alliances with Educational Organizations and our Kansas Decision Makers
  - Through our Music Advocacy Day @ The Capitol we are able to create more networking with key decision makers from the top downward
  - Included MEA groups participating in the Advocacy Day shows the depth and breadth of the MEA organization
  - The more spectacle (within reason) and number of Advocates we can include will help with information dissemination too
- Strengthening of Support
  - We get the opportunity to show what a professional and serious organization our MEA is and how we see Music Education as an important aspect of students' lives
  - Again, we can see that the more you know the more you appreciate or value Music Education
- Survey of Music Teachers
  - This is collected through our MEA website as well as the AdvoAngle.com website and geared to our Music Educators involved in our MEA
    - We can use Snapshot surveys at the various district and state meetings for Music Educators
- We will measure success through careful observation of state school positions being consolidated or closed in the rural areas of the state
  - In the case an intervention is needed in a music community, we have created better support from our supporters

