

December 2006

This letter is to the membership of MAEA. We have heard from various teachers that are in fear of their positions being eliminated in their perspective school systems. The Executive Board recently heard from one individual that is facing this after the Holidays. This letter was created so the membership realizes some of our fellow art educators are facing financial challenges within their district with the possibility of program cuts. Therefore, we have these suggestions and advocacy tips for those facing this issue and for those of you that want to gather more support within your district. It is very important we continue to utilize every resource we have as an arts educator to help our arts programs in the schools.

Please realize - These are ideas that many of you may have already been doing yourself:

1. Gain support for your art program and help from the parents (a letter or petition to keep art in their school from the parents to the administrator or superintendent) in your district to help keep Art Education in the school for the children.
2. Gain support and help from the School Board in your district. Have the parents approach the School Board about the importance of the arts in schools for our children. Send the school board monthly reports about the art happenings for the month. It could be just visual art or connect with all the arts specialists. All arts areas should work together to support one another.
3. Have parents or yourself send a letter of concern to the following individuals:
  - a. State of Michigan Superintendent - Michael Flanigan
  - b. The State School Board (The Current President is Kathleen Strauss)
  - c. Michigan Department of Education Fine Arts Representative Ana Cardona
4. Send an e-mail request stating your situation and ask for ideas and help to Cindy Smith and have her send it out to the entire MAEA membership via e-mail. We have over 800 members signed up to receive the e-mails. You may get examples from other teachers that have experienced this situation and have ideas on how they helped make their program stay in the schools.
5. Connect with ArtServe of Michigan for additional information and advocacy tools about the arts. ArtServe could also serve as an additional advocate for you. The person to connect with would be Donna Edwards.
6. An excerpt from the work of Daniel Pink is listed below (courtesy of Julia Tomaro). He is an avid supporter of the Arts and thinks about the arts in terms of our future success of the world. His book that is out is titled: "A Whole New Mind". He will be speaking at the National Art Education Association conference this spring in New York and at the National ASCD conference this year (Association of Superintendents and Curriculum Development). You could present Daniel Pink's work to your school board.
7. The Council and Executive Board of MAEA have been working on a document / draft about talking points about the arts for members to be able to use when advocating for their program within their school district. The goal is to present and finalize this for the conference in 2007 in Grand Rapids for MAEA members. It is attached below Daniel Pink's excerpt for you to use / read through etc.

8. Gather information and support from all of the above and present it at your next school board meeting. You just need to ask your Superintendent to have you be included in the agenda for an Arts Support presentation.

We hope this information can begin to help with making a change and making the parents, school board members and your administrators aware of how important the arts are for our children.

Sincerely, The Executive Board of The Michigan Art Education Association

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