

Statement of Common Cause: Orchestras Support In-School Music Education

Music education improves the learning environment and engages teachers and caregivers in children's learning. Students who participate in ensemble music-making create joy, human connection, and expressions of individual and shared cultural identities. **America's orchestras are committed to advocating for equitable access to comprehensive and sequential music education in our nation's schools.**

Research has proven that arts education provides academic and social benefits and is essential to a complete education for all students, preparing them for success in school, work, and life. There is also clear proof that musical training during childhood can lead to markedly accelerated brain development. The status of music education in our nation's schools has short- and long-term consequences for both student achievement and the future of orchestras.

Educational activities in orchestras have grown exponentially over the past two decades. Starting from the tradition of stand-alone school-day and family concerts, orchestras now offer small ensemble performances, residencies and long-term partnerships, after-school and summer camps, intensive instrumental instruction and ensemble experiences, early childhood and teen programs, and a host of other activities occurring during the school day as well as during out-of-school time. In addition to more than 1,200 professional and community orchestras, there are now nearly 500 youth orchestras in communities across the United States. Orchestra programs strive for deeply embedded partnerships with local school systems and community-based music (and other) organizations that are informed by current and emerging community needs, and responsive to local, state, and national arts and academic standards.

While these programs and initiatives of orchestras provide an opportunity for young people to develop and deepen a lifelong relationship with music and to learn more about themselves and the world around them through the orchestral tradition, they do not and cannot, nor should they, replace a standards-based K-12 music education.

America's Orchestras are Committed to:

Advocating for In-School Music Education

Orchestras believe:

- A child's education is not complete unless it includes the arts. The arts are an academic subject essential to a well-rounded education, and music is vital to maximizing a child's potential. Ensemble music-making in schools is an important part of a complete education.
- Schools are in a unique position to deliver comprehensive, high-quality, systemic music education to all students. Orchestras will serve as a resource in this effort, supporting the work of school-based music educators.
- Beginning at a very young age, robust education related to music of many genres and cultures is a key ingredient to youth development, and to creating opportunities for equity and access for all students through the arts.
- After-school hours are a vulnerable time for many young people, and orchestras support initiatives with intensive music learning for students regardless of economic status.
- The needs of students should be at the center of education advocacy efforts. Orchestras' education programs are most effective when developed to address the needs of student learners in partnership with school leaders (teachers, administrators, caregivers), local arts organizations, and other stakeholders.

Being Informed Advocates

Orchestras commit to:

- Understanding the status of in-school music education in their communities and in local districts, and advocating for accurate data and accountability about how much and what kind of music instruction students receive.
- Discovering, implementing, and sharing best practices in advocacy for comprehensive, high-quality in-school music education through sustainable partnerships with all advocates in the community.
- Consulting with educators, administrators, and community leaders to understand how orchestra resources and strengths can best address the unique needs of students, schools, and communities.

Taking Action

Orchestras seek to improve the status of in-school music education by:

- Ensuring music education advocacy is a role for everyone in the orchestra family—staff, musicians, trustees, volunteers, and audiences.
- Advocating for policies that support the presence of qualified in-school music educators and that demonstrably improve access to high-quality music education for all students, particularly in low-income and underfunded schools.
- Proactively forming sustainable advocacy relationships with school partners, policy leaders, and community stakeholders to secure the success of every child's music education.
- Participating in forums where local, state, and national education policies are determined by listening to community needs and communicating the benefits of systemic K-12 music education.