

Imagining Possible Futures:  
Policy and Advocacy Education in Music Teacher Training Programs  
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Degree programs for undergraduate music education majors are designed to provide the training, skills, and experience necessary for student success after graduation. However, policy and advocacy are two topics that may not be thoroughly covered in music teacher training curricula, but are critical to discuss given the current political and economic climate in the United States. By adapting current undergraduate music education curricula to specifically include policy and advocacy content, graduates will be better equipped to face the challenges of the hostile arts environment in the United States, where music education's existence may need to be consistently justified.

According to Burton, Knaster, & Knieste (2015), there are indications that preservice music teachers have minimal knowledge or understanding of policy and its implications for music education. In their study of undergraduate music education majors, 11 of 19 respondents said there was value in learning about educational policy, but it is often missing from the curriculum. Additionally, 13 of 17 respondents said they felt unprepared to speak on behalf of music education. Further, Jones (2009) warns that when teachers are unaware of policy, they turn to using "buzzword advocacy" or "spurious claims" (p. 30). As a result, teachers may struggle with making sound policy recommendations. Methods classes were identified as the primary source of policy and advocacy dissemination for 32% of respondents. These courses vary from institution to institution in terms of content, methods of instruction, and time spent focused on various topics. Consequently, improvements to help music education majors feel more prepared cannot be made without further investigation revealing what is being taught.

This pilot study had two purposes: the first was to examine the current curricula and methods of teaching educational policy and advocacy in undergraduate music teacher training programs. The second purpose was to generate ideas for best practices to teach these essential, but often overlooked, aspects of music education to preservice teachers more effectively and thoroughly. This study surveyed music education coordinators at National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)-accredited colleges and universities with undergraduate music education programs in the National Association for Music Education (NAfME)'s Eastern Division. Data shows that 95.7% ( $n=22$ ) of survey respondents believed that policy was an important part of undergraduate music education curricula, and 87.0% ( $n=20$ ) of participants stated that advocacy was as well. However, 14.3% ( $n=3$ ) of music education coordinators surveyed reported that their students do not receive any policy or advocacy training, either through dedicated courses or through discussions integrated into other courses. Respondents reported using a variety of methods to teach policy and advocacy, including examining information and participating in programs from music education organizations, such as NAfME and state music education associations, reviewing state laws, such as state education department standards, discussing federal laws, such as national standards and education legislation, and assigning mock tasks, such as curriculum projects and mission statements.

This study found that there is a perceived need for policy and advocacy discussions in undergraduate music education curricula, but time is a factor limiting their inclusion. Preservice teachers should be aware that knowledge of policy and effective advocacy will be part of their future career, and accordingly, college professors should include more policy and advocacy discourse and content in curricula, utilize pertinent resources, prepare music educators to be compelling advocates, and encourage critical thinking about policy so they are prepared to advise future changes.

## Materials and Resources for Teaching Policy and Advocacy to Undergraduate Music Education Majors

- State music education agency resources
  - For example:
    - <https://www.pmea.net/specialty-areas/advocacy/>
    - National Association for Music Education resources
      - <https://nafme.org/community/elearning/public-policy/>
      - <https://nafme.org/advocacy/>
- State and federal legislation and information
  - <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/landing.jhtml?src=pn>
- Assignments
  - Mock debates defending music education programs to school boards, administration, etc.
  - Design music education curriculum for general music, ensemble, etc. at varying grade levels
  - Create advocacy toolkits
  - Create mission statements and philosophies
  - Writing position statements using hard and soft policies
  - Attend local school district board meetings
  - Finding intersections between music and policy
  - Policy analysis
    - Kos, R. (2010). Developing capacity for change: A Policy Analysis for the Music Education Profession. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111(3), 97-104.
      - Identify problem, gather evidence, identify alternatives, establish criteria, project outcomes, confront tradeoffs, make a decision, and tell the story
- Encourage and facilitate undergraduate research on policy
  - Honors thesis
- Guest speakers on policy and advocacy
- Current topics/events discussions and assignments
  - <https://nafme.org/category/public-policy-newsroom/>
  - <https://nafme.org/category/advocacy-news/>
  - News outlets including Education Week, New York Times Education, and <http://educationvotes.nea.org/>
- Attend music education association policy/advocacy days
  - For example:
    - NAFME Hill Day (<https://hillday.nafme.org/>)
    - PMEA Music Education Advocacy Day (<https://cqrengage.com/pmea/17advocacy?5>)
- Encourage students to join professional music education organizations and attend conferences
- Facilitating internships with arts advocacy groups
- School-University Partnerships
  - Hunter, L. R. (2011). School-University Partnerships: A Means for the Inclusion of Policy Studies in Music Teacher Education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 112(3), 137-143.

### Application to Teaching

- Music educators should be aware of how educational policy impacts their classroom
- Music educators should be aware of current events in educational policy
- Music educators should be actively involved in policy creation
- Music educators should be aware of and utilize effective advocacy techniques to further their programs
- By being more involved in educational policy creation, educators can be proactive in advocating for their programs