

STARTING A MUSIC BOOSTER ORGANIZATION

OVERVIEW: When considering the components of the successful music program, the development of a Music Booster Organization counts as one of the most vital. A parent who is actively engaged in the school also gains first-hand knowledge of the operations of the music program itself. Such an investment of time and energy can translate into much-needed support for the success of all of the participants. Great programs attract eager and deeply invested parents. Music Booster Organizations also provide an army of volunteers to help deal with the endless, myriad tasks which are part of any flourishing music program. The more parents, the better.

This guide explains the initial steps to be taken to start a Music Booster Organization. It is not to be considered a comprehensive manual for the operation of such an organization. The National Association for Music Education published a *Music Booster Manual*¹ that is highly recommended and contains a great deal of more in-depth information for the ongoing operations of the successful Music Booster Organization.

¹*Music Booster Manual*. 1989. #1504.

GETTING STARTED

1. Meet with the appropriate program supervisor to inquire about the district/school policies for starting such a group and the procedures for its ongoing efforts. Be sure to provide the supervisor with a rationale for starting the Music Booster Organization. (See **APPENDIX A**) Most administrators understand the value of involving parents in the education of their children and the rationale can underscore many of those ideals. It is vital, however, to know if there is paperwork that must be initiated or specific banking procedures that are required. Also, consider working with the supervisor to elicit strategies to engage parents successfully. Does the school already have a working Athletic Booster Group or similar parent organization? If so, visit with the school sponsor of that group to get their best ideas for rallying parents. Is there a sample Constitution or By-laws that you might use or Articles of Incorporation that could be referenced? Take care of the legalities. This type of advance work is intensive but could save hours in organizational time and/or issues down the road.
2. Once all of the appropriate planning (paperwork, in many cases) has been completed and rules/regulations set forth, it is now time to involve the parents. Generally, there are a number of parents who seem to step up to offer their assistance even BEFORE being asked and these will be key people to help organize the others. Visit with these key people first about the concept of a Music Booster Group and discuss the vision for the organization. These are the future officers of your organization.

It is vital that all parents recognize and be mindful of the fact that their function is to support the students and the program and not to drive the content of the program.

The above tenet should be set down right from the very beginning with the parent leaders and they should act in accord with this concept throughout their deeds and actions.

3. Call a meeting of all of the parents and ensure that the meeting starts with a student performance. Not only will many parents attend because their students are performing a “Command Performance Concert” for their parents, but this will also help bring a sense of purpose to this initial meeting – that as parents, they are being called upon to assist their children achieve at a higher level.

4. Keep the meeting “on point” by preparing and distributing an agenda. (See **APPENDIX B**) If possible, limit the meeting to one hour.
5. Start the next part of the meeting with a brief statement from the administrator who supervises the program. The administrator’s remarks should stress the fact that parent involvement is crucial to student success.
6. Dovetail your remarks to those of the program supervisor. Again, parent involvement directly enhances student achievement in the music program. This must be made clearly evident and will serve as the impetus for the development of the organization. “What is best for the students?” should become the mantra that drives the decision-making of the organization. (See **APPENDIX C**)
7. Introduce the parent leaders and have them lead the meeting. The director and principal should remain in attendance to help clarify any issues that may arise at this first gathering.
8. **KEEP THIS FIRST MEETING BRIEF!** The length of this meeting will drive the attendance at all subsequent meetings! You do not have to organize everything in one evening. The point is merely to get parents together to explain the purpose of the Booster Organization and to generate excitement for helping the students in the program succeed at the highest level. If they leave knowing that you will reach out to them as needed, you will have accomplished Goal #1 – that of getting the parents “on call” and ready to assist.
9. Have students distribute and then collect Music Booster Information that might be used to help further organize your Booster Organization as the year progresses. (For sample form, see **APPENDIX D**)
10. Serve refreshments at the end of the meeting and at all subsequent meetings. It encourages socialization.
11. Within the next week, follow-up with the leaders to discuss which committees may need to be formed. Have the leaders use the Music Booster Information Forms to organize parents into the committees that they have indicated are of interest to them.

The wheels have now been set in motion. Keep your parent leaders engaged and ensure that they communicate regularly with all of the other parents. Parents want to help. All they need to know is how. Ask the appropriate administrator if the Boosters can develop a webpage that can be linked directly from the school’s Music Department webpage. Have parent leaders research other Booster sites for ideas.

Ensure that all meetings are purposeful and meaningful. Agendas should always be provided. Attend all Booster meetings and keep them as short as possible.

Finally, it is important to remember that music parents are the most effective advocates for music education. They are members of the larger community apart from the school and their enthusiasm will spread across their own mini-communities as they are inspired to become dynamic partners in your program.

APPENDIX A

The Rationale

The NYU Child Study Center website provides a succinct rationale for involving parents in a meaningful way in the education of their child.

Although parents conscientiously send their children off to school every day and expect them to do well, they can add an important extra ingredient that will boost their children's success. Parent participation is the ingredient that makes the difference. Parents' active involvement with their child's education at home and in school brings great rewards and has can have a significant impact on their children's child's lives. According to research studies, the children of involved parents:

- are absent less frequently
- behave better
- do better academically from pre-school through high school
- go farther in school
- go to better schools

Research also shows that a home environment that encourages learning is even more important than parents' income, education level, or cultural background. By actively participating in the education process at home and in school, parents send some critical messages to their children; they are reinforcing the idea that school is important.

When parents contribute effort and time, they have the opportunity to interact with teachers, administrators, and other parents. They can learn first-hand about the daily activities and the social culture of the school, both of which help them understand what their child's life is like.

The child and the school both benefit, and parents serve as role models as they demonstrate the importance of community participation. In addition to improving academic progress, parental involvement pays off in other significant ways. Numerous studies have shown that parents' involvement is a protective factor against adolescent tobacco use, depression, eating disorders, academic struggles, and other problems. By staying involved with their child and/or teenager, parents can be a source of support, create a climate for discussing tough issues and serve as role models for responsible and empathic behavior.

APPENDIX B

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF
THE MOZART MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSIC BOOSTERS ASSOCIATION
Month, Day, Year
Location – Time

AGENDA

- I. Command Performance (10 minutes)
 - A. Selection 1, Name of Ensemble/Performer(s)
 - B. Selection 2, Name of Ensemble/Performer(s)
 - C. Selection 3 (if time permits) Name of Ensemble/Performer(s)

- II. A Call to Action, Mr. Principal (5 minutes)

- III. It's Up to All of Us—Guaranteeing Student Success through Collaboration, Ms. Band Director (10 minutes)
 - A. Cover items from rationale in APPENDIX A
 - B. Cover bullet points in APPENDIX C
 - C. Goals for the school year
 - D. Introduce Parent Leaders

- IV. Collaborating to Achieve Goals for the School Year, Parent Leaders (15 minutes)
 - A. Projects/ideas for the year
 - B. Fund-raising campaign
 - C. Review Music Booster Organization Information Forms to articulate how parents might be able to help
 - D. Wrap-up (5 minutes)
 - 1. What will happen next (follow up)
 - 2. Thank all for attending meeting and supporting the program

- VI. Adjourn and have students serve refreshments—Encourage socialization (20 minutes)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Ms. Band Director
PH: XXX.XXX.XXXX
FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX
Email: mrbanddirector@mozartms.edu

Mr. Principal
PH: XXX.XXX.XXXX
FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX
Email: mrprincipal@mozartms.edu

Parent Leader1
PH: XXX.XXX.XXXX
FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX
Email: mrparentleader1@gmail.com

Parent Leader2
PH: XXX.XXX.XXXX
FAX: XXX.XXX.XXXX
Email: mrparentleader2@gmail.com

APPENDIX C

Bullet Points to Cover—Guaranteeing Student Success

- Support at Home
 - What can parents do to support the program from the home front?
- Support at School
 - What can parents do to support the program from the school?
- Support at Events
 - What can parents do to support the program at events?

APPENDIX D

**THE MOZART MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSIC BOOSTERS ASSOCIATION
INFORMATION FORM**

Please complete the information below and return to one of our student performers.

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Name of Student in the Program _____

Preferred Email _____ FAX _____

Street Address _____ Zip _____

Place of Business _____ Phone (W) _____

Spouse's Place of Business _____ Phone (W) _____

Best Time of Day to Reach Me _____

Preferred Method of Contact _____

I am interested in helping in the following areas. (Check all that apply.)

- Assisting at concert events
- Assisting at fund-raising events
- Becoming a leader in this organization
- Chairing a committee (specific committee information will be forthcoming)
- Chaperoning
- Creating/maintaining website
- Making phone calls as needed
- Securing community partners
- Speaking at Service Clubs and other miscellaneous community meetings
- Volunteering within the Music Department
- Writing articles for the booster newsletter/website
- Other _____
- Other _____

Thank-you for your support!