

## **Show Me (How to Get) the Money! 6 Steps to Supporting a Well-Rounded Education**

With the passage of ESSA (the Every Student Succeeds Act—also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) in December of 2015, music became a part of what is now defined in the law as one of the subjects that provides students with a well-rounded education.

As defined in the law, well-rounded education “means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.” (ESSA, Title VIII, Section 8002).

Yes—music is one of the subjects listed in the law and each time the term “Well-rounded Education” is referenced in the law—over 20 times—it thus infers music as well as all of the other subjects.

What does this mean for music education? One of the most significant outcomes is that districts will now be able to assess their ability to provide a well-rounded education, including music, and address any deficiencies using federal funds. Another plus for music educators is that federal dollars may be used to provide professional development to help support a well-rounded education.

This past December, ESSA received additional funds and among those categories that saw an increase are Title II-A which will now receive 2.1B to support Effective Instruction grants and Title IV-A which will now receive 1.2B for Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants.

The SSAE funds are granted to the states from the federal government then re-granted to districts through a grant application process so it is extremely important that educators, parents and school officials learn as much as they can about these resources and how to apply for them. Here are few steps to help get the ball rolling.

1. Learn about ESSA. One of the best places to get relevant information is through the National Association for Education's (NAfME) "Everything ESSA" website, <https://nafme.org/advocacy/essa/>. The material provided is well-written and easy to understand.
2. Do a bit of homework or enlist a parent to help with identifying what types of SSAE grants have been awarded in past years. These are public funds so the information can be provided by calling the Federal Grants Department at your State Department of Education. It might help to know if other districts in your state are receiving SSAE support. States may not be able to provide specific information as to how the grants will be used at the district level but once it is determined which districts received the funding, the next step would be to contact that district's federal grants department for details.
3. Once you have some understanding of what is in the law and how past grants have been awarded, visit with your principal or supervisor to ask about their knowledge of these resources. Remember, this will help provide support for the entire school so you will be considered a hero for bringing great information to your school leaders. If they are not aware, determine who in your district is responsible for writing federal grants then ask for a meeting for additional information and guidance. There are more than 13,500 schools districts in the United States and the vast majority will have someone whose job it is to apply for federal grants. States may have varying application processes and your federal grants staff person will be able to provide detailed information but among others, covered expenditures could include salaries, purchased services, instructional supplies and materials, professional and technical services, and instructional and non-instructional equipment.
4. Meet with your music education colleagues to perform a needs assessment. What is lacking? How might more students be provided with access to a music program? NAfME provides a comprehensive resource to help with this process. The "Opportunity to Learn Standards" document provides recommendations for Curriculum and Scheduling, Staffing, Materials and Equipment, and Facilities. A copy can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/MusicOTL>.

5. Provide a well thought-out proposal based upon the guidelines provided by the grants professional in your district.
6. Wait for a response from your state but don't be discouraged if funds are not awarded on the first try. These are annual grants so applications can be re-submitted in subsequent years. Do, however, follow-up to see how to better organize your application for the next round.

This is our time. Music education has never been in a better place to determine its own future...but it is up to us. Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill's "all politics is local" quote accurately describes what lies ahead. So familiarize yourself with the details of ESSA, meet with your music department to come up with a game plan and, most importantly, make that appointment with your principal.

Marcia Neel serves as senior director of education at Yamaha Corporation. For more information on ESSA, contact [hmansell@yamaha.com](mailto:hmansell@yamaha.com).