



WISCONSIN
MUSIC STRONG

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July 9, 2020

Dear Wisconsin School Administrators and Board Members,

We would like to express our deep appreciation for the work you have all done to date for your students, families, and staff members during this unexpected pandemic. We know that the health and well-being of your students has been and continues to be at the center of all decisions. We, the member organizations of [Wisconsin Music Strong](https://wimusicstrong.wsmamusic.org) coalition, are writing to ensure that your planning for the upcoming school-year includes access to a well-rounded education inclusive of music and arts education. This letter highlights several items we hope are being considered.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Music Educators Association (WMEA) have already established “what” we want our students to know and be able to do in music. WMEA released a [COVID-19 Statement](#) stating “all children deserve equal access to a credible and well-rounded education that includes high-quality study of music and the arts, regardless of the mode of delivery in which teaching and learning occur.” This year, we need to find creative ways to deliver the “how”. Through the [National Core Arts Standards](#) and both the [Wisconsin Standards for Music](#) and [WMEA Music Standards](#), the artistic processes of *Creating*, *Performing*, *Responding*, and *Connecting* support students with developing knowledge, skills and dispositions that provide lifelong benefits to students as individuals and members of a global community.

Music and arts education are part of the well-rounded education our children are required to receive. Three important pieces of legislation support access to music education: the Every Student Succeeds Act (pg. 49), Wisconsin DPI Administrative Rule PI 8.01 (pg. 21), and 2019 Wisconsin Act 85 signed into law on February 5, 2020. This newest legislation requires WI DPI to communicate the percentage of pupils from each high school and school district participating in music, dance, drama, and visual arts as a non-evaluative data point on the school accountability report card. In other words, music and arts education are not optional or extra-curricular; they are an integral part of every child’s education.

Moreover, the mental health and emotional well-being of students are central to the decisions you are making. The [Arts Education Social & Emotional Learning Framework](#) released during Spring 2020 by the Social Emotional Learning Alliance for New Jersey (SEL4NJ) explicitly lays out the intersection between arts education and social-emotional learning.

While the pandemic creates challenges for curricular design in the arts, please know that numerous state and national organizations are providing guidance about safe approaches to music education during the pandemic. The Wisconsin Performing Arts Education Consortium [website](#) includes links to current health and safety research for music, speech, forensics, drama, and theater for physical activities you may be considering as well as a guidance document prepared by [WSMA](#), [WMEA](#), [WHSFA](#), and [AWTE](#) that is

being reviewed by Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the WI Department of Public Instruction Teaching & Learning team. National and international performing arts organizations have combined resources to commission a critical study on the [effects of COVID-19 aerosol transmission](#) in performing arts performance settings. This duplicated study will test how aerosols spread from brass and woodwind instruments, the four vocal ranges, theatrical speech, and aerobic breathing. Preliminary results for woodwinds and brass are scheduled for July 10th, while preliminary results for singing and theatre are expected by July 25th. Updated guidance will be provided following the release of this study. Please consider that more detailed information will be available later this summer.

As Wisconsin state music associations, music education non-profits, music business owners, music educators, and administrators, we are here to help educators to figure out the “how” of music education for this fall. We are committed to ensuring teachers receive support with curriculum and access to vetted information that helps guide decision-making on behalf of students. We encourage communities to work with music educators and community arts organizations and invite your parents and community members to the table. The *Wisconsin Music Strong* coalition can serve as a resource to help make additional connections, if needed.

We are in this together. As a statewide community, we can ensure the following statement from the [WI DPI Education Forward](#) plan is a reality for all Wisconsin students (page 51):

“Ensure all students have access to and are engaged with courses that provide a well-rounded education. Students may apply core skills and find engagement in these courses. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) states that students need to receive a well-rounded education, and school schedules for this next year need to ensure equitable access to opportunities that meet the educational and social and emotional needs of the whole child. The “how” may need to look different, but schedules should include the arts, career and technical education (CTE), science, social studies, world languages, math, and English language arts.”

We wish you the best as you continue to plan for the 2020-21 school year and prepare a safe return to school for Wisconsin’s students.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin Music Strong Coalition

Anne Katz, Arts Wisconsin
Dr. Paul Budde, Wisconsin Music Educators Association
Laurie Fellenz, Wisconsin School Music Association
Dr. Stephen Sieck, Wisconsin Choral Directors Association
Bridget Fraser, Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras
Kathryn Schwarzmann, Madison Symphony Orchestra
Chris Gleason, Beyond the Notes Music Festival
Michael Ross, Madison Youth Choirs

Bruce Bush, Hal Leonard
Tristann Rieck, Brass Bell Music Store
Todd & DeDe Heid, Heid Music
Steve DeVillers, Instrumental Music Co. Inc.
Travis Christopherson, Schmitt Music
Connie Smith, Ward-Brodt Music
Chris White, White House of Music