

# Yes, You CAN Be An Advocate for the Arts!

Teachers in the visual and performing arts at all grade levels are keenly aware of how important it is for them to be visible and vocal advocates for the arts – but most feel overwhelmed with just doing the best job they can every day for their students. Taking on the role of advocate often feels like the “one more thing” that they just can’t do.

But being an effective advocate for the arts may be easier than most teachers think. If you read through this list carefully, you’ll find that many of these things are an integral part of what you already do. If teachers can even do one of these things, they’ve made a critical contribution to their profession and to the significant role the arts play in the education of their students:

## **BE VISIBLE**

- Display student artwork at your school:
  - in the office area where it can be seen by administrators and everyone who visits
  - in the hallways
  - outdoors, if you and your students do any kind of murals, mosaics, sculpture, or tile installations
  - Make sure your indoor displays are accompanied by some basic information: the grade level of the artists; basic art concepts covered; artist name if the work was inspired by an artist’s work or style. This is your chance to inform as well as display.
- Display student artwork in the community.
  - Work with your school’s Join-a-School liaison to see if you can display work in your partners’ locations.
  - If there are restaurants, libraries, community centers, galleries or other businesses within your community ask about displaying student work in their location.
  - Inquire at a parent organization meeting about display venues.
  - Collaborate with the music teachers at your school on an opening reception for an exhibit of student art in a community venue.
- Perform
  - Plays and concerts put your students’ talents and skills on display.
  - Make sure that your feeder schools are included in your publicity efforts.
  - Seek out alternate venues for student performances.
    - High school groups performing at their feeder elementary schools make a compelling case for elementary students to consider music and drama electives.
- Join at least one decision-making committee at your school.
  - The saying, “Out of sight, out of mind” is true. In the very hectic, fast-paced world of schools, decisions made about site-based issues that affect your classes *and* the arts won’t take your perspective into consideration if you’re not there to voice it.
- Attend *and participate* in your school staff meetings.

## TELL PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING

- Make sure parents at your school know what's happening in your classes.
  - At the elementary level, ask for a regular space in the school newsletter to highlight what's going on in music or art. Try to get on the agenda for a parent organization meeting to talk about your program & answer questions.
  - At the mid-school & high school level, you might be able to establish an email list of parents to inform them about your classes and about ways that they might be able to help out. If you have a Booster organization, make sure they are the ones who have that information.
- Make sure your principal and asst. principal are aware of your events.
- Make sure you include your Board of Education member as well as your State Senator and Representative in your publicity efforts as well. Even if they never come, receiving the invitation lets them know you're out there.
  - Identifying Your Board of Education Member:
    - Go to the APS website: [www.aps.edu](http://www.aps.edu) and click on "Meet the Board" under the "Parents" section.
  - Identifying Your State Legislators:
    - Call the League of Women Voters: 884-8441 OR
    - Go the state's website: [www.state.nm.us](http://www.state.nm.us)
      - Under "Government in NM" go to "Legislative Branch" and click on "State Legislature"
      - Click on "Find Your Legislator"
      - Under both House and Senate click on "Search by Name, District, or Zip Code". Enter your zip code and search.
- Share specific information about your community display and performance with the APS Community Relations office. Look for an aspect of your event that focuses on something unusual or on a particular student's accomplishment.
- Make sure your students have signed APS permission forms to have their photos taken, to be interviewed, to have their name published with their artwork. Forms are available in the school office or on the Fine Arts intranet (<https://intranet.aps.edu/departments/fine-arts>)

## BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT YOUR CONTENT AREA AND WHY THE ARTS MATTER

- Go to the websites for national arts organizations and look for their "Advocacy" sections. All have a wealth of information about their content areas as well as the arts in general.
  - National Art Education Association [www.arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org)
  - NAFME-National Association for Music Education <https://nafme.org/>
  - National Dance Education Organization [www.ndeo.org](http://www.ndeo.org)
  - American Alliance for Theatre Education [www.aate.com](http://www.aate.com)
  - Americans for the Arts [www.artsusa.org](http://www.artsusa.org)

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