Growing Stronger Every Day

by Ross Boothman

While other associations struggle throughout these tough economic times, Texas Music Educators Association continues to grow and remain financially sound. We are in a most fortunate position. Our association’s continued strength is a testament to the value of music education in our state and to the work of our members. Texas continues to be viewed across the nation as the model for music education in schools. The work of our association during the past year will only strengthen TMEA for its future.

Membership

Our membership continues to grow. How does this happen during the down economy we have experienced the past year or so? I believe it’s really quite simple. Our members believe that music is a vital part of our students’ education in Texas. We want to belong to an association that works diligently to ensure the continued presence of music education in our schoolchildren’s curriculum. We want to belong to an association committed to offering us the best professional development opportunities in the nation. The growth in membership and convention attendance are indicators of the passion we have for our discipline. The following is a summary of our membership totals at the close of the 2009–2010 year:

- Active: 11,009
- Retired: 552
- Institutional: 71
- College Student: 3,057
- Sustaining: 520
- Total: 15,209

TMEA is also in great financial shape (how many corporations, much less non-profit groups, can say that today?). Thanks to the work of TMEA Executive Director Robert Floyd and our financial planner, TMEA has realized its goal of having two years’ worth of operating expenses in savings/investments. This is an incredible accomplishment! This financial stability has allowed TMEA to continue to hold our dues to the same level for the past ten years while members of other associations have seen consistent increases. This stability also offers us a sense of security other associations aren’t as fortunate to enjoy. Our convention registration has also remained unchanged and is still an incredible value.

With this continued focus on financial growth, we were able to increase last year’s TMEA scholarship awards total to $124,500. These scholarships were awarded to future music educators as well as current teachers wishing to further their education. Scholarships continue to strengthen TMEA—the students graduate, become our colleagues, and join our association. Congratulations to our recipients this year and best of luck!

Texas Future Music Educators

Thanks to the work of TMEA Administrative Director Kay Vanlandingham, the number of TFME chapters continues to increase. We ended last year with 37 chapters made up of 886 members. Of those members, 418 attended our 2010 convention and took advantage of the clinic/performance opportunities. This is a great educational opportunity for students who are considering careers in music education. Please consider forming a chapter in your district. Information is available under the Programs section of www.tMEA.org.
**Summer Dialogue II**

The Summer Dialogue II participants met in July of 2009 and charged the TMEA Executive Board with the following recommendations: redesign the website making it more user friendly and searchable; determine what data/research is relevant for Texas music programs and develop a plan for moving forward to gather such data; develop a consistent and concise advocacy message; continue to collaborate with TMAC to develop an effective assessment tool; and continue to address elementary and all-level music certification issues.

Thanks to the work of Karen Kneten, Andrew Denman, and all of the office staff, the redesigned website was unveiled at the end of July. The College Division will be visiting the second recommendation at the College Division Fall Conference and developing a plan for implementation. The advocacy section of our website offers materials in PDF, audio, and video formats speaking to how we serve students in the classroom through music. Frank Coachman and various TMAC committee members continue to refine and further develop the assessment tool. Finally last December, TMEA won a major victory with the U.S. Department of Education by obtaining a ruling stating that teachers of elementary music with an all-level music certification did not have to earn a generalist designation to be highly qualified to teach in Texas.

**Legislature**

While there was no legislative session during this past fiscal year, the Executive Board kept our lobbyist on retainer and continued to plan for the 82nd legislative session that begins in January of 2011. Executive Director Floyd, at the invitation of Senator Florence Shapiro, Senate Education Committee Chair, testified before her committee on the enrichment of a middle school student’s experience through fine arts. Floyd was also invited to testify before the House Committee on Culture, Recreation, and Tourism on the impact of fine arts and specifically music on the Texas economy.

TMEA also worked closely with TEA staff and the State Board of Education to protect the marching band waiver for the high school P.E. requirement. Final language passed by the Board this past spring eliminates the waiver but instead allows 1/2-credit of P.E. for each semester in marching band (up to one credit), thus allowing the band student to meet the P.E. graduation requirement through marching band participation. Students will also continue to receive a graduation credit per course for successful completion of Band I, II, III, and IV.

The best advocates for music education are the students and parents of our students who believe they are participating in a worthwhile endeavor. If students are working hard, producing great music, and enjoying their time in our programs, there will be no stronger voice for continued support of music education. Please know the Executive Board and TMEA office staff are always willing to listen to suggestions for improving TMEA and music education in our great state. The better we work together the better our profession will be. Have a great year!

Ross Boothman is TMEA President-Elect and Band Director at Lumberton HS.