

music department
budgeting tips

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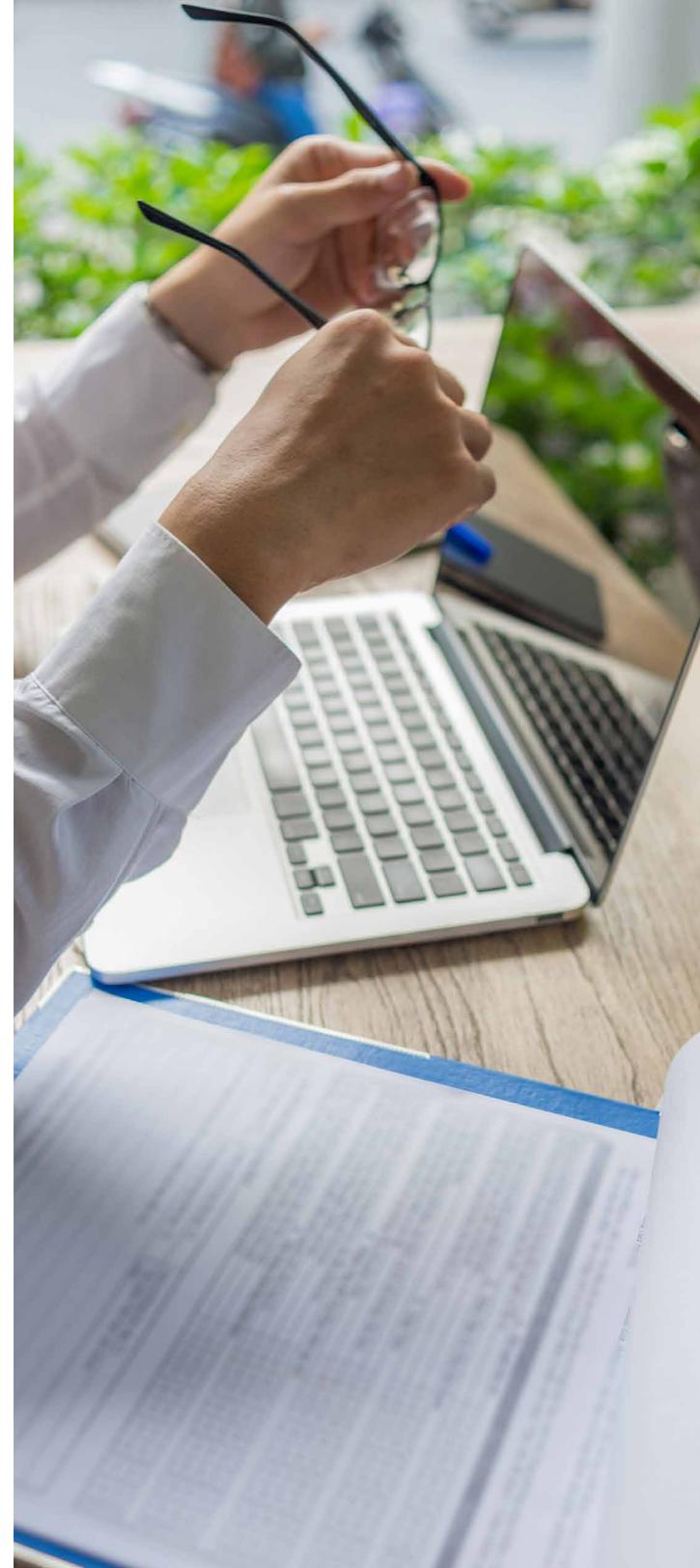
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In a recent poll we asked music educators what they liked most about their jobs, and their number one response was budgeting.

Okay, we made that up.

Few people are thrilled about budgeting. The good news is that we've found experienced educators who can help. We've compiled advice on every aspect of the budgeting challenge, from ways to raise and save money, to tips on creating and submitting your budget.

This advice may not make budgeting fun, but we hope it will help you get it done sooner.



creatively preparing the music department budget

One of a music director's most difficult tasks is preparing the music department budget. In addition to tapping your inner accountant, you also have to predict the future in order to anticipate both the growth and long-term needs of your music program. Two keys for success are to always keep long-range planning in mind and to constantly strive to promote cooperation within your district.

Budgeting First Steps

I suggest starting by taking inventory of your music, instruments and uniform apparel. Then look at your present and future class or ensemble numbers. Referencing past enrollment numbers will help you chart your ebb and flow by years. This will give you an idea of what the future may hold. If you are new to the school you may have to request assistance from the guidance office for the numbers.

Next, develop your wish/need list. Keep these separate as you will have to defend your needs with administration later.

Finally, based on the information you have compiled, prepare a 3-5 year budget plan, categorizing music/textbooks/technology, instruments, uniforms, repairs and group travel. Be sure to include professional development as well, if your school pays this. Be clear in your prioritization between needs and wants.

My budgets were typically built with growth in mind. With that as a given, here's a rough breakdown of what I saw as our basic needs, in a scenario where professional development was not part of the budget:

- New music 20-30%
- Repairs and upkeep 0-15%
- New equipment/uniforms 40-60%
- Travel 10%

Once you have an idea of what you'd like to request, you'll want to consider the framework in which your request will be received.

Three Budget Types

Having worked in four different school districts as well as at the college level, I have experienced three types of budgets. I've named these "The Red Line," "We'll See What We Can Do," and "The Dollar Amount" budgets, and offer details below. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Recognizing which most closely resembles your district's approach will assist you in being able to prioritize and justify your needs.

The Red Line Budget

With this type of budget you submit your needs along with ordering information, providing dollar amounts for each line item, even including shipping costs. If this describes your district's approach, it's crucial that you make your prioritization clear! The administration will often review your request and draw a line, cutting everything below the line.

Some administrations will also prioritize what they feel they can afford and cut specific items. This can be an advantage, but my experiences are it is mostly a disadvantage.

My advice? Always ask for more than you expect you'll get! I believe there's a psychological advantage in providing some things to cut!

The "We'll See What We Can Do" Budget

With this type of budget, you submit your needs and then are told; "We'll see what we can do," with no confirmation that anything on your budget will be funded. This type of budget is the most dangerous, as you are at the mercy



of the administration, and may end up with no budget to speak of. Once, in a situation like this, I received a \$90 repair kit while another high school in the district received new marching drums. Ouch!

The type of budget is common in small schools. If your budget works this way, I recommend meeting with your administration and requesting that they change the strategy or find ways for you to provide more input. Otherwise, the best you can do is to clearly justify every budget item (and again be very clear in your prioritization).

The Dollar Amount Budget

With this budget style you are given a dollar amount which you can not exceed. This was my preferred style as it offered me the most control. It allowed me to meet my program needs and follow the budget I developed. It also allowed me to look ahead and plan for future needs.

Speaking of future needs, should some needs pop up that you did not anticipate, don't be shy. Bring them to the attention of your administration. If any money is available at the end of the year, you'll want them to keep you in mind!

The Dollar Amount Budget

Below are some additional items to take into consideration when working with your music department budget and general purchases.

Who Pays for What?

- Check with administration about transportation, festival fees, etc., to see if they are covered by general funds or department funds.
- Check to see if music or textbooks are part of your yearly budget or covered by school funds.
- Ideally your budget will cover most of your program's expenses. You'll want to avoid having to fundraise or use booster money for your everyday needs. Never volunteer this money, if you do you will likely regret it later!
- Remember to include upgrades for software (including SmartMusic, Finale, etc.) if it is not covered by textbook funds in the school.

Purchase Orders

- If possible, ask for a blanket purchase order amount to your preferred music or instrument vendor. This is like a savings account, where you purchase music at various intervals taking the spent amount from the

blanket PO. It helps avoid delays with purchase orders and can save the day when emergencies pop up, including festival scores, repairs, etc.

- Always make sure you have a purchase order before you buy! In some cases directors have had to pay for items out their own pockets after ordering them without first receiving approval.

Timing

- Think through your entire year, not just one quarter or semester at a time.
- Before submitting your annual budget, show your administration your long range plans and goals. This will assist in supporting both your immediate AND long range needs.
- Know the deadline when you have to spend the amount you were given. This can be especially helpful in filling needs for the following school year. If you have money remaining, request the "blanket" purchase order mentioned above to cover forgotten or summer needs.

Requesting Bids

- When submitting the budget, be sure to acquire the number of necessary bids needed (especially big ticket items). Include all information, make, model, size, shipping and discount if applicable. This shows the administration you are trying to find the best price for your needs and that you are committed to spending the money wisely.

Uniforms

- When purchasing uniforms or robes, try to have the school pay the full amount. There may be times when you have to negotiate this point. Ask the administration if the sport teams have to purchase their uniforms. Point out the average lifespan of uniforms, the materials used, and the consumable items that need to be replaced.
- Look ahead to uniform needs for growth if your program appears to be headed in that direction.

Music

- Look at the number of programs you have for each ensemble and figure 2-4 new music selections per program. If you have a healthy library, 1 or 2 may be sufficient. It is always good to have new or modern works for the library.

- You also will need to consider solo and ensemble festival needs. I tried to have at least one copy of each in the library. I would ask students to purchase their own solo copy of the work.

Financing

- Check with your preferred vendor about a purchase/lease program for large items such as pianos, tubas, percussion equipment, etc. You might be better off including a 3 year purchase plan rather than outright purchases. This way you can get more over a longer period. Ask the vendor to assist selling this point to administration and board. Note: This is where your 3-5 year plan comes in handy!

Sample Budget Worksheet

To help you in your preparations, I've created a [sample budget request worksheet](#).

With planning and open communications between you and your administration, budget needs are accessible and will result in success of your program. Don't be hesitant to express your needs, even in your first year!



Joseph Pappas is a veteran of 27 years of successful teaching in public schools. He currently serves as adjunct professor at Jefferson College in Hillsboro, MO, and Southeast Missouri University, Cape Girardeau, MO.

Read his articles and bio on the [SmartMusic blog](#).

taming band room troubles: easy, cost-effective solutions

Need a quick fix for a broken instrument? Do your percussionists keep losing your triangle beaters? Do you need to incorporate technology in your rehearsal? These are just a few of the types of challenges instrument directors are faced with every day. If money was no object, most of these issues would be quickly and easily solved. However, many educators work with very limited budgets. To help, we'd like to share a few simple, inexpensive ideas – often using common household items – to help you and your program achieve success!

Teaching Strategies

Having trouble getting your beginner brass players to center their mouthpiece to create correct embouchure? Have your student put a coffee stirrer in their mouth as if they were drinking a beverage. Slide the mouthpiece on the coffee stirrer from the bottom to the top until it reaches the student's lips. This will quickly center their mouthpiece.



Do you constantly have issues with enforcing good posture? A simple two-foot, 1/2-inch diameter clear tube from a hardware store can demonstrate their airway. To further show the importance of posture, have a brass player put their mouthpiece in the tube and then buzz a note. As they buzz, kink the tube. Your point about posture will be instantly proven and result in a comical memory your students will not forget.

If your students have trouble with a hand position while holding their instrument, locate some tennis balls or baseballs from your coaches or local sporting goods store. Have your students hold the ball. Then, have your student hold their instrument using the same position in which they held the ball. This simple demonstration will help them with keeping their fingers and hand slightly curved.

Repair / Maintenance

There are several items from your local hardware store to help you with quick, temporary repairs as well as instrument and equipment maintenance. You may also use common items probably located in your school already!

A single dollar bill can be used to absorb moisture from sticky pads on your woodwind instruments for a quick fix before a concert. Simply take a U.S. dollar bill and place it under the pad. Press the key down firmly and slide out the bill, repeating if necessary.

A rubber band or hair tie can serve as a quick fix for a loose saxophone register key. Wrapping a rubber band or hair tie over the neck of the saxophone will still give the register key the flexibility to move, but will keep the key closed when it is not being used. Rubber bands are also great emergency fixes for [broken spit valve springs](#).



Want to help prolong the life of your percussion equipment? Petroleum jelly is great for maintaining tension rods on your drums. It serves as a lubricant and prevents rust. Super fine steel wool, size 0000, restores the shine to old drum rims and percussion hardware. Take off the rim and rub a piece of 0000 steel wool all over it to take off any old filmy residue.

Penetrating oil from your local hardware store comes in handy when trying to clean out brass instruments or removing tuning slides. Use a small dab on a paper towel to wipe out valve caps, and prevent future buildup of unwanted sludge in the horn. Putting a few drops over the crease of where a stuck tuning slides meet the rest of the instrument tubing and waiting overnight may help to release the slide.

Creation

Many necessary band room items can be created using inexpensive items from retail, sporting goods and hardware stores. For example, every band room needs triangle beaters. Go to your local hardware store and purchase three-foot pieces of steel dowels in a variety of thicknesses, a metal file, and bolt cutters (or borrow these from your maintenance staff). Use the bolt cutters to cut the dowel into four equal length pieces. Using the metal file, file down the ends so that they are safe and smooth.

Do you find yourself without a gong mallet? Purchase a hockey puck, a 1-inch wooden dowel, Gorilla glue, and felt weather stripping from the hardware store. Using a drill with a 1-inch drill bit, drill a circle about half way through in the middle of the hockey puck and glue the wooden dowel into the this hole. Next, glue the weather stripping or thick felt around the perimeter of the hockey puck and let it dry. You now have a gong mallet that produces a fantastic sound.



Use Your Resources

With all the demands of being a band director, it is nearly impossible to function entirely on your own. Some of your biggest resources can be found in your school and community.

Get your students involved as often as possible. Have your percussion section maintain the percussion instruments or have students organize the band room or music library. The physical education teachers may have tennis balls you could borrow (or old ones you can have). They might even lead a stretching session at band camp.

Are you playing a piece that was inspired by a novel or poem? Ask your English teacher to do a presentation about the poem or novel to foster cross-curricular learning. You might explore similar collaborations with a history teacher.

Are you in need of a brake drum? Go to your local car mechanic or junk yard and ask if they would donate one to your program. Your local print shop may print professional programs for your next concert in exchange an advertisement on the back page.

Technology

Technology offers many ways to make our instrumental programs more efficient. Some, like the new [SmartMusic](#), are free, while many more are inexpensive. Here are a few suggestions:

- [Dropbox](#) is a great tool that can be used for having students submit information or performance assessments to you. Set up a Dropbox folder so your students can record themselves playing their designated selection of music and then send their recording to you with the click of a button.
- [Staff Wars](#) is great for younger students. This app shows a variety of notes on the screen that a student must play. The app will pick up the student's sound and the note will explode if it is played correctly. If the note is played incorrectly, the note will explode into whatever clef their instrument reads.
- [Yamaha Chord Tracker](#) is useful for you and your jazz rhythm section. Using your music library on your tablet or smart phone, this app will analyze a piece of music you select from your music library and give you a lead sheet with the chords measure by measure. This app also has the ability for you to adjust the tempo and even transpose!
- [Remind](#) is an app that allows you to communicate with students and parents via email or text message without giving them your personal email address or cell phone number. Once you setup your account, you can send messages online or through the smartphone app that will get sent directly to their email or via text message.

These are just a few quick solutions and ideas to help you use everyday items in simple, inexpensive ways so you can help your students succeed. Most importantly, we hope these ideas inspire you to investigate and create other innovative ways to improve your program.



Andrew J. Smouse is a graduate teaching assistant for the Division of Wind Band Studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where he's pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree.

Brittany Hassler is the percussion instructor and arranger for Muhlenberg High School in Reading, PA and the middle school band director for the Oxford Area School District in Oxford, PA.

Read their full bios and article on the [SmartMusic blog](#).

get more bang for your buck with technology

I don't know how your school or district works, but in our district, preliminary budgets are allocated to schools in January, and a plan to spend those funds must be in place by March. The purchasing of new items begins in July as soon as the new financial year begins.

Let's be honest—most schools do not budget a lot of money for technology. Often teachers have very little say in how that money is spent. To add insult to injury, subjects like music education are often near the bottom of the priority list when it comes to technology funding.

To help, I've compiled some tips on how to do more with your music technology budget (even if you don't have one).

Raising Funds

You might find yourself having to provide for your own technology needs. If so, a candy bar or lollipop fundraiser (check out [Ozark Delight lollipops](#)) could provide for your needs. In addition to fundraising, I would also suggest looking to see if there are any local companies or organizations that would be willing to sponsor your project with a grant.

Additionally, if you have a clear vision of what you want to achieve, do not be afraid to share that vision with your parents. One of your parents may own a company that would be willing to support you!

Music is Unique

To further add to the challenge, a significant percentage of educational technology doesn't fit well with music education. It's often hard for music educators to find technology products or programs/applications that are useful for the music classroom or that can be easily integrated into the classroom. If you wish to use or purchase technology, you have to keep the end goal

in mind. You need to have a clear idea of what you hope to achieve with the technology you purchase. And you will need to know both the hardware and software that is needed to meet your end goal.

Devices

There are exciting developments in hardware, such as Chromebooks that “flip” to create a tablet and can run Android apps, the stunning Surface Pro 4, and a long-awaited 12.9” iPad. The problem is that schools usually don't buy these devices, because they, too, are trying to get the most “bang for their buck” with technology.

If you are looking for inexpensive devices, do not be afraid to look at used iPads, Macs, or even Chromebooks. If buying an iPad for yourself, do not purchase anything older than an iPad Air 2. Similarly, don't buy a MacBook older than 2012 or a Surface older than a Surface 3. And remember that Chromebooks can often be purchased inexpensively—even at Walmart!

Where to Purchase

Especially when looking at accessories, such as USB microphones, I suggest looking at Amazon, eBay, and craigslist. (It's always a good idea to make sure that purchases from alternative retailers, like eBay and craigslist, are approved by your school/district). While it is wonderful to support local businesses, getting the “most for your buck,” will require you to look online for best prices. An Amazon search will help you determine what the current price is for a device, and eBay and craigslist can offer significant discounts on some items.

You do have to be careful when purchasing on eBay and craigslist—not all items are in working order, and some items may be stolen goods. If purchasing from craigslist, meet in a public place, and only pay for an item after you have tested it and made sure that it is free of any restrictions (such as “Find my



iPhone"). If you find that online prices are not any better than what you can find locally, by all means, support your local merchants!

Bargain hardware, such as tablets sold for \$25 on Black Friday, often lack up-to-date processors and other important hardware features. You often "get what you pay for."

And when it comes to software, free software often lacks the support you will receive versus a paid product. A number of programs offer "freemium" services, where the basic service is free, but additional features require a purchase. This can be problematic with iPads in a school environment because there is still no way to make an In-App Purchase using a school purchasing account.

Platforms

Many schools are turning to BYOD solutions (Bring Your Own Device). If this is the case in your school, you will have to find software solutions that work on any platform. There are programs that work on most devices, but there are always going to be glitches and surprises on various platforms, and students will expect you to be the expert. Learn to say, "I don't know," and to urge students to use Google and the support solutions from various applications to

solve problems on their own.

When it comes to multi-platform solutions, the best applications require a purchase or subscription, and educational pricing is often available. Schools that adopt Chromebooks typically do not set aside money for subscriptions, because many courses integrate technology simply using the G Suite apps (Docs, Slides, etc.). While music classes can use G Suite apps, music teachers usually want to adopt technology that can be used directly with music.

Recommended Apps

Here are three examples of technology that many music teachers want to use:

1. If you are looking for a computer program that can help students practice their music and provide authentic assessment, you will want to look at the "red note/green note" programs on the market, such as MakeMusic's SmartMusic. One of the exciting developments with the new SmartMusic is that the program has a completely different price structure, making it more affordable for many schools. Learn more [here](#).
2. If you are looking for a notation program to use with students and have access to a Windows or Mac computer lab, check out [Finale Notepad](#).

which is free. Have a mixture of devices in your classroom? You may wish to explore web-based options including [Noteflight](#) and [flat.io](#).

3. If you are looking for a Digital Audio Workstation that works on most devices, check out [Soundtrap](#) and [Soundation](#).

Other Resources

In the world of Mac and Windows, there are a number of free programs that can be used successfully. I would point you to other articles and presentation such as Chad Criswell's (Music Ed Magic) blog post: "[Low Cost Music Technology Options for the Music Education Classroom](#)" and [Barbara Freedman's "Free Technology for Music Education with Barbara Freedman."](#)

And there are hundreds of online music games and resources that can be used on many platforms, such as those found at Karen Garrett's [MusicTechTeacher](#) site. Also make sure to check out the work by [Amy Burns](#) (and also at [mustech.net](#)) as well as the work by [Katie Wardrobe](#).

Of course, you are always invited to check out my [Technology in Music Education](#) blog, and the [Music Education & Technology Podcast](#) that [Paul Shimmons](#) and I produce (it's also available in iTunes).

In closing, if you have a limited budget, it is important to make sure that you begin with the end in mind, knowing exactly what you want to achieve through your project. This will help steer your purchase of hardware and software—and may also help you convince others (school, boosters, PTO, community) to support your efforts.



Christopher J. Russell, Ph. D, is an author, blogger, clinician and middle school choir teacher at Oltman Middle School in St. Paul Park, MN.

Read his articles and bio on the [SmartMusic blog](#).

experienced fundraising advice

In our Title 1 school, the student population is very diverse socially and economically. Funding our music programs can be a challenge. Fundraising makes a big difference.

Many music directors use sales of fruit, cheese cake, candles, and “you name it” from fundraising companies to benefit their programs. The convenience and relative low-risk nature of these projects make them very popular. However, our school wanted a higher profit margin – at least 75% – so more of the funds would benefit our students. We also wanted projects that could potentially bring in \$10,000 or more per event. Below are a few approaches that have done very well for us.

Our Booster Group

Several years back, we created a parent booster group we called “The Foundation.” Its charter is designed to enhance funding for our fine arts and athletic programs. The underlying philosophy is that no child gets left out because of “ability to pay or not.” The Foundation frees up our local PTA to continue in the capacity of strengthening our programs through classroom, media center and social needs. Because our Foundation was designed from the outset as a funding agency to enhance our programs, our music directors and coaches can spend more time teaching kids.

Direct Contributions

Membership in the Foundation is optional. Families are encouraged to become members at various “giving” levels: \$25, \$50-\$99, \$100-\$249, \$250-\$500, \$500-\$999 and +\$1000. This is our best source of funding because it is 100% efficient. Our parents, grandparents, businesses, and local politicians understand that their contributions directly help our kids and community.

In addition to mentioning contributors in all our music programs, we also provide them with a variety of rewards. These include free tickets to shows, plaques, window stickers, and more. As a 501(c)(3) organization, donations are tax deductible.

Drawings

Drawings for popular, big-ticket items can be extremely popular – and profitable. Just be sure to check your local laws to make sure you comply with them. We offer a drawing for a week-long trip for two to Hawaii. This includes airfare, hotel, rental car, and a side excursion with a total value of \$4000. The proceeds from the drawing help us fund our music department travel expenses.

To save on expenses, we have our school system’s printing department make us a two part “ticket,” individually numbered for security, with a “stub” end for filling out donator info. Then we bind them into booklets of ten. From there, kids do all the work.

Each kid/family gets one booklet at a time (unless a parent requests more). We ask that they collect a \$5 donation to our program for each ticket. Kids receive donations from September through December, then we have the drawing at one of our holiday concerts.

To encourage student participation, we post charts, have fun competitions between music groups, and provide rewards like ice cream from the cafeteria. These rewards typically have high value to the kids, but little to no cost to the project.

For booking the excursion, we’ve been very fortunate to have a parent who is a travel agent. She books at cost and donates her time in exchange for the advertising on the ticket.

Carnivals

Our fundraising carnival is called Pantherpalooza, named after our school mascot the panther. It’s a small carnival event for the students held each October. In preparation we form a committee that divides up the responsibilities. We contract with local vendors, including an inflatables company, a shaved ice and concessions vendor, a DJ, etc. Everything is set up on our athletic field on a Friday when the local high school football team is not playing.



Kids can purchase individual tickets, groups of tickets, or an unlimited ticket. In addition, sponsorships from local providers like dentists, doctors, and other kid-oriented businesses help cover expenses. In return, signs and banners are posted at the entrance with the sponsors' logos and information. Profits are split on the tickets and concessions.

This is a great *fun*-raiser in every sense of the phrase, and also offers excellent PR for the school.

Silent Auctions

Many schools conduct silent auctions. As with other music program fundraising events, make sure you form a committee to divide up the responsibilities. In addition to donating auction items, encourage sponsors to pick up event costs in exchange for advertising. You might even provide an extra touch of class with a nice donated venue.

One trick to a successful silent auction is correctly timing it with the yearly calendar. Consider, for example, lining it up with the holiday shopping season. I think it really helps to have a mix of inexpensive and big-ticket items. Auction items that do particularly well include trips, weekend retreats at a parent's lake

or mountain house, flight simulator time, handmade furniture, autographed items from sports and music personalities, babysitting services, hair services, tickets to events, etc.

You might also consider an adult-only event with appropriate beverages, food, conversation, entertainment, etc. Parents enjoy the night out and a good social atmosphere can lead to higher bids.

Ethnic Heritage Dinner

Our Hispanic Heritage Dinner really brings our school together. One contributing factor is that our school has a Spanish-speaking liaison to help bridge the language gap with our Hispanic community. This person coordinates with our Foundation to encourage our Hispanic families to cook traditional dishes for a meal prior to one of our fall music concerts. Here are some details:

- The liaison will start contacting parents in August for the October event.
- Usually our concerts bring in 1000 to 1100 people: We ask for \$5 per meal.
- We use the school's cafeteria facilities and arrange for one of our cafeteria workers to oversee the distribution of food and make sure we are up to code.
- We start serving food at 5:00 while the concert begins at 7:00.

Parents LOVE this event! It makes dinner easier on concert night, it simplifies getting to the concert on time, and the kids are happier. Best of all, the food is WONDERFUL.

Jeans or Hat Day

Students wear uniforms in our school. For a special event, students are able to wear something else in exchange for a small contribution. This is an easy fundraiser that only requires 3-4 parents, for a few hours, on one morning.

Students pay \$1 to wear jeans, a hat, or "wild" socks for the day. To show they have paid their \$1, each student gets an obnoxious sticker to wear. Luckily, our kids have fun with this. It doesn't generate five-figure amounts but it's a quick and easy event that can be repeated within the same year with a +99% profit margin.

Fundraiser Timing

If possible, set up your fundraising calendar a year in advance so you don't conflict with other groups. Always list your fundraisers on your school's master calendar of events. In my experience, fall is usually the best time for fundraising.

Repeat successful events at the same time each year – the community will grow to expect them and budget them into their personal finances.

And don't forget to always advertise well in advance. Whenever possible get in your local paper (and include photos) to draw attention to your event and program.

General Fundraiser Tips

I can't stress this point enough: Never handle a project alone – form small committees to both share the workload and to provide plenty of checks and balances. Make sure you establish a budget so there are definite targets for fundraising needs. And be clear about the purpose for the fundraising; funding specific items needed for your program.

Here are some additional suggestions:

- Fill out the necessary forms with your school district.
- Understand the economics of your community – don't just assume – ask parents, school administrators, and community leaders.
- Keep accurate records! Show where and from whom every dollar comes and goes.

- Make sure your principal and assistant principals are on board and always keep the school (and/or booster group) bookkeeper in the loop.
- Try to anticipate any pitfalls that may come your way and plan for them in advance.
- Don't forget to thank your community by performing at the local festivals, tree lightings, malls, retirement homes, MLK celebrations, etc. The more active you are in the community, the more likely the community will support you.

Finally, I encourage you to always use your music program fundraising and performing in conjunction with advocacy. I hope some of these ideas inspire you to do more for your program. Good luck!



Since 1996, Mike Gibson has been the director of bands at Ridgeview Middle School in Sandy Springs, GA.

Read his articles and bio on the [SmartMusic blog](#).

how parent booster groups can help

For many programs, parent booster groups are essential. They help provide access to resources that school districts can't provide. In addition to fundraising benefits, individual booster parents bring many talents into our organizations. When managed correctly, these contributions can greatly relieve a lot of the stress associated with being a music director.

A colleague and I were recently talking about our booster groups. We compared their structure, membership, executive board, etc. Sharing ideas with other educators like this is always a great way to stay current. Based in part on our discussion, I'd like to share some tips that might help you form a booster group or better utilize the one you have.

Group Charter or By-Laws Considerations

One of the first steps is to write a charter (or your by-laws) and have the results notarized and filed with the school and other agencies required by your system, township, etc. When writing this document, be very clear about the purpose of the organization. Like a well-written business plan, this purpose should guide all you do, including writing your mission statement.

From there you'll want to outline the decision- and approval-process for the group. It's important to have defined guidelines about all handling of money (and it's equally important that you never deviate from these guidelines). Finally, you'll need to list the leadership positions and responsibilities for each.

You should also consider incorporating your group and filing for Charitable Non-Profit Organization status, 501(c)(3). Incorporating can help relieve some liability from the individuals in the group should something go wrong. Having a 501(c)(3) allows any donations to be tax-deductible as well as addresses other tax issues for the group (check your local laws as well). Here's a [link to the IRS website](#) with more information about requirements for 501(c)(3). You will want a

lawyer to help with the documentation for incorporation and 501(c)(3) status. We were fortunate to have a parent who is a lawyer donate their time.

Be sure to get approval of all documents from your local school board, principal, etc., then keep copies in your files, the school office, and your booster group's files.

Organizing the Leadership

You will want to create an executive board. Typically this will include president, vice president (fundraising chair), treasurer, secretary, a parent liaison for each group being represented (we have one booster group for all music and athletics), fundraising coordinator, membership coordinator, school principal (or assistant principal) and music directors. This group needs to be large enough to bounce ideas off of one another and yet small enough to streamline discussions and actions (and get things done).

As a suggestion, your executive board might meet once a month. You'll want to make sure the meeting is organized with an agenda. Typically the president runs the meeting from this printed (or electronically shared) agenda.

Our meetings use this format of parliamentary procedure:

1. The minutes from the previous meeting are read by the secretary. The president asks for corrections, then for a "second," and then approval by saying "Aye" or disapproval by saying "Nay."
2. The treasurer's report is given with corrections, second, and approval.
3. Each group (in our case-band, chorus, orchestra and athletics) provides a report of monthly activities, reminders of future events, etc. Each should take no more than a few minutes.
4. The president presents old business, then new business.
5. The board votes and approves/disapproves motions as needed.
6. The meeting is adjourned – usually within an hour.



Keep in mind your organization's responsibilities to your community as well. Other community leaders, parents and school personnel can be valuable assets to your booster group without being on the executive board. They can serve on various committees, serve as sources of information and contacts, provide grant writing, etc. The potential benefits go on and on. These people can also be great advocates for your program.

Selecting People

When looking for booster group leadership, make the effort to find active, go-getter parents that will place your organization's overall interest ahead of their own. Consider their individual skills and personalities when helping to determine how they might best help. Remember, most parents just want their kid(s) to have an opportunity to be happy and successful.

Another consideration for leadership might be each potential member's influence and connections within the school and community at large. As stated earlier, advocacy for your program and school is an ongoing process and should never be overlooked. The longer your "roots" grow into your community, the stronger your "tree" will grow.

Finally, think about potential longevity. If you'd like someone in a position for a long time, a parent with younger students might be a better choice than someone else whose youngest student is a senior. For the same reason, you might also prefer parents with more than one (or two) student(s).

Other Contributions

As my colleague and I were discussing our booster organizations, he mentioned that his group's treasurer once made the comment, "You're just using us as your cash cow." While providing funds to supplement what the local school board provides is an important function, it's not the only assistance a booster group can provide your music program.

Consider the many skills your boosters possess that can be used to make your job easier and the kids more successful. They may be accountants, lawyers, teachers, stay- or work-at-home parents, realtors, police officers, nurses, bus drivers, truck drivers, counselors, preachers/rabbis, mechanics, etc. Put these skills to work, too!

No matter what level of school music group you teach, these community members have a lot to offer your program.

What If Your School Has Additional Fiscal Challenges?

Our school, Ridgeview Charter is a Title 1 middle school. Our booster group, the Foundation, was created to support both our music and athletic programs. Annually the Foundation provides more than \$50,000 in support. Additionally, the Foundation's members help with chaperoning events, providing community information, organizing receptions, providing transportation, coordinating school functions, bookkeeping assistance, phone chains and messaging, advocacy, and much more.

Sometimes people see booster groups as the icing on the cake in large, affluent school districts. I invite you to challenge this, as Ridgeview has. Booster groups can help any program become exceptional.



Since 1996, Mike Gibson has been the director of bands at Ridgeview Middle School in Sandy Springs, GA.

Read his articles and bio on the [SmartMusic blog](#).

an administrator's guide to music department budget

There are so many variables when speaking about budgets. Generally, each school receives a set amount of funds from the state or federal governments and granting institutions based on a variety of formulas. At universities, distribution of funds can be based on tuition, student fees, grants, and bond issues. In common education, funds are generally received based on student average daily attendance, bond issues, and grants.

Every state, school district, university, and granting organization has a set of rules that govern how these funds are distributed and spent. If you are new to managing a school budget, it is important to ask questions before assuming that these funds can be spent on a particular project.

Parts of a Budget

Building a budget in its simplest form is not difficult. For a music program, you can devise the categories for both income and expenses. Income would include any funds that you receive directly from the overall school budget, fundraising, and grants. Income could include the following:

- District and school funds
- Fundraisers
- Support groups
- Admission fees to events
- Student fees

Expenses (not including salaries and benefits) could include the following:

- Instrument repair/maintenance for band and orchestra
- Keyboard tuning
- Instrument purchases

- Uniform purchases
- Uniform cleaning and maintenance
- Music library
- Travel
- Professional development
- Technology
- Print expenses
- Guest artists
- Miscellaneous

First Step

Estimate the total amount of funds your department will receive from both the school district and any supplemental funds from individual schools. If this is your first year as the supervisor, you will need to look at previous budgets to determine an estimate. Unless you have been forewarned of cuts in the budget, the estimate should be accurate.

If there has not been a budget, then you will need to investigate several sources within your school district to ascertain a total amount and also investigate how those funds were divided based on expenditures. This is a tedious job, but will serve you well in the future.

The worst-case budget scenario is that there is not nor has there ever been a specific budget for music. In my opinion, the only thing worse than having a small budget for the program is to not have any control over the budget. This is not a recipe for success.

BUDGET 2017

Next Step

You must allow your faculty to have input into the budgeting process. In my first years as an administrator, I was “too busy” to include the faculty. This was a mistake, and I learned to never to let it happen again.

Generally, music teachers are excellent planners who know what their needs will be for the following year. Budget time is the time for honest conversations on what the faculty's needs are and how they relate to the budget. If someone requests more than your budget allows (it happens), it's better to fill them in on the budget reality at the beginning of the process rather than later.

Because of budget cuts that many schools are experiencing, fundraising and support groups have become critical. Fundraising is generally something no teacher is interested in, yet it is often necessary. Most everyone in teaching has been involved in selling magazines, candles, calendars, and many other fundraisers that can bring some significant help to the budget. If at all possible, I'd suggest you try to make the fundraisers musically-related.

Nearly every school and university have a support group of dedicated people who are committed to several things: involvement in the student's success,

believing in the importance of music education, in being part of the social environment. Excellent volunteers are wonderful and indispensable. They need to be nurtured and provided with opportunities to help you raise funds and speak positively about your program.

The only drawback I have experienced was when some individuals in the support group began telling me how to do my job or became involved in curriculum decisions. The only way I know to prevent this negative involvement is to make sure the support group members understand their purpose from the very beginning: to raise funds, help when needed, and speak positively about the music program.

One of the most difficult steps in the budget process is dividing funds among all the schools and the different programs in each school. You have to be fair and impartial. You have to be because you are the supervisor for all the music programs in the school system.

Yet there are programs that by their nature are more active and expensive than other programs. Band is an expensive area of instruction. The band is called on for a host of extra activities, including parades, football games, and

pep bands, just to name a few. As a general rule, all of the music programs in the secondary schools have large enrollment numbers.

Years of research has shown that the most important time for music development is in early elementary school. Yet that is typically not where the majority of funds will be spent. This is a dilemma you will deal with every year. The conclusion I have reached is to give the necessary funds to the secondary programs and keep the contingency part of the budget large enough to meet the special needs of the lower grade levels.

Final Step

The final step is the presentation of the budget to those who actually control the finances. This is accomplished in two parts.

First, present the previous year's budget summary, noting the broad categories of income and expenses. Organize the budget proposal in three columns. It will give administrators an idea of how your budget worked in the previous year, what kind of steward you have been with public funds, and what your needs will be for the next fiscal year. Here is an example of how those columns could look:

INCOME		
Item	Budget	Annually Spent
District Allocation	\$100,000	\$98,275
Fundraising	\$25,000	\$23,500
EXPENSES		
Item	Budget	Actually Spent
Yearly Instrument Repair	\$20,000	\$22,750
Fundraising	\$12,000	\$13,000

Second, present a written proposal of your needs for the coming fiscal year. There needs to be a cover letter that provides overall justification for your request. The next pages should include income you expect to receive from outside sources and the expenses you are anticipating.

List income and expenses in broad categories (as shown in the example to the left). The people to whom you will be presenting the budget do not need to know the repair cost for each instrument or how much a piece of the choral music costs. They need broad categories.

The categories of income and expenses will remain the same. The broader item statements under each category will remain the same. Under the budget category, list your request for the coming budget cycle. At the least, upper administration will know you are a good steward of the funds you have been given, you understand budgets, and you have a reasonable plan in mind for executing the budget.

Most of us in music education are not trained to work with school budgets. Arts educators don't always have the best reputation when it comes to budgets. Don't be that person. Prepare well, ask questions, and don't overspend.



John Clinton recently retired as the dean of the College of Fine Arts and Design at the University of Central Oklahoma. For 30 years previously, he was director of fine arts for the Norman, OK Public Schools.

Read his full bio and article on the [SmartMusic blog](#).



One Final Tip: Explore the new SmartMusic. It's free to use and compatible with the devices your students are using, including iPads and Chromebooks. Learn more today at [smartmusic.com](https://www.smartmusic.com).

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