

**An Open Letter to Music Faculty in Higher Education
from the Executive Committee of NASM
Regarding K–12 Teacher Shortages**

Dear Colleagues:

We are writing to urge your attention to a **critical matter facing the entire field of music**. In many areas, there is a **serious shortage of music teachers**, particularly in **K–12** school settings. This problem, and how we as a field resolve it, will have an impact on the future work of every musician, and every postsecondary institution offering music degrees. No matter what our specialization, each of us has a responsibility. We are asking you to join us in an effort to ameliorate this situation as quickly as possible before it does irreparable damage.

We take the unusual step of writing you with such urgency for a simple reason. **If we don't solve the teacher shortage, the consequences are serious: substantive, sequential music programs will be removed from the schools. Once such programs are gone, it is almost impossible to get them back.** If this were to happen on a large scale, it would reduce the number of children and youth engaged with music study and, in time, reduce the number of those talented and prepared enough to have a chance to become music professionals, and the number of amateurs with sufficient knowledge and interest in music to pursue it as a player or listener throughout a lifetime.

Clearly, **inattention to this problem has great potential to damage every aspect of our field.** What can you do to help?

1. First, **remember daily that the problem exists, is serious and urgent, and needs your attention.** For many K–12 students, especially the most needy, music programs in the schools are their only opportunity to gain knowledge, skills, and insights into our discipline. Yes, there are other approaches to teaching music, they are all valuable and deserve our support, but they are not a substitute for school-based programs in which all can participate.
2. **Support K–12 music teaching as an honorable and critically important profession.** Encourage students that express an interest in teaching of whatever type. If students with notable prospects in another music specialty show an interest in teaching, encourage them to pursue that interest. Exemplify for all music students your own respect for teaching and for future teachers.
3. **Help all music students understand the relationship between teaching and the future of music.** Associate teaching with excellence in all other aspects of music. Nurture and respect students who are committed to all kinds of teaching careers, and help them to become the best musicians and teachers of music they can possibly be.
4. **Join with others locally, regionally, and nationally to address the K–12 teacher shortage** from the perspective of your own work and your own field of specialization. Encourage graduating students to go where jobs are. Be aware of alternative certification, now available in over 45 states. As appropriate, encourage graduates already teaching to continue, or those who have left to return.
5. **Act as though the teacher shortage is an immediate problem.** The field does not have much time to solve this problem before adverse consequences begin to multiply. **That is why every potential K–12 music teacher is critically important this year and the next.** Think of it this way: every potential teacher lost represents the possibility of losing programs that reach hundreds of students.

Each institution and individual will address this problem in ways they know best. Local action is the key. Our purpose is to raise immediate concern about a critical issue for the future of the field as a whole. Having worked so hard for so many years to build programs, having increased evidence of the importance of music study for every child, and having a high degree of interest in parents and schools, **it would be a great tragedy for our art form if we were unable to provide and sustain the teachers needed and wanted in communities throughout the nation.** We ask for your attention to this matter, fully aware of all the problems in K–12 education, teacher preparation requirements, and conditions for teachers in the schools. Challenges in these categories are always with us and they must not stop our field’s historic commitment to quality music instruction in the schools and all that it means for the future health of our discipline.

Thank you for your consideration and **for the outstanding work that you are doing** on behalf of music.

Sincerely yours,

NASM Executive Committee