

MSBOA COVID-19 Talking Points and Q&A

Talking points for District Presidents

- For the better part of four months, the Michigan Music Education Task Force, made up of leaders of all music education groups in the state (MSBOA, along with MSVMA, MMEA and MASTA, along with professors at MSU and U-M), met and discussed how to mitigate the pandemic's impact on music education. The goal of the Task Force was:
 - Develop strategies and plans to adapt to the Governor's Guidelines for *return to school*, Fall 2020.
 - Provide teachers with ideas and strategies for returning to school (all models – normal opening, hybrid or distance-learning).
 - Provide administrators with facts and creative solutions for opening schools to ensure music education thrives.
 - Prevent the current health situation from having irreparable long-term damage to student music education in Michigan.

- On July 20, the Task Force Final report (with recommendations for teaching and learning), was sent to MSBOA, MSVMA, MMEA and MASTA members so they could begin having research-driven discussions with principals, superintendents and parents. The report included the preliminary findings of an aerosol study done by researchers at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

- On August 7, a second document was sent (including guidelines for Return to School) to all MSBOA members. This document included information from the second round of the aerosol study from CU Boulder.

- Music Education during the pandemic is tough. COVID-19 has presented health, economic and personal challenges worldwide and there has been no tried and true “playbook.” People disagree about the ways to handle processes and we are left as a volunteer organization to do the very best we can to keep music education alive for Michigan students.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why isn't MSBOA advocating for music at the state level?

We *have* been. Our documents and the recommendations from the aerosol study have been sent to the Governor's office and are in the hands of the Governor's advisory council. In addition, MSBOA President Greg Normandin has communicated with members of the Governor's *Return To School* Task Force as well as people close to the Governor. In addition, many people on *our* Michigan Music Education Task Force have spoken with members of the “Return to School” Task Force put together by the Governor.

Most importantly, we have provided all reports and guidelines to every

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MSBOA member – so these conversations could happen at local levels – where decisions are being made.

Why isn't MSBOA doing the same things MHSAA is doing?

MHSAA and MSBOA are different organizations with different missions and governance. MHSAA is a voluntary body and MSBOA is comprised of classroom teachers; MHSAA accepts no tax dollars and as such, they do not have to work within the same guidelines as we do (as school organizations).

To be sure -- There are obvious inequalities between high school athletics and other extracurricular activities. MHSAA events attract 1.6M spectators a year – and just as we've seen the power of sports at the national level in the pandemic, we must realize music just does not have the influence athletics does in our society. For example – both professional and college sports are active; symphonies and theatres have not yet opened up.

(In 2017, revenue from the four major US sports -- football, baseball, basketball & hockey -- garnered more than \$34 billion dollars, while Broadway revenue was \$1.7 billion during that same period -- and most symphonies did not make enough to even be profitable.)

The "rules" seem to be all over the map... Why are guidelines being interpreted in different ways?

There is no clear and satisfying methodology here.

One reason there is no "blanket" policy is because of geography. Different parts of the state are in different COVID "phases," and even when schools are in the same COVID-19 phase, there can be different infection rates among communities. Thus, there are disparities.

Another issue is there are inconsistencies between the way different health departments are interpreting the Executive Orders.

And frankly, some people with decision-making authority are just making their own judgements. This is happening all over the country, and not only with music education. There are vast differences in the way municipalities, businesses and even legal minds -- are interpreting things. We must acknowledge the obvious: COVID-19 is like nothing any of us have seen before and there is a great deal of anxiety, misinterpretation and human error in such a complex and fluid time.

The MHSAA has football, and yet, band students can't play at the games... Why the disparity?

According to the MHSAA's official statement, if the Athletic Association allowed marching bands, they would be obligated to give tickets to more people (student & parents) and the crowd size would grow to more than "the spirit of the Governor's Executive Order."

And it must be honestly stated: real health and safety concerns are not ubiquitously one-sided; we've heard from Band Directors who do not want to be put in potentially dangerous situations and have questioned the value

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of pushing for bands to be included.

We are working with a member of the Governor's Advisory Council who has committed to advocating on our behalf...so we can create possible options for band students to have creative performance opportunities.

**What's happening
with Solo & Ensemble
Festival?**

Jeanine Ignash, State VP for Solo & Ensemble, is currently leading a committee looking at virtual options for S&E Festival. Obviously, things are fluid and there are still many details to work out. Stay tuned.