



It Takes a Village...
**Music Booster Parent &
Director Sharing Session**
PMEA Annual Conference
April 25, 2026 at 9:45 a.m.
Kalahari Resort in the Poconos

Description

It takes a village to “raise” a music student. Community support groups (boosters) are crucial for the success of sustaining Pre-K to Grade 12 band, choral, jazz, string, general music, Modern Band, and other school music programs. Across the country, we have seen that the best music programs never fail to attract supportive parents, alumni, administration, and community members at large. This makes creating and managing a booster program a particularly easy and attractive way to gain essential funding for establishing programs, and for providing the additional financial and educational resources to enhance the learning of students while increasing their opportunities to perform, travel, and experience music on a deeper level.

This session will provide an informal forum for the participants to “let their hair down” and share their local strategies and “best practices” to build numbers and the engagement of its members, improve overall effectiveness and efficiency, “re-energize” their booster organization's mission, vision, goals, and action plans, and help the boosters themselves with tips and tools to guide their organizations' motivations, actions, and legal compliance.

Panelists

We’ve invited an “expert” guest panel with vast experience managing their own parent booster groups to help steer the conversation towards pragmatic solutions to as many common issues as time allows.

- Robert Dell (Carnegie-Mellon University and retired from Peters Township SD)
- Donna Fox (Carnegie-Mellon and retired from Peters Township SD)
- Paul Fox (PMEA Council for Teacher Training, Recruitment, & Retention and retired from Upper St. Clair SD)
- Len Lavelle (North Hills SD)
- Christopher Marra (Seton Hill University)
- Henry Pearlberg (retired from Wallingford-Swarthmore SD)
- Rich Victor (University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education and retired from State College Area SD)

Website Resource/Clearinghouse of Materials: <https://paulfox.blog/>

Password for Rich Victor’s Advocacy for Baldwin Parents: BHMP12413

Possible "Hot Topics"

- A. "The power of unity" + "strength in numbers" (assembling a unified support group, a "comprehensive K-12 music boosters" of collaboration, cooperation and interconnectedness – working towards common goals for the music program)
- B. "Understanding who you represent" (putting students first & eliminating personal agendas & biases)
- C. "Staying in bounds" (the mission, vision, and job description of a music booster, and redirecting/deflecting/modifying the occasional bad attitudes of parents - "the director does not like my kid?" or "my daughter did not make drum major")
- D. "What's the difference between a coalition and a political action group?" (defining perceived and actual individual vs. group action plans - and touching on your saying: "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu...")
- E. "The tools of advocacy" (tips, tools, and techniques on how to be an effective advocate)
- F. "Managing the minutiae" (an "idea bank" or clearinghouse of common problems and solutions – storytelling of "how to get it all together" and "what works for us!")
- G. Other common issues (apathy & inertia: building parent member support & involvement, volunteerism & attendance to meetings; fundraising and "fun"raising, nonprofit vs. profit IRS tax status, etc.)

Session Objectives:

Attendees (both booster parents and music teachers) will be able to share their combined knowledge, understanding, and "best practices" of:

1. Rationale for and methods to start, build interest and participation in, and sustain a Music Booster Group
2. Types and models of booster organizations
3. Recruitment of booster members and officers
4. Job descriptions of officers and committee chairs
5. Set-up and smooth operation of official full group meetings and committees (agendas)
6. Budgets and fundraising
7. Support of music group travel, adjudication festivals, award banquets, social activities, etc.
8. Communications and publicity
9. Advocacy of the local Pre-K-12 music programs and music education in general
10. Sample Constitutions & Bylaws
11. Sample policies and procedures
12. Sample forms (e.g., uniform management)

In addition, a "brainstormed" review of booster group problems/concerns and "what we do" suggestions will be aired which may also cover these timely topics:

13. Recruitment of volunteers
14. How to get people to show up to meetings
15. How to "help" not "hurt" the program
16. How to become a parent advocate of the total music program of the district
17. Fundraising and "fun"raising - what's the difference and why you need both?
18. Differentiation of "boostering" vs. "directing" or going over the head of music teachers
19. The advantages and disadvantages of going "nonprofit"