

Advocacy: The Best Defense is a Good Offense

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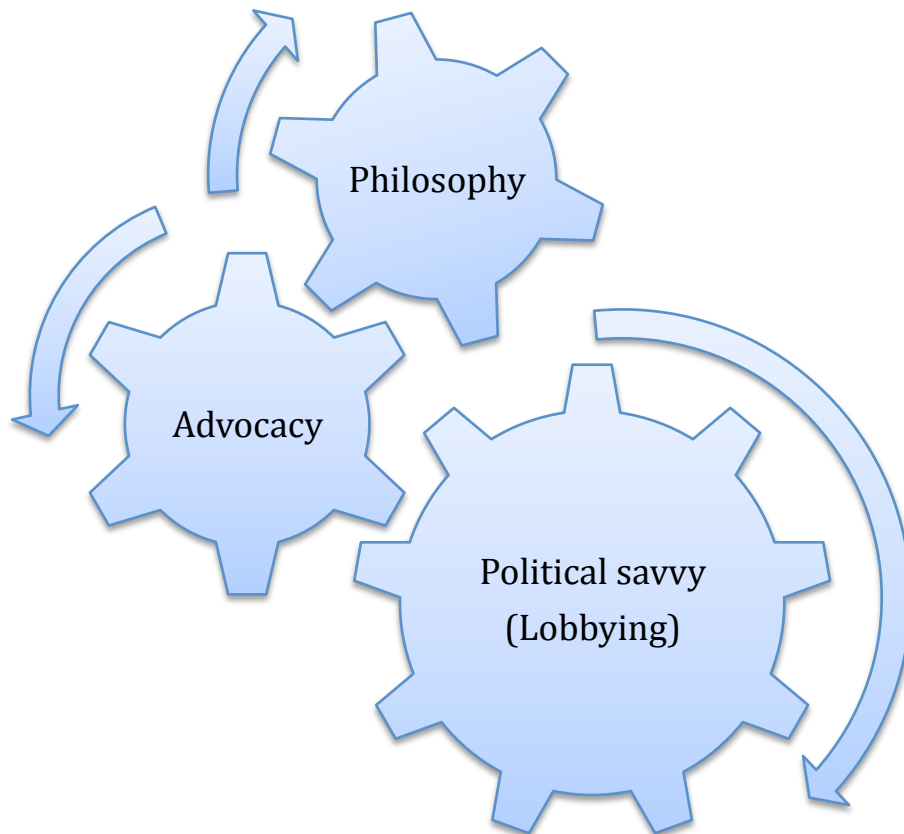
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The Role of Advocacy¹

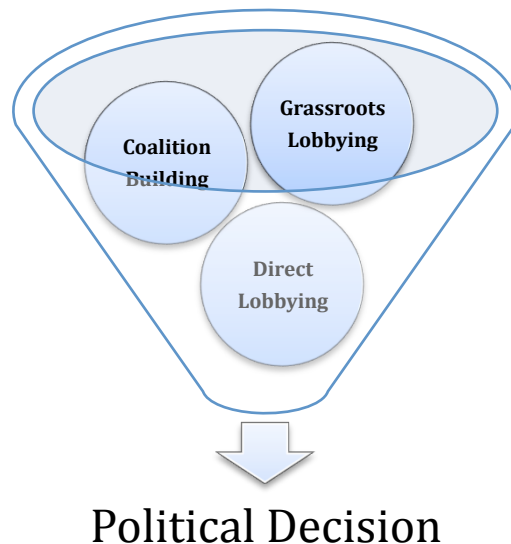
- **Philosophy**—seeks to explain the nature and the significance of music education through critically reasoned arguments.
- **Advocacy**—seeks to build political and financial support for music education through calculated methods of persuasion.
- **Political savvy**—Advocates look to philosophers for their reasoned arguments but, winning political and financial support for school and community music programs often depends more on political savvy and marketing expertise than on a cogent philosophy.



¹ For a thorough explanation, see David Elliott, *Music Matters* (New York: Oxford, 1995), 11.

Types of Lobbying²

- **Lobbying defined**—a group of people seeking to influence politicians or public officials on a particular issue.
- **Skills needed**—an in depth understanding of the technicalities of the legislative process, a deep appreciation of human relations, and a keen sense of when to make the right moves.
- **Grassroots lobbying** (or rallying constituent support)—is similar to coalition building in that it seeks to create an appearance of broad public support for its aims. Grassroots strategies include e-mails, letters/mail-outs, faxes, phone calls, and newspaper, radio or television advertisements. It is imperative that lobbyists maintain good relations with the news media.
- **Coalition building**—small groups with little influence attach themselves to larger, more influential, groups with more clout so that they are perceived as being a part of the majority. Collaborations between divergent groups can be more impressive than among those groups who always collaborate.
- **Direct lobbying** (or one-on-one contact)—requires strong communication skills and a reputation of trustworthiness and integrity. The lobbyist should know the facts and present both sides of the issue to not put the decision-maker on the defensive. Insider credentials or a prestigious position can help a lobbyist gain access to decision-makers.



² These definitions emanate from Betsy McWhirt, *The arts and legislation: A comparison of for-profit and nonprofit lobbying* (Masters thesis, The American University, 1988).