

Edmund Chiarello – NYSSMA® President



My Compliments to the Teacher

Sometimes, people in various regions of our state form opinions about the quality of music education in their area or school based on their experience, perceptions, assumptions, or hearsay. Many of us have worked in districts that offer outstanding music programs, programs that offer a variety of quality experiences in general music, bands, orchestras, choirs, modern band, theory and composition, and music technology. These programs often come with a history of plaques, traditions, master educators, and proud community members, all of which are genuine attributes, and deserve celebration.

It is a treasured quality when Boards of Education, school districts, and individual schools believe they have the best music program. The enthusiasm and pride driving these perceptions are valuable assets. We often hear claims such as “X High School has the best theatre program!” or “No one showcases instrumental performance like Y School District.” We appreciate and embrace these superlatives and the history and pride they represent.

It is important, however, to recognize that while district resources are often driven by budgets and class size is influenced by school board policy, good teaching transcends these parameters and limitations. A skilled teacher can work with available resources to build a curriculum and design lesson plans providing a comprehensive quality learning experience. While more funding, smaller

class sizes, and better scheduling would certainly be beneficial, exceptional teaching can make a significant impact regardless of these factors.

Our profession thrives

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of teaching and learning in various locations. I have worked in two different school districts as both a teacher and administrator. Each has a proud tradition of excellent music programs. Now, as I observe student teachers in di-

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verse schools in a variety of areas, I see a wealth of exceptional teaching. Whether a school is resource-rich or operates with minimal equipment, all these programs provide comprehensive music experiences and take pride in their achievements.

Though the challenges of less motivated individuals exist, they do not represent the majority. Most educators are dedicated and passionate about delivering their best efforts to their students each day.

Typically, we view our discipline

through the lens of our own school, district, and teaching environment. We are all entrenched in the work we do for the children and the school(s) we serve, and the community they represent. While these microcosms are rich in tradition and accomplishments, there are many schools and districts across our state offering programs of equal quality of which we have very little knowledge.

Sharing and learning

Recognize, that regardless of your program's general level of accomplishment, there are many similar programs with dedicated, hardworking teachers striving toward the same goals and delivering quality instruction to the programs in the communities they serve. As music educators we share many more similarities than differences. The programs we maintain are more alike than different. What you are achieving in your classroom and on your stage is likely mirrored across the state in many similar programs.

We have much to learn from each other by sharing ideas and experiences and celebrating our accomplishments. Despite busy schedules and geographical distances, I encourage you to make the most of any opportunity to connect with fellow educators. We have much in common and much to share.

Happy fall! Thank you for your dedication and hard work and I hope to see you at the NYSSMA® Conference in Rochester, December 5–8 where we can all celebrate, sharing with each other and learning. ||