

Funding Source Alert: School District and Independent Foundations

Dateline: 2/2/2006

At a time when support for music and the arts appears to be in decline, music teachers need to be creative when it comes to finding funding. One often untapped source is school district foundations. Aimed at improving the quality of education for students, school district foundations award funds to teachers in the form of grants. To qualify for a grant, a teacher must submit a written proposal or application. The number and amount of awards is determined by the specific district foundation, meaning particular foundations might be able to award grants in full for every proposal received, while others may award funds but not as much as requested. There is also the distinct possibility that, due to high demand, proposals will have to be rejected.

Every foundation will also have its own set of limitations and guidelines. For instance, the school district foundation in one Illinois music specialist's area offers grant money for teachers twice a year. Teachers can submit a proposal requesting up to \$750. The guidelines for the award stipulate that the money be used in ways that support state standards. The following is how the aforementioned teacher successfully used her award to do just that:

"Last year I addressed 5th grade and the area of math and music. The

students used glockenspiels and composed 8-bar original compositions. The compositions were evaluated on rhythmic accuracy, but could include any combination of note values. I was able to get enough Boomwhackers® for the class to perform a few of the better compositions."

Local or independent foundations, funded by professionals and other concerned citizens in the area, are also an excellent source of funding. As with school district foundations, a proposal or application is usually needed, detailing the reason for the grant, the requested amount, and other pertinent information.

"[An independent] foundation has allowed me to expand the music program at my school in a way I never could have with regular budget money."

Michigan

Award amounts, examples ranging from \$45 for a floor music staff to \$1,500 for Orff instruments, are as varied as the projects for which they are used, highlighting one of the distinct benefits of school district and local foundations: flexibility. Unlike grants from governments and similar sources, funds from school district and independent foundations tend to be available not only to teachers, but to anyone who works with students. Additionally, the money can be used for a multitude of educational purposes, such as field trips, guest

performances, materials, or professional development. Such support and flexibility have allowed teachers to enrich their programs in ways unthinkable before.

To find out if your school district or community has a foundation, you could:

- Ask your principal.
- Contact your school board representative(s).
- Look for information in district newsletters.
- Search your school district's web site.
- Perform a Google search for the name of your school district and the word "foundation."

To find local foundations, all of the above suggestions will apply. In addition, you could:

- Investigate your local public or college/university library.
- Perform a Google search for the area and the word "foundation": for instance, Milwaukee area foundation.
- Read memos or informational literature delivered to your school.
- Ask local nonprofits.

For further information on grant writing and potential funding resources, go to Plank Road Publishing's music education advocacy resource center,

SchoolMusicMatters.com, and check out the Grants and Fund-Raising sections in the Idea Bank, and the Funding/Fund-Raising section in Links. While you're there, take our 2006 School Music Matters Survey and tell us about the state of funding and support in your area.