

**Subject:** Tennessee's "Race to the Top": Where Does Music Education fit?

I hope that the summer has been a relaxing and rewarding time for each and every one of you. I also hope that you have been able to "recharge the batteries" as we prepare for another year of challenges and rewards.

I'm sure that all of you are very familiar with our state's new initiative; "First To The Top" (or "Race To The Top")

A few facts about the program:

- Excess of over \$500 million dollars awarded to the state of Tennessee by the federal government to be used for education

- Our state's proposal to the federal government contained over 1,100 pages with supporting documentation

- New ideas and bold changes dealing with how teachers would be evaluated, promoted and paid.

- Early models (January 2010) suggested 50% of teachers' evaluation criteria and tenure rights will be based on objective student achievement data. 35% of that data would be drawn from the state's Value Added Assessment System data, which measures a student's year-over-year progress under every teacher. The final 15% would be taken from a menu of other teacher assessment data.

For music educators in the State of Tennessee, the question becomes: How and where do we fit into this model?

The current 15 member committee in Nashville, that is creating and defining the "rules" by which we are going to exist within the "Race To The Top" program, contains no music educators or no music education voice. The "Race To The Top" program is going to change the ways that we operate on a day to day basis with our classes. Because of this, the music educators from our state must be heard. With well over 1,500 members, I believe that the Tennessee Music Education Association can be a voice to the committee and to the state. However, our first step should be to define what we believe should be evaluated within the teacher assessment process. We must give them some guidance on what we, as Tennessee

music educators, believe to be defining items within our daily/weekly/monthly/yearly teaching strategies.

Although we all would like to see ensemble performance evaluations worked into this process, the chances of this happening are probably zero. The "Race To The Top" initiative deals with individual student progress. With that in mind, we need to suggest what should be evaluated, when and how often it should be evaluated, and who should be doing the evaluations. Student Portfolios, SmartMusic Gradebooks, etc. may become more and more common words to us over the next few years. However, we have to decide what is important enough to be evaluated and assessed within these items.

Without becoming too specific within this e-mail, I am asking each of the TMEA State Chairs and our 9 affiliated Regional Presidents to contact their memberships to ask them the questions that I just began asking: **By what measures of student's progress should we, as teachers, be assessed? We need to hear from our state's membership!!**

The full council of the TMEA meets on Saturday, August 14th at MTSU. I am asking that each of the State Chairs and Regional Presidents bring their membership's information/ideas to that meeting so that the TMEA Board/Executive Committee can quickly begin to assemble and arrange the material before forwarding our suggestions and statements to the "Race To The Top" committee in Nashville.

Please feel free to contact me or copy me on your correspondence. Let's see if the TMEA can be a strong voice within the education process of the state of Tennessee.

I look forward to hearing from everyone.

Sincerely

Ron Rogers, President

Tennessee Music Education Association