



The CMEA President's 2010 Fall Article from CMEA Magazine

Greetings from Walnut Creek, California! It's incredible but summer is over. It was only yesterday that we were having our year-end spring concerts, graduation, and successfully ending the school year. For myself, traveling to Washington DC for MENC was very important, guest conducting at Cazadero Music Camp was a treat, Kauai was immensely restful, and those final lazy days of summer are winding down. A brand new school year awaits us filled with refreshed energy, new and innovative ideas, new students, and renewed enthusiasm. Welcome back to school and the continuation of our great mission in music education. However, is it really business as usual?

As you no doubt know, California public education has been devastated by the state budget meltdown of the past several years. This clearly won't be getting better anytime soon. Traveling to Washington DC this summer to the MENC National Assembly as your CMEA President, I have found that many of our fellow states and MEA organizations are experiencing similar financial issues as those in California. This is a national problem, not one that is localized in our state. Our problems just happen to be the most severe and very high profile in the news. There are many layers to the problems we are facing. Let's focus on one in this article.

With the financial meltdown along with some other mitigating factors, the CMEA State Conference has not been drawing the number of music educators needed to make it a consistent event or to break even financially. With the present economic situation, the CMEA Executive Board felt the need to make some basic changes in the way we present conferences in California. With that in mind, the CMEA State Conferences (in the format we currently use) scheduled in Santa Clara for 2011 and Sacramento for 2012 have been cancelled. The CMEA Executive Board accepts responsibility for these actions taken in the best interests of the membership and organization. Does that mean that CMEA is out of the conference arena? The answer is no.

California is a vast and diverse state with many music education organizations including ACDA, ASTA, CAJ, CBDA, CODA, NCBA, NCBDA, SCSBOA, SCVA to name a few. Many of the fore mentioned groups have their own conferences and/or honor groups. We all share the same goal, and speak the same language of providing quality music education to the students in California. With this in mind, wouldn't it be politically and financially prudent to combine forces during these dark times and beyond?

There is a phrase that I heard this year from Michael Kumer of Duquesne University which stuck with me, "Never Let a Crisis Go to Waste!" We are currently hard at work negotiating and planning a blended conference with three of those organizations: CAJ, CBDA, and CODA. This blended conference in 2011 will be in conjunction with the CBDA All-State Convention in Fresno during February 17-20, 2011. CBDA will handle aspects of the conference relating to

Band. CODA will take the lead in the area of Orchestra. CAJ will be responsible for the Jazz area. CMEA will offer a scaled down version of some areas not covered by these three affiliate organizations that will include Choral, General Music, and Advocacy. CMEA will also continue to have our Gala Awards Banquet to honor our award recipients. **This collaboration** between CMEA and three of our four major music education professional organizations that are strong advocates **in** their specialty areas is **unprecedented**. As time goes on, CMEA hopes that additional organizations will join us in this new evolving educational endeavor that will clearly benefit everyone.

The dream of a single super-conference during one weekend in one location has been floated around for decades but has never come to fruition. This new conference union is unprecedented in California music education history, but we are treading in uncharted territory and there will no doubt be big and small bumps in the road. An endeavor like this requires vision, patience, flexibility, understanding, and cooperation. This will be the ultimate exercise in working for the common interests of all concerned in music. Music educators are among the most resilient, selfless, and giving people in the teaching profession. I have no doubt that with everyone's support, this dream and collaborative effort will become a reality soon and become an annual tradition. I strongly encourage you to join CMEA this year in Fresno.

Many different individuals have contacted me to share their concerns about CMEA and the future of music education in California. We are going through what are probably the most difficult fiscal times in our state and nation's history. With that said, music education is once again under siege. The theme of the conference this year was "One Goal, One Voice." Music Education is relevant in our school curriculum, and we must be heard as one strong voice. Can you imagine the political impact music educators would have statewide if we truly spoke as one united voice? This **goal** can clearly be accomplished through cooperation, thoughtful discussion, compromise, careful negotiation, and flexibility on all our parts. This won't happen overnight, and will take time and patience to reach the desired goal. There's an old adage from history, "United we stand, Divided we fall." This is the time to stand together for all our students in every music discipline. CMEA must be relevant, and we must be heard.

I want to thank John Burn, Michael Stone, and Brandon Price of CBDA, Jason Aiello and Joni Swenson of CODA, and Dr. Chuck Tumlinson of CAJ for their immense help in forging this new dawn in California music education. They are truly visionaries and friends of music education. Please feel free to contact me, or our CMEA Executive Board of Jeff Jenkins, Scott Hedgecock, Dr. Diana Hollinger, Russ Sperling, or John Larrieu for more information, or to express your opinion.

The history of CMEA and all the personalities that have been involved with it over the years is indeed well known, diverse, and colorful. It is to everyone's benefit that CMEA be financially solvent, provide leadership to our members, provide and guide our members towards educational and advocacy resources, and represent music education at the forefront when curriculum issues are addressed at the state level. All past and present CMEA leaders and Executive Board members have one thing in common: a desire to work for the best interests of the membership and our profession. Thank you for your support and confidence in us as we move forward. Best wishes for an outstanding school year!

Norman Dea
CMEA State President