

# YOUTH ADVOCACY TOOLKIT





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

INTRODUCTION

2

ADVOCACY 101

3

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY

4

ADVOCACY LETTERS

# INTRODUCTION



## WELCOME!

Welcome to the Youth Advocacy Toolkit! This toolkit is intended to be used as a resource to assist young people on their journey to becoming advocates for music education. Whether you are a seasoned advocate, or just starting out, it does not matter – this toolkit has something for everyone! As long as you are passionate about music and music education, you are sure to learn something along the way!

## WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Before you start reading, take a moment and jot down your thoughts about advocacy. What does it mean to you? If you are not sure, that is okay! In general, advocacy is all about taking action to create positive change on an issue that is important to you.

To publicly support or suggest an idea, development, or way of doing something.

(Cambridge Dictionary)

Any action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.

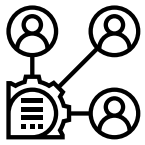
(Alliance for Justice)

The act of speaking on behalf or in support of another person, place, or thing.

(YourDictionary)

There are a multitude of ways to participate in advocacy, and advocates do not have to hold powerful positions – they could be anyone, including YOU!

# INTRODUCTION



## WHAT IS A STAKEHOLDER?

A stakeholder is any individual or group with an interest in a particular issue or activity. Stakeholders can be people who create policy, as well as those who are affected by it.

## WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS IN MUSIC EDUCATION?

Students	Teachers
Parents	Administrators
Ministry of Education	School Boards
Post-Secondary Institutions	Community Groups
Musicians	Music Industry
	General Public

## STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS

Some of the most common reasons a stakeholder or stakeholder group will have an interest in an issue are: **economic**, **social**, **cultural**, **political**, and **personal**. These interests may determine a stakeholder's role in advocacy.



## HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

There isn't only one way to be an advocate. This section outlines some of the different ways you can get involved in advocacy. With so many options, you're sure to find the right one for you!

### COMMON ADVOCACY METHODS

#### PETITIONS



Starting a petition is one of the simplest advocacy strategies, especially if one of your goals is to show decision-makers exactly how many people support your issue. A petition should include a brief description of the issue, a statement outlining what you are asking for, and a list of your supporters.

Letter writing is another simple way to get involved in advocacy, whether you are attempting to influence decision-makers or gain support from individuals and organizations. (See our section on advocacy letters for more info.)

#### LETTER WRITING



#### SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN



Using social media is a great way to amplify your message, raise awareness about your issue, and connect with potential supporters who are not in your immediate social circle. Social media is also a great way to keep stakeholders and supporters up to date on your latest advocacy efforts.



## HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

### EVENTS



Advocacy events include concerts, workshops, conferences, and rallies, and can be held in person or virtually. Advocacy events are great ways to bring together stakeholders and allies, raise awareness, and demonstrate support for your issue to decision-makers.

Another way to draw attention to your issue is by leading a special project. Examples include creating a short video, giving a presentation, or building a website where the public can find information about your issue and how to get involved.

### SPECIAL PROJECTS



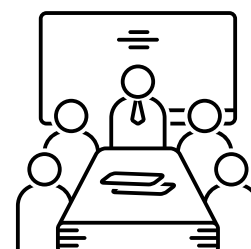
### FORMAL MEETINGS



At some point in your advocacy work, you may wish to request a formal meeting with your school principal, a school board trustee, Ministry of Education staff, or elected officials.

Public meetings often provide an opportunity for you to speak about an issue, ask questions of decision-makers, and meet other community members. These include school council meetings, school board meetings, or town halls hosted by elected officials.

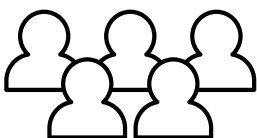
### PUBLIC MEETINGS





## QUICK TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING FOR ADVOCACY

Sharing stories can be an extremely useful tool in advocacy work. Unlike statistics and research findings, stories are personal, and allow your audience to connect and empathize with you in a way that wouldn't be possible through a recitation of facts.



**Know Your Audience:** Who are you communicating with? Before you reach out to your intended audience, learn about who they are and whether they have a history of supporting music education.



**Tailor Your Message:** For maximum impact, craft your story with your audience in mind. Your elected representatives will have different priorities than your peers or members of the general public, which can influence how they perceive your cause.



**Focus on Your Goal:** What is the overall goal of your advocacy work? Keep this in mind when crafting your story, and make sure to highlight your key messages.



## QUICK TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING FOR ADVOCACY



**Highlight the Larger Issue(s):** Personal stories allow your audience to connect and identify with you, but to get them on board it's important to show them that this isn't an issue that only affects you. Facts and data can be woven into your story to demonstrate that your issue isn't yours alone.



**Use Simple Language:** Your audience won't be able to connect with your story if they don't understand it. Keep in mind that the people you are sharing your message with may not understand technical musical jargon. Using clear, accessible language will help your audience to relate to your story and focus on how it makes them feel.



**Be Authentic:** Along the same lines as using simple and clear language, your story will be most impactful when it's told with your authentic voice.



**Include a Call to Action:** You've told your story, the audience responded positively, you've persuaded them to support your cause... what next? A clear call to action will let your audience know how they can get involved. Examples include making a donation, volunteering, sharing a message on social media, or writing to decision-makers in support of music education.





## QUICK TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MUSIC EDUCATION ADVOCACY



Stay up to date on the latest policy announcements from your school, school district, or province/territory. Policy documents from the school district or Ministry of Education are accessible to the public online.



Don't be discouraged if the policy documents are lengthy and use a lot of technical or legal jargon.



Find out if your local news outlets have dedicated education reporters. If so, they will be writing about the latest policy announcements and distilling any hard-to-understand information for the general public.



Don't rely on reductive slogans like "music makes you smarter" or "music makes you healthier." Statements like these may sound compelling, but are often not backed by evidence and are easily debunked.



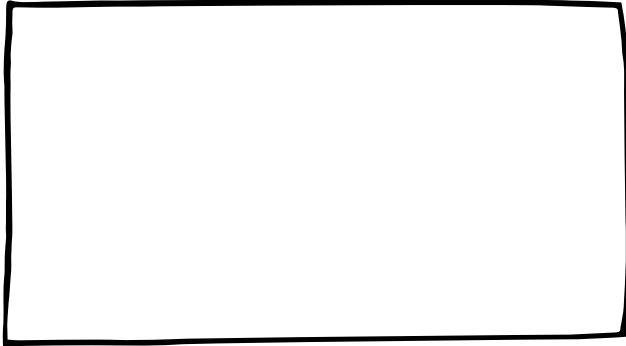
Research past advocacy campaigns to find out what worked well and what didn't.



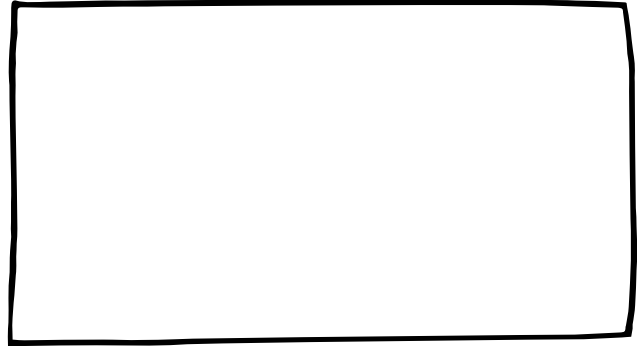
Try to find out if any other individuals or groups are advocating for the same issue and offer to work together. Start by checking social media for posts about the issue that matters to you.

## GETTING STARTED

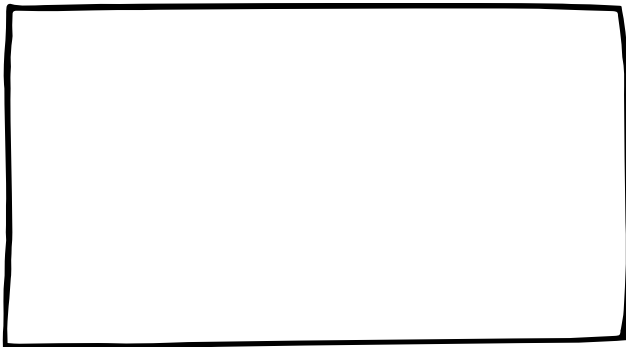
REASON FOR TAKING ACTION:



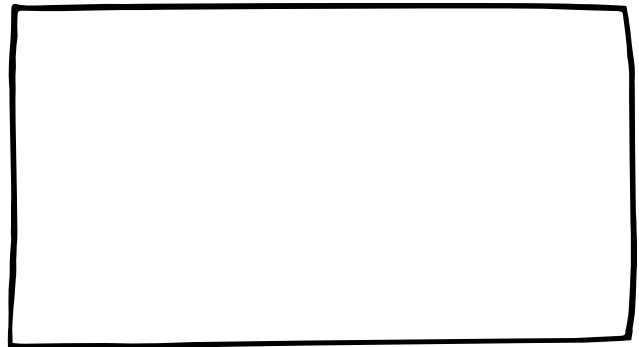
WHO ARE THE DECISION-MAKERS?



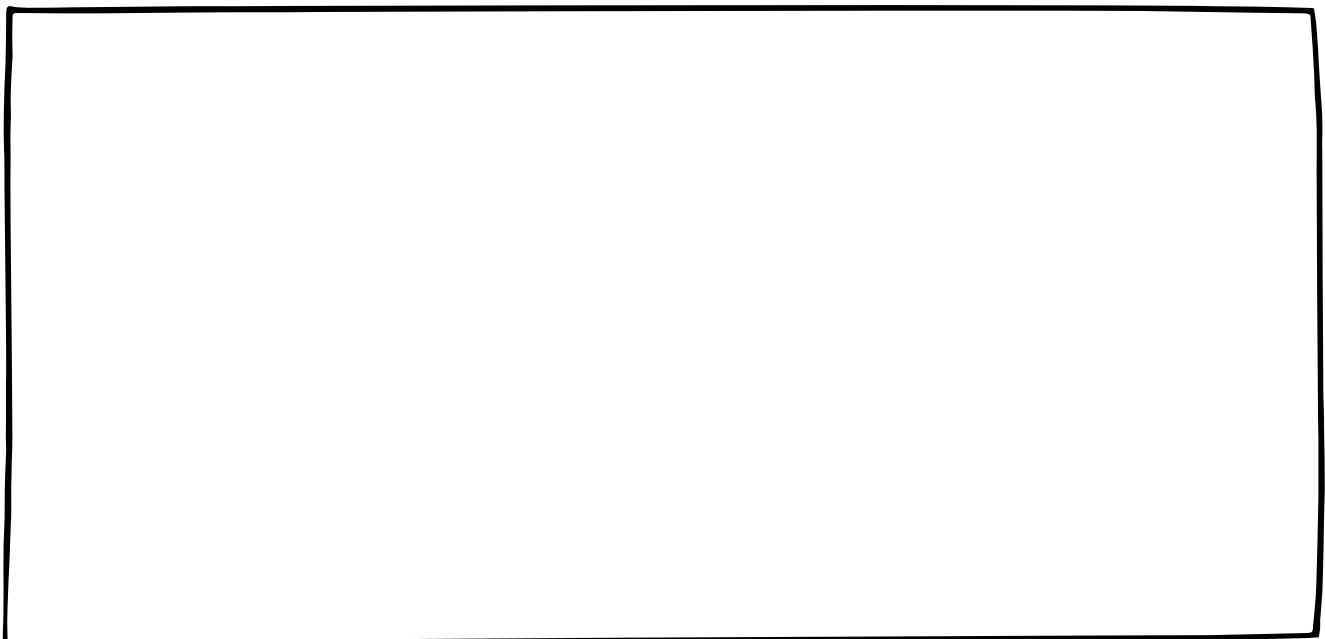
WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?



WHO ARE YOUR ALLIES?



STRATEGIES FOR REACHING THE DECISION-MAKERS:



# SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY



## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is a type of online platform where thoughts, ideas, and information are shared, both formally and informally.

## HOW CAN WE USE IT FOR ADVOCACY?

The youth of today are more involved with social media than any other generation. Social media is a great way to communicate with other youth, and to share your message with leaders and the public.

Social media is a quick, easy, and generally accessible way to spread your message or share your advocacy campaign, but in order to use social media to your advantage, you must understand how each platform works.



**Greta Thunberg is a Climate Change advocate and uses social media to spread awareness. She currently has 12.1 MILLION followers on instagram alone.**

VIA @GRETATHUNBERG, INSTAGRAM



How many social media apps do you have?

Which one do you use the most?

How often do you use these apps?



## UNDERSTANDING COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA TERMS

### AUDIENCE

The people you are presenting to.



### ENGAGEMENT

How the audience interacts.



### IMPRESSIONS

Cumulative views by your audience.



### REACH

Number of unique accounts that viewed your content.

### CROSS-PROMOTION

Collaboration with other accounts to reach a wider audience.

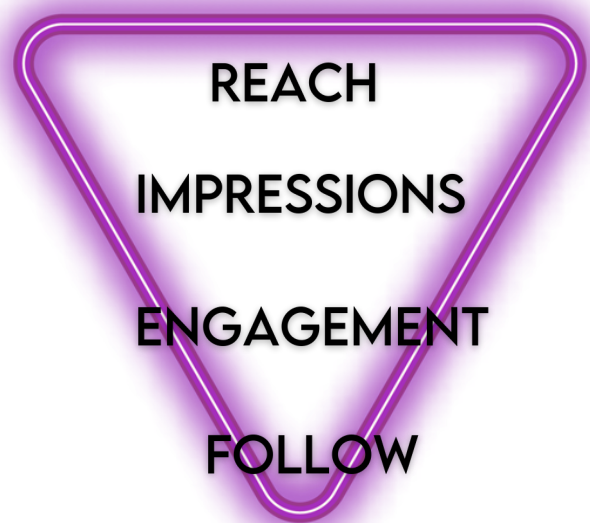
### FOLLOW

When an audience member chooses to receive information from your platforms.

## APPLYING IT TO ADVOCACY

Now that we know what these common terms mean, how do we use them? Check the 'Analytics' tabs on your social media platforms.

Reach, Impressions, Engagement, and Follow form a "funnel" from general interest to a focused, official follow.



The Audience "Funnel"



- Over 2.35 billion users.
- Primary age below 34.
- More users are 25–34, but most active users are 18–24.
- US is the leading country, Canada comes in at 16.
- 90% of accounts follow at least one corporate brand.
- Highest portion of influencer marketing in comparison to competing platforms.
- Medium engagement rates for brands at 1.6%
- Users are most active at 11:00am Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
- 

\*Instagram is a leading platform for advocates. Personal accounts will see a high engagement rate. Keep an eye on your engagement percentage. Currently, video content created using the new formats (Reels, IGTV) does the best in the algorithm.\*

**youth4music\_ca**

[View Professional Dashboard](#)

**231** **471** **166**  
Posts Followers Following

**Youth4Music**  
Youth Organization  
Canadian youth inspiring and building community through music. Youth4Music is a program of... more  
[linktr.ee/Youth4Music](https://linktr.ee/Youth4Music)

[Edit Profile](#)

[Promotio...](#) [Insights](#) [Email](#)

[Grid](#) [Reels](#) [IGTV](#) [Tags](#)

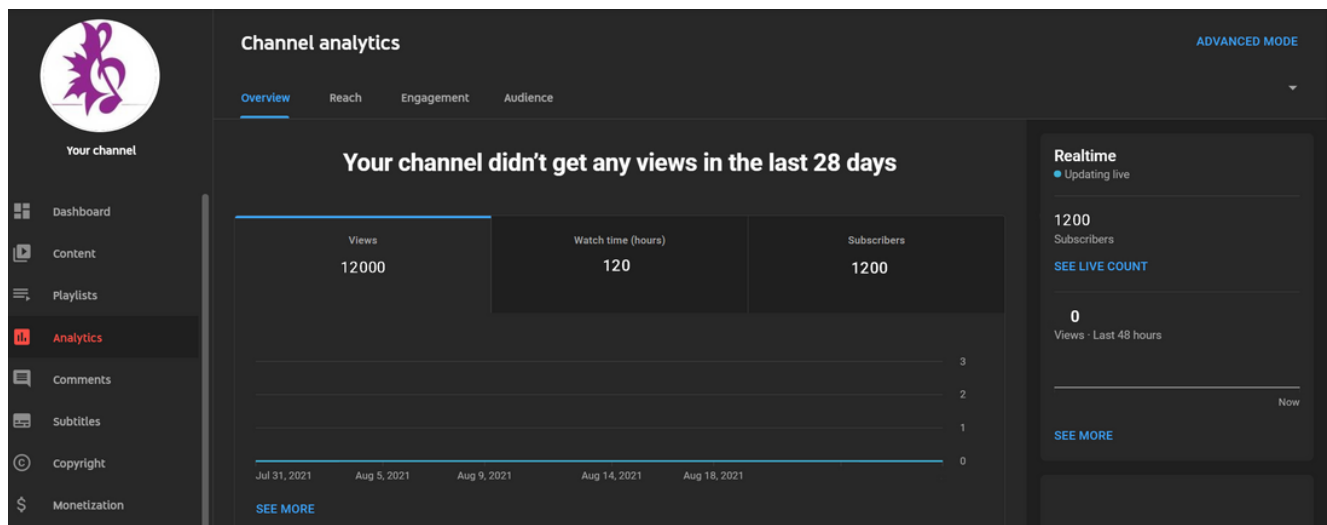
**Annotations:**

- Official username (choose wisely!)**: Points to the username **youth4music\_ca**.
- Instagram Bio: This is where you can put your official name of your organization (with full grammar), if that specific username is already taken.**: Points to the bio text.
- Promotions Tab: If you have a little bit of cash, you can use it to boost any of your posts. You're paying the algorithm to promote it to more user feeds, with customizable audience options.**: Points to the **Promotio...** tab.
- Insights: This is where all of your analytics like reach, engagement, and follows show up. Use this tab wisely and you will be able to figure out what content does the best on your page.**: Points to the **Insights** tab.
- Highlights: A great place to archive and organize older story posts. Visitors will get a better idea of who you are and what you do if you have a clear highlights section.**: Points to the story highlights section.



- Primarily long form content.
- 2 billion unique users per month
- Very popular across all age groups, but most used by ages 15-25.
- Worldwide fame. Most countries have their own version of the platform.
- This vast popularity brings YouTube in as the second most popular platform in the world.
- 70% of watchtime is based on algorithmic recommendation.

**\*Great for longer campaign videos and high-quality video content. Algorithm is harder to work with but it is a great space to direct your followers to as a hub for all video content and to stream.\***



Channel Analytics will be your best friend on this platform. It isn't as easy to connect and communicate with your subscribers as it is on other platforms, but it's still one of the most widely used platforms and is easily accessible to most. It is also much easier to find specific content because of the search engine, and lack of infinite scroll.

Note: if you're looking to monetize your videos, you first must join the YouTube Partner Program, which has some requirements:

- Live in a country where the YouTube Partner Program is available (it is in Canada!)
- Have more than 4,000 valid public watch hours in the last 12 months (i.e., no bots)
- Have more than 1,000 subscribers.
- Have a linked AdSense account.

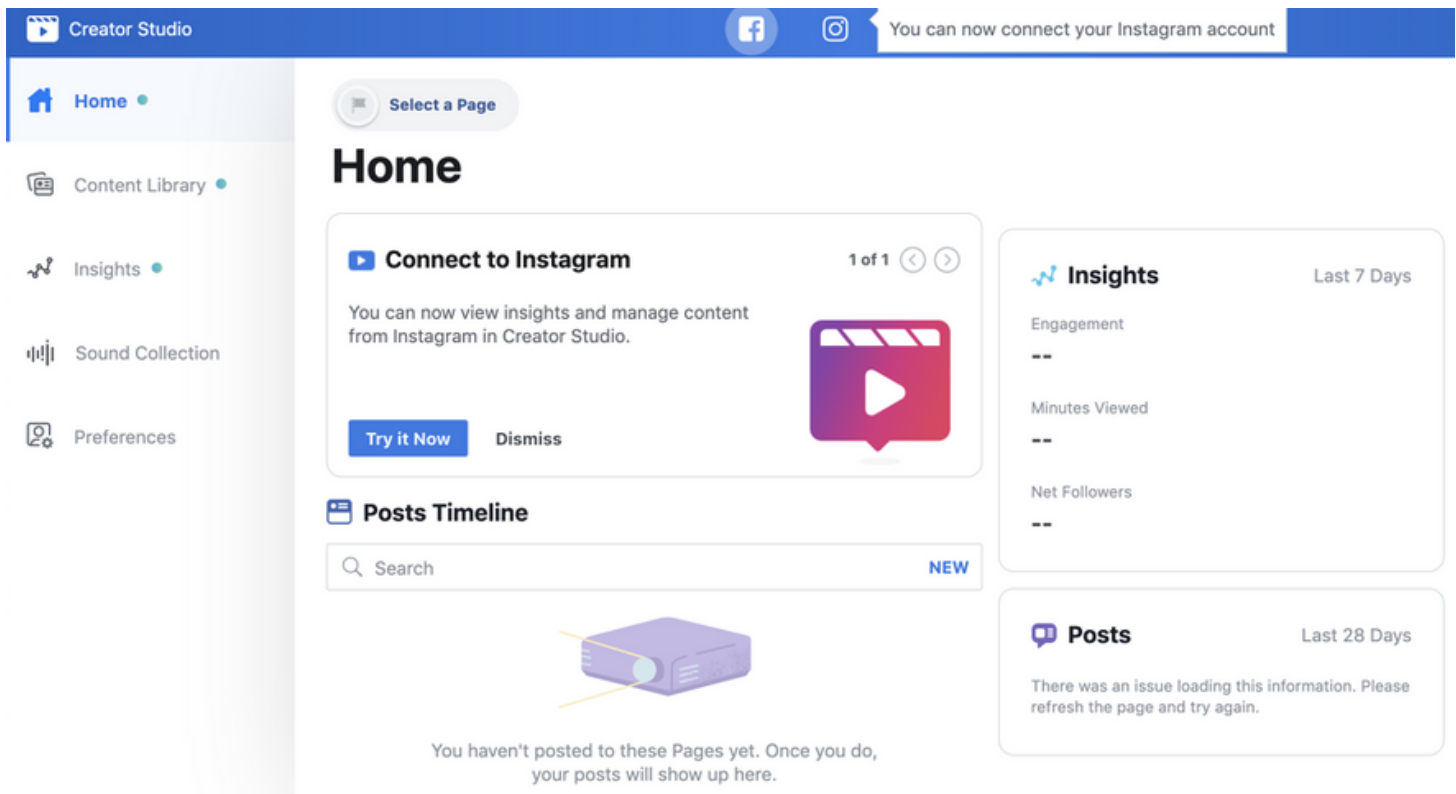




- A rise in older generations on this platform.
- 10% of users live in the US and Canada.
- 1.62 billions users visit the platform daily.
- Primarily for family and friends.
- Highest traffic on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- Will generally only show content to 1% of your audience. This entices people to purchase ads.
- Users are 4x more likely to watch a livestream.
- Square videos receive 35% more engagement than horizontal.

*\*This is a wonderful platform for networking, and staying connected with the music community in your area of expertise.\**

### Facebook's Creator Studio Workspace



Facebook is a great place for sharing all forms of content. You can write longer posts, or embed links, or post high quality photos and videos, or even host a livestream!

Unfortunately, Facebook does not have the best algorithm in terms of promotion. If you are hoping for people to find out about you organically on Facebook, you may need to "promote" your page and posts via payment. Make sure you add tags to everything you do – that will attract your targeted users. Creator Studio also allows you to schedule posts for free!



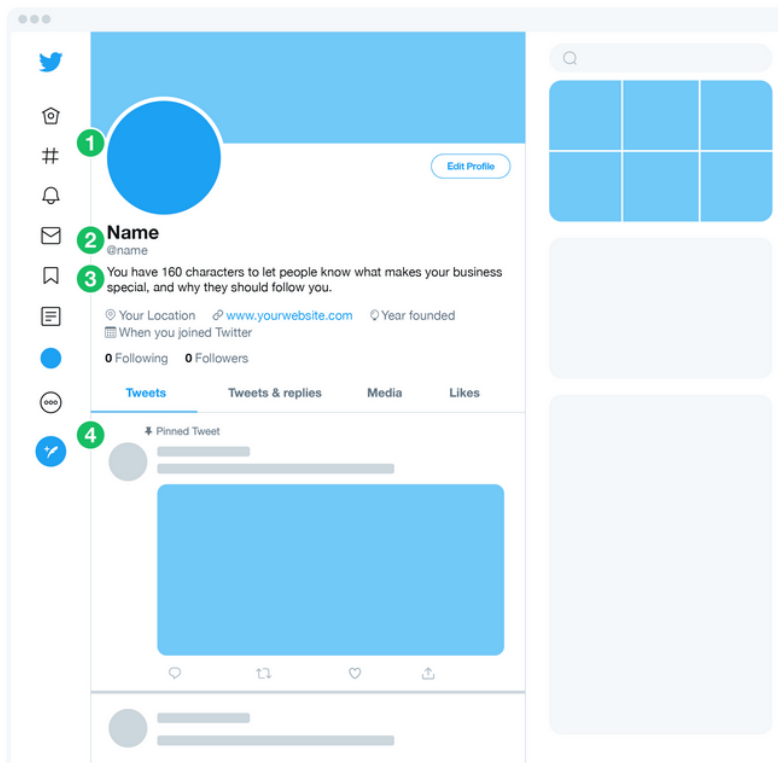
# TWITTER



- Recently re-branded as "X"
- 237 million active users daily.
- Declining in active users.
- Gen Z is surprisingly the most active on Twitter, but is not their most active platform.
- Median age is 25-34 years.
- Twitter users have the highest percentage of income and education in comparison to other platform's daily users. 1/3 of users are college graduates making \$75,000 or more annually
- A very politically charged place.
- "61% of Twitter's top 10% of users (by tweet volume) identify as women and 69% of this group say they tweet about politics."

\*Many of the users here are "news-oriented" and get their news intake from this platform, so keep that in mind when designing and posting content. Twitter can be a great space to start a conversation, connect with like-minded individuals and organizations, and ask people to take action\*

## A general layout and overview of Twitter



Twitter is more of a place to post links to longer articles. Short-mid length videos do well on this platform, and if you can make use of the current "trending" hashtags, then your tweet could go viral and you could attract more followers to your cause! Twitter isn't for the lighthearted, however - you have to think fast on your feet and be witty in 280 characters or less!





# TIKTOK



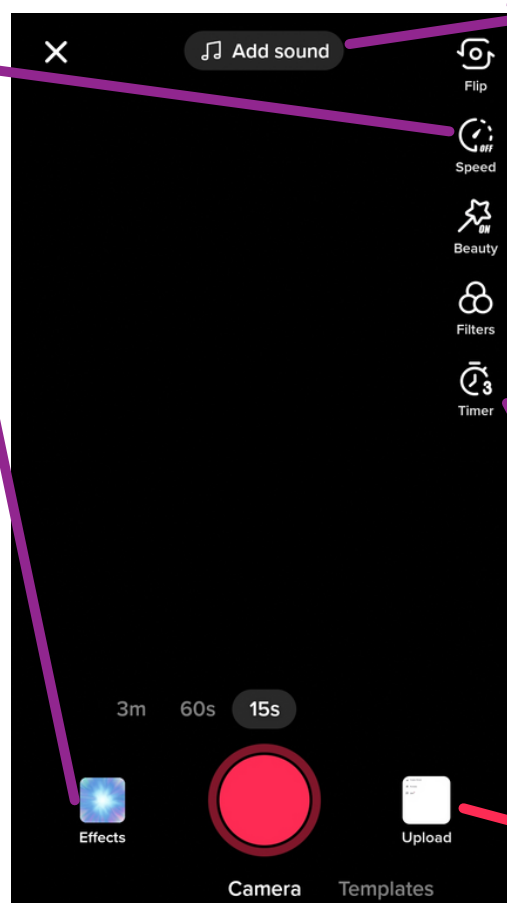
- 834.3 million monthly active users.
- Largest age group is 18-24 years at 21% of total users
- Majority Gen Z and Millennial Users.
- 29% of US Teens say that TikTok is their favourite app. (and most likely their most used app)
- US Influencers see high engagement rates on TikTok.
- TikTok Engagement Rate: 18% / Instagram: 3.86% / YouTube: 1.63%
- Also known to incubate trends.

*\*This is an excellent platform to use to target youth, grow your page, and get your message out. The algorithm is quite easy to work with if you are familiar with TikTok, and it is said that ANYONE can become viral on TikTok, if they create the right kind of content and understand trends.\**

TikTok's layout can be a bit confusing for new users, so here's a brief summary of its features:

There are so many different effects on TikTok – and some of them work so well – it's impressive. Filters, face shifters, voice changers, hair colours, twin effects, greenscreen effects – you name it; TikTok probably has it. Don't be afraid to have fun with these and see what you can make! It may strengthen your content and attract more views.

Note: we're still all figuring out TikTok. It is still a very young app, and it is intended for anyone to be able to create anything. Experiment! Fiddle around with the effects and features. Once you understand TikTok enough, content creation is easy. You may surprise yourself.



**Sounds:** TikTok "sounds" are one of its most unique features. It doesn't matter if the sound or song is relatable, if it is a trending sound, many people find a way to make it relate to their content (To really understand TikTok, you have to be on TikTok quite a bit) If you pick something trending, you're more likely to get on the featured page, or FYP (For You Page)

**Timer:** Not only can you set up a countdown timer before it records, you can also select the amount of time it records for. This is how TikTokers master their video editing and transition skills.

If you don't want to record on the app, you can upload photos and videos that you have taken, if you prefer editing in a different program.



## WHAT IS AN ADVOCACY LETTER?

An advocacy letter is a specific type of communication usually addressed to elected representatives, decision-makers, or people with the power to influence decision-makers, that demonstrates your support for a particular cause.

## WHY WRITE AN ADVOCACY LETTER?

- \* It can alert decision-makers and elected officials to an issue they may not have been aware of before.
- \* To encourage people in power to support an issue.
- \* It's important for elected representatives to know how their constituents feel about various issues, and will often take this into account when deciding how to vote on a bill, or whether to lend public support to a cause.
- \* Taking the time to write, print, and mail a letter, as opposed to sending an email or completing an online form, conveys a certain level of seriousness and commitment.
- \* Writing a letter gives you the time and space to lay out all of your thoughts and craft your narrative for maximum impact.



## QUICK TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY LETTER WRITING



Start by introducing yourself as a constituent or stakeholder, and summarizing your connection to the issue.



Be brief. Try to limit your letter to a single page.



Be polite. Convey your passion for music education without getting angry at the recipient of your letter.



Get personal. Use examples from your own experience to illustrate your points and highlight the importance of music education.



Research past advocacy campaigns to find out what worked well and what didn't.



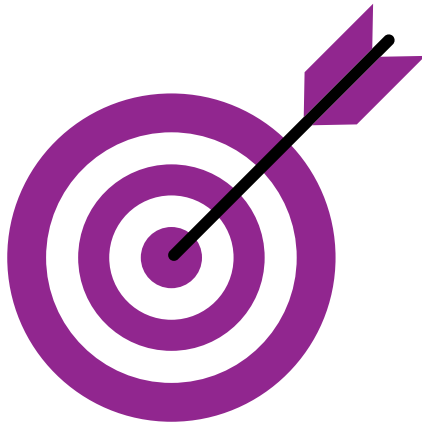
Try to find out if any other individuals or groups are advocating for the same issue and offer to work together. Start by checking social media for posts about the issue that matters to you.

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WRITING ADVOCACY LETTERS

## WRITING VARIABLES

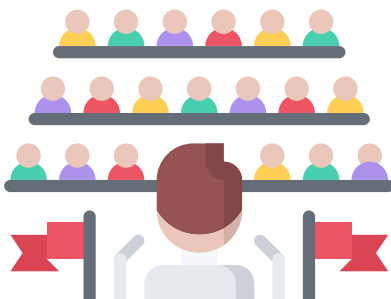
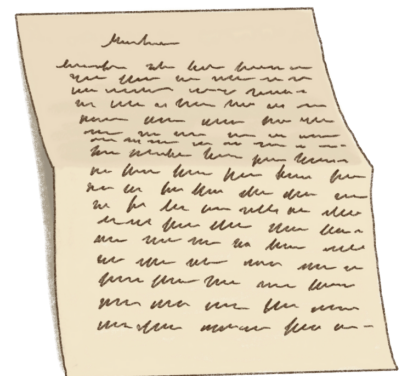
**Writing involves different variables that need to be considered in your plan and drafts!**

**Message:** Your message is your overarching central idea. Creating clear, concise, and consistent messaging is always most effective.



**Purpose:** The purpose is the reason why you are writing something. In advocacy, your purpose can be to instigate or prevent change or convince an individual to support your cause (or both!).

**Form:** A letter! You will need to follow all the conventions around letter formatting which will also influence how you craft your writing.



**Audience:** Most importantly, your audience refers to who you will be writing to. This will affect how you will write your letter.

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WRITING ADVOCACY LETTERS

## COMPONENTS

1

Heading – Your name, address, phone number, email, and the date you wrote the letter.

2

Recipient's Address – Your recipient's name and where you will be sending the letter.

3

Salutation – Dear "Recipient". Be sure to include any titles such as Dr. and Hon.

4

Body – The content of your letter, divided into paragraphs.

5

Complimentary Close – A short sentence such as thank you or sincerely.

6

Signature Line – Your name and signature.



# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WRITING ADVOCACY LETTERS

## DRAFTING

**You can now begin drafting your letter! Here are some tips to get started!**

- Draft on paper before typing your letter on a computer.



- Use "Outline" mode on Microsoft Word to organize your writing into headings and subheadings.

- Do not use contractions like can't or won't in formal writing.



- Use the P.E.E. (Point, Example, and Explanation) strategy to organize your paragraphs.

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WRITING ADVOCACY LETTERS

## PERSUASIVE WRITING TECHNIQUES

**Persuasive writing techniques can be useful to sway opinion in favor or against a particular cause.**



1. **Call to Action**: A call to action is often a short and compelling sentence at the end of a persuasive piece of writing that sums up clearly and concisely what you want your audience to do.

2. **Bandwagon**: The advocacy bandwagon consists of organizations and individuals who support your cause. Referring to them in your letter may help sway your audience's opinion.



3. **Testimonial**: A statement or story testifying to the impact of a program, policy, etc. on an individual. Adding a testimonial adds a personal layer to your advocacy.

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WRITING ADVOCACY LETTERS

## EXAMPLE LETTER WITH ANNOTATIONS

Simon Proulx  
123 Main Street  
Winnipeg, MB  
Z1L 6Y6  
(123)-123-4567

← **Heading**

July 13th 2021

Hon. Cliff Cullen  
Room 168  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3C 0V8

← **Recipient's Address**

Dear Hon. Cliff Cullen,

← **Salutation**

My name is Simon Proulx and I am a member of Manitoba's Music Education Advocacy Committee.

I am writing to you because it is rumoured that some music programs across Manitoba may be cut due to proposed education reforms. I believe that cutting these programs would be detrimental to the well-being of students and their schools.

**Body**

Music programs can contribute to a feeling of belonging and fulfillment at school, something that is desperately needed after two difficult years due to the COVID pandemic. A Finnish study examined children in 10 schools who had participated in a music program as well as students who participated in sports and visual arts programs. The results demonstrated that students in the music program had a higher level of satisfaction and fulfillment at their respective schools compared to those who were involved in the sports and visual arts programs. This demonstrates the vital importance of music education in schools to support students' wellbeing and happiness.

As someone studying music at a postsecondary level, I can draw from my own experiences with music to demonstrate its importance. Music has enabled me to make friends with people from around the world and during school made me feel like I was a part of a vibrant and supportive community. Music has taught me patience, empathy, and discipline, contributors to being a valuable member of society. I believe that music is one of the largest contributors to my own happiness and I am sure it is for countless others.

**Testimonial**





# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO WRITING ADVOCACY LETTERS

## V. EXAMPLE LETTER WITH ANNOTATIONS (CONT.)

**Bandwagon**

The proposed reforms may hurt Manitoba's vibrant arts community. The less instruction Manitobans get in music, the less they will see its benefits to society, thus contributing to fewer patrons to our world-renowned musical organizations. The Manitoba Band Association, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, as well as others have all expressed concern that the removal of these programs would irreparably impact the arts and entertainment sector.

It is with this in mind that myself and the rest of the Advocacy Committee urge you to support the continued growth of music education programs. Music contributes to the happiness and fulfillment of youth across the province and fosters the growth of our arts and entertainment sector which is a vital part of the provincial economy.

Help us keep music alive in Manitoban schools!

Sincerely,  
Simon Proulx

*Simon Proulx*

**Complimentary Close**

**Signature Line**

**Call to Action**

**YOUTH4MUSIC IS A PROGRAM OF THE  
COALITION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION IN CANADA**

**THE COALITION IS COMMITTED TO RAISING  
AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE  
THAT MUSIC ENGAGEMENT PLAYS IN CANADIAN  
CULTURE, AND TO PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF MUSIC  
PARTICIPATION.**

**MUSIC EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL**

**VISIT US AT [COALITIONCANADA.CA](http://COALITIONCANADA.CA)**