

Music Jam concert

By Katie Traxler, Member of the AOSA Advocacy Committee

One of the most exciting events our school put on last year was our Music Jam Concert. Parents, alumni, and student musicians performed side-by-side for our school community to help raise money for our school. The jam was such a huge success that we have made it an annual event. Here is how it came about and how the school has benefited from the experience.

Identifying and contacting parent musicians: One of our parents, who is an incredible pianist and composer, came to present a master class on improvisation to my Orff ensemble group after school. We had such an amazing time that he decided to write a piece for us. One of our PTA parents approached me with a list of other parent musicians and the idea of collaborating in a concert with some of our musical groups. I surveyed my students to learn who had a parent that played an instrument and contacted them as well. We also sent out an email through our parent coordinator to the entire parent body to invite other interested parents to contact us. All interested parents - whatever the instrument - were invited to join in.

Communication with alumni: Alumni were contacted in a several ways: parent emails (saved from previous years of participation in ensembles), face to face (some alumni help out with our after school program and many come to visit), and through word of mouth (they called, texted, and used Facebook to get in touch with each other). They were excited to come back and perform with us, especially since so many of them attend middle schools that lack music education programming.

Musical Selection: Choosing the music was a bit of a challenge until we decided that we really didn't need to have music centered on one theme. We decided to showcase our favorite pieces in the concert. We chose the piece written for our Orff Ensemble, *Make It Happen*, as the theme song for the concert. Our guitar ensemble voted on their favorite song from class, and the choruses chose several pieces from their current repertoire and previous concerts. The parent musicians collaborated through e-mail to choose a few additional pieces, mostly using their specialties of jazz and musical theater. One of our parents arranged all of the pieces for the parent-band's instrumentation.

Scheduling rehearsal time so that the whole group could work together: We invited the parents who were available (our composer and one of our singers) to come to some of our weekly rehearsals. Guitar students who were also in chorus used that rehearsal time to add guitar parts while singing along with the chorus. The parents emailed each other the lead sheets and PDFs of the music, and they learned parts on their own. The morning of the concert, the parents had their own rehearsal on our stage at school. That evening, the students and alumni had a short dress rehearsal with the parent-band right before the concert to put it all together. I

wrote the script for the concert, which featured a few sentences about each of the special music and art programs at our school, and rehearsed at lunch with our student body president who was our host for the evening.

Feedback and tangible results from the performance: The concert exceeded our wildest expectations. We raised over \$2000 for our arts programming from ticket sales and even had a write-up in the newspaper. Parents and children were blown away by the turnout and support.

Student reaction to the community interaction: The kids had the most amazing time. Playing with professionals - some of whom were their very own parents - was an unforgettable experience. It brought their playing to a whole new level, and it demonstrated the real-life use of skills and techniques we work on in class. Watching and listening to the parents read through the music and talk about form, keys, and trading improvisation sections during rehearsal blew their little musical minds! They recognized many terms and felt like they were able to connect with the band as musicians. They were extremely engaged and motivated to perform their best, and the joy on their faces was unforgettable.