



The Home Education Foundation

"Home Educators' Voice at the Capitol"

www.flhef.org
PO Box 12563
Tallahassee, FL 32317-2563

All-County and All-State Music Programs

Background:

In 1996 the Legislature passed the "Craig Dickinson Act" Fl.St. 232.425 pertaining to interscholastic extracurricular student activities. As that time, the athletic and music programs were part of the Florida High School Activities Association (FHSAA). In 1997 the Legislature passed a law that would reorganize the FHSAA and made that organization responsible for athletic activities only. During the 1997-98 school year the Florida Music Educators Association (FMEA) took over the responsibility of overseeing public school music activities and created a new organization, similar in structure to FHSAA to do the job. This new organization was incorporated under the name of Florida School Music Association (FSMA).

The FSMA, like the FHSAA, is an organization of member schools. If a school wants to maintain membership in FSMA, the school has to abide by the by-laws which incorporated the requirements of Fl.St. 232.425. Therefore, any home education student who notifies the school of his intent to participate in a school music program must be allowed to participate. Additionally, any home school association may join as a member school and participate as a separate entity in the state music festivals.

A home education representative, Mrs. Glenda Jones, was appointed to the first FSMA Board of Directors and is still serving in that capacity to represent the interests of home educated students in school music activities. This Board has been aware of the battle that took place in 1995-96 between the FHSAA and home educators and has been responsive to the interests of home educated students in writing the by-laws of the FSMA.

Who's Who:

FSMA is a not-for-profit association of member schools that coordinates and oversees interscholastic music activities in the state of Florida for all public schools. Membership in the FSMA is open to high schools, junior/senior high schools, and middle schools which are public or non-public schools, or home education associations. Florida School Music Association membership is required for schools that wish to participate in state-sanctioned interscholastic music activities, which include evaluation festivals and solo-ensemble festivals. Individual students are not allowed to participate in music festivals unless the student is enrolled in one of the FSMA member schools. The FSMA sanctions the Florida Bandmaster's Association (FBA), the Florida Orchestra Association (FOA), and the Florida Vocal Association

(FVA) to sponsor and conduct District and State Evaluation/Music Festivals for bands, orchestras, and choruses.

The Florida Music Educators Association (FMEA) is the umbrella organization for the individual professional associations--the Florida Bandmaster's Association (FBA), the Florida Orchestra Association (FOA), and the Florida Vocal Association (FVA). The FSMA sanctions the FMEA to sponsor and conduct All-State Band, Orchestra and Chorus competitions for FSMA member schools. In order to audition for All-State competition a student must be enrolled in a FSMA member school. You may visit their website at www.flmusiced.org.

Under the "Craig Dickinson Act," home educated students who are enrolled in a public or non-public school or home education association FSMA member school have the same opportunity to participate in Music Festivals and All-State Competition as public school students.

Other Music Activities:

There are a couple of other music activities which some home educated students want access to, but it has been difficult to create any uniformity across the state. The problem is that the activities do not fall under the auspices of the FSMA and the activities may be sponsored on a local level by the school district, universities or private organizations. Let me discuss each activity separately and give you some information about it.

All-County Band is an activity sponsored by each school district and run by local district authority, usually the school district administrator over music programs. In order to audition for the All-County Band a student has to be recommended by a school bandmaster. This activity is truly an interscholastic extracurricular activity and should, under s. 232.425, be open to a home educated student who is a member of a public, non-public or home school band. It is not a curricular activity and a student is not required to participate as part of his or her grade, but must compete for a chair against students from other schools. Therefore this activity falls under s.232.425(5) (b) which reads: (5) Any organization or entity that regulates or governs interscholastic extracurricular activities of public schools: (b)shall not discriminate against any eligible student based on an educational choice of public, nonpublic or home education. I am not an attorney, but it seems to me that All-County should be open to students in non-public bands, as well, based on this language, since the school district is the entity that governs the All-County Band.

Most school districts have refused to allow private or home schooled students to participate in the All-County Band. Can home educators force them to change these policies? I believe that we can. It has not been an issue that many home schoolers have contacted HEF about. There are a few avenues that I can pursue, if this is of importance to home educated students. Another avenue is to approach the School Board who can also decide the matter on a local basis, taking the decision out of the hands of the school district administrators. It may, however, take a lawsuit to force the districts to allow home school participation.

Youth Orchestras are also locally controlled activities, sponsored by school districts, universities or private groups. Since this is not an activity of the public schools, it would not be regulated by s.232.425. If a home education student is not allowed to

participate in the Youth Orchestra, then you need to appeal to the head of the organization and see how a home educated students can be allowed to participate. You may find that the sponsoring group is unaware that home educated students are not allowed to participate and the rules may need to be changed. Get involved and see how you can help with fund raising or other activities to get to know the leadership of the Youth Orchestra. Usually, the way to get things changed is to build relationships.

Note: Presently, a "string" student who is in a school district that does not have an orchestra program could audition for the All-State Orchestra if the student is a member of a Youth Orchestra and is recommended by the director who must be a Florida Orchestra Association member. However, the FOA is currently discussing eliminating the Youth Orchestra exception as a means of entry into All-State within the next year or so. The members of the FOA see this as a way to support and strengthen music programs in public and non-public schools and home school association.

Auditions for the All County Bands in some counties are as early as Nov. 13. If you have students who might qualify from your home school band, you might want to contact the District Music Supervisor and see if this is open. There may be some lobbying that needs to be done on the school district level to get your students included. I will try to advise you if you need help.

I hope this clarifies the music activities for you as leaders.

Brenda Dickinson