

Advice from the Retirees

The treasure-trove of experience, expertise, and a mature, well-weathered perspective are a few of the major assets of our PMEA Retired Members. Their history and value to the profession – contributions and counsel given both now and in the past – are immeasurable.

The PMEA **Retiree Resource Registry** (R³) is one place to find a list of these “go-to” advisors who are willing to help your program or situation. Representing a combined total of more than 5,000 years of “being in the trenches,” the retirees might have a quick response to a question, unique solution to a common problem (they have seen it all!), or even a tried-and-true “trick up their sleeve!” Check out the detailed alphabetical registry online – as well as the accompanying **R³ Help Index**, which is sorted by specialty areas to help match needs with available resources – brought to you by PMEA and retired PA music educators.

In addition, we asked our retired members to offer their thoughts for new retirees or soon-to-be retired colleagues. **How should you prepare for “one of the biggest transitions” in life – retirement?**

Chuck Neidhardt was the first retiree to respond, with a host of quick and to-the-point recommendations.

Here is something I firmly believe in when you retire, and I utilized it at the time – still do. **Have a plan!** Figure out some idea of what you want to do with the rest of your life after teaching. Perhaps you should enjoy some travel, read the books you didn’t have time to read, or get involved with a community music program or church music program. Begin a routine exercise plan, or begin a sport. You don’t have to be good at it – just do it for your health. This is a must for retirees because the exercise we got from walking the hall between our room and our mailbox (or elsewhere in the school) is no longer there. It only takes a short while to begin to add the pounds and lose the strength we had while teaching. Also, be sure to begin a regular regimen of seeing your doctor and having a physical check up at least once a year.

Travel to those places that you always wanted to see but never had the time. Try a warm sunny place in the winter and see what your students always enjoyed while you were stuck in the classroom during January and February. Get involved in advocacy, either for music education or something else that is important to you. Just be sure that you have something to do, because to do nothing is just unhealthy for your mind and body.

Suggestions from other successfully retired members were also offered, often repeated, creating a consensus:

1. To prepare yourself for retirement, have something in place to do – private teaching, performing, traveling, and/or volunteering. Stay active and involved.
2. Build your social network of friends, colleagues, and people with which you want to continue spending time. Relationships and get-togethers are important in retirement.
3. Stay involved in music – somehow. Once retired, you can revisit your roots in creative self-expression (the things that inspired you to become a music teacher in the first place), while avoiding the day-to-day stress and routine of your former job assignments.
4. Do not micromanage or “try to help” the new guy appointed to your position. If (and only if) your replacement asks, perhaps you can meet for breakfast or lunch to “pass on the baton,” offering to share with him/her where are the closets (if not the skeletons), and information for smooth transition such as the location of the music library database, curriculum guide, classroom instruments, etc. However, keep in mind it is not your responsibility nor is it appropriate to give the newcomer philosophy, methodology, or minute details on how or what to do in your former job. The new professional is not you (and probably will make many mistakes), and will have to find his/her own way to realize success in the position.
5. For assistance in making the smooth transition to retirement, read the Fall 2013 *PMEA News* article “Retirement – Now What?” archived on the Retired Member section of the State PMEA website (<http://www.pmea.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Retirement-Now-What-in-PMEA-News-Fall-2013.pdf>). Also peruse the other links posted on the same site.

For this article, a shout-out and our thanks go to Ben Holste, Nonie Detrick, and Charles Neidhardt for their insights on retiring.

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