



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**SMMUSD's Music Education Program Receives National Recognition**  
***Santa Monica and Malibu named a Best Community for Music***

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District has been honored with the “*Best Communities for Music Education*” designation from the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education, for the 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.



SMMUSD is one of only three districts recognized in Los Angeles County and one of 18 in the state to receive this prestigious award in 2020. Fewer than 5% of school districts nationwide receive this distinction and it recognizes the district's commitment to a strong music education. Some 750 districts in the country have been named this year.

The Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students.

“This award recognizes the outstanding efforts by teachers, administrators, parents, students and community leaders who work together to ensure access to music learning for all students as part of the school curriculum,” said Superintendent Dr. Ben Drati. “We would not have received this recognition without the hard work and dedication of many people providing equity and access to all our students.”

To qualify for the Best Communities designation, SMMUSD answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, support for the music program, and community music-making programs. Responses were verified with school officials and reviewed by The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas.

The Santa Monica Education Foundation is instrumental in funding many SMMUSD visual and performing arts programs including weekly elementary arts classes, third grade recorders, ballroom dance for fifth graders, middle school dance classes, theatre, semi-private music lessons for qualifying students and winds, strings and voice programs at SMMUSD Title 1 schools. Visit <https://www.smedfoundation.org/> to learn more or donate to support arts in Santa Monica schools. Support the arts through PTA at Malibu schools.

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After two years of music education, researchers found that participants showed more substantial improvements in how the brain processes speech and reading scores than their less-involved peers and that students who are involved in music are not only more likely to graduate high school, but also to attend college as well. Everyday listening skills are stronger in musically-trained children than in those without music training. Significantly, listening skills are closely tied to the ability to: perceive speech in a noisy background, pay attention, and keep sounds in memory. Later in life, individuals who took music lessons as children show stronger neural processing of sound: young adults and even older adults who have not played an instrument for up to 50 years show enhanced neural processing compared to their peers. Not to mention, social benefits include conflict resolution, teamwork skills, and how to give and receive constructive criticism.

A 2015 study supported by The NAMM Foundation, "[Striking A Chord](#)," also outlines the overwhelming desire by teachers and parents for music education opportunities for all children as part of the school curriculum.

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**About The NAMM Foundation:**

*The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its approximately 10,400 members around the world. The foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs. For more information about the NAMM Foundation, please visit [www.nammfoundation.org](http://www.nammfoundation.org).*

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