

Citywide – SMMUSD’s Music Education Program Receives National Recognition



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.

SMMUSD joins 623 districts across the country in receiving the prestigious award in 2019, and is one of only two districts in Los Angeles County to be recognized.

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 SMMUSD schools.

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.

Submitted by Gail Pinsker, Community & Public Relations Officer