

What You Need to Know

Music Education





Did you know?

**Music Education
strengthens IQ,
academic performance,
word decoding, and
phonological skills,**
and there is preliminary evidence
that music education might facilitate
foreign language learning.*

* From **"Arts for Art's Sake: The Impact of Arts Education"** by Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin

Check out more research in the **Arts Education Archive** of the National Arts Administration and Policy Publication Database.

About Americans for the Arts

The mission of Americans for the Arts is to serve, advance, and lead the network of organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America. Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs that meet the needs of more than 150,000 members and stakeholders. We are dedicated to representing and serving local communities and to creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts.

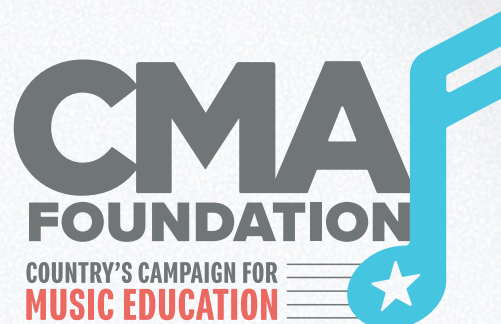
About the Arts Education Program

The Arts Education Program provides leadership development, networking, research, and tools that empower individuals and organizations to create equitable systems and strong policies which strengthen the arts education ecosystem. We seek to unify diverse stakeholders, including arts education professionals, cultural and education sector leaders, the business community, parents, and young people, to create change in their communities, states, and the nation.

About the Arts Education Navigator

The Arts Education Navigator is a web-based tool that prepares arts education supporters to become effective advocates. Produced by Americans for the Arts, the tool includes the work of many individual and organizational leaders who share the vision of equitable access to arts education for America's learners.

Learn more about the Arts Education Navigator at AmericansForTheArts.org/Navigator



This publication has been made possible through the generous support of the CMA Foundation. The CMA Foundation is committed to supporting high quality music education programs throughout the country.

Visit ItStartsWithME.org to learn how you can get involved in your community.

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How to Use This Publication

Whether you are a parent, student, educator, business person, program administrator, elected official, or otherwise, you can use your voice to support arts education in your community, state, and nation.

Whether tackling policy change in your own city hall, through the State Board of Education, or even within Congress, the stories of local impact from constituents like you is the most valuable contribution to our public policy process. Through utilizing this publication, we hope that you will gain a foundational knowledge of the topic area to best locate your own work and ensure you are equipped with the appropriate language necessary when making your case.

This publication is one of many available through the **Arts Education Navigator**, a web-based tool that prepares arts education supporters to become effective advocates. Through this tool, we hope that you will follow the six steps towards creating your own personal advocacy plan.

Follow this six-step process to move from simple supporter to **empowered advocate!**

Check out the whole six-step process by visiting the **Arts Education Navigator** online tool.



Introduction

Anyone who has ever been involved in music education as a parent, teacher, or student knows first-hand that music is a powerful force for growth and development for young people in the home, school or community. We know that music has demonstrated positive effects that go well beyond the classroom and transcend into college, career, and life.

We also know that it is up to all of us as advocates and citizens to do everything we can to support the benefits of music education for all students and young people in every school and community, particularly for those youth and communities that are often marginalized in our society today.

Lastly, we know that supporting music education takes work—but it is work that can be carried out effectively by many types of supporters through following a few simple steps to become an effective advocate for equitable access to music education for America’s learners.

“Without music education, I would not be who I am today. I would not have enjoyed my education at all. I was one of those students who went to school because I knew daily that I had the opportunity to make music. The values and life lessons that music education taught me go beyond learning how to sing or play an instrument. **There are values taught in the music classroom that cannot simply be taught by sitting at a desk.** I learned how to work hard, be self-disciplined, take responsibility, and make the most of every opportunity. Also, how to be successful.

This is why music should be a part of the core curriculum. I was inspired in my music classroom, which is ultimately what has led me to have a passion to teach music in the future: to inspire others, specifically the upcoming generation...**I want to instill the values I learned through the music classroom in my future students.**”

—Student, Washington State



Tip: As an advocate it is always important to share stories alongside your hard-hitting data and policy ask. Here is an example of a student testimonial that could encourage decision-makers to support music education.

Historical Context

Music has been a part of the development of individuals and cultures for as long as societies have existed. Music has been considered a subject worthy of intensive education since at least the tenth century and been a part of publicly-funded education in America since 1838.

These beginnings, alongside the growth of music education in our communities and schools, testify to the ways in which music serves communities, schools, and individual learners. The strength of the benefits of music education are so widely accepted that music is now practically a universal component in American schools—to a point. The limiting point is overwhelmingly apparent regarding access and quality, and is particularly related to a school’s aggregate socio-economic status and the racial demographics of the student population. Where music programs may be present, there is often a wide range in the relative strength of the programs, which varies from excellent to anemic.

While music education has grown in sophistication with regard to pedagogy, building on more than a century of practice and (more recently) on decades of dedicated research, there has been a parallel development in the vision of music education as something that is both a right and necessity for every child. Developments in pedagogy included an emphasis on reading music in the late 19th century; the integration of recorded music in the first decade of the 20th century; an emphasis on large ensembles in the 1920s and 1930s, the embracing of influences from Japan, Hungary, and countries around the world in the 1960s; and the inclusion of popular music styles beginning in the 1970s.

Perhaps the most important historical marker in American music education is the year of 1994. First, the arts were elevated to ‘core academic subject’ status in federal education law. Second, the development and dissemination of the first voluntary national standards for arts education, augmented and refined in the 2014 release of the **National Core Arts Standards**, provided guidance to education providers about building content and delivered a framework for the essential value of music education. These elements have evolved today to enhance the achievement of music literacy through experiences in Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting, which lead to the forging of deep personal and cultural connections among individuals, communities, and the world.

The concept of music education as “Music for every child—and every child for music” coalesced around 1920 and remains strong today, albeit slightly reformulated as the shorter “music for all.” Efforts to reach this ideal through policy have resulted in an ongoing evaluation of the many benefits of music education. Layering on the obvious proposition



Students learn guitar in music class in conjunction with Little Kids Rock program at Mt. View Elementary which is taught by Mr. Mark Hale.

that music is inherently valuable in individual and social life, advocates and policy-makers alike have come to be able to list a series of ways that the pursuit of musical skills and knowledge can and does serve other developments. These developments include dispositions toward cooperation, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. They include evident neurological and behavioral benefits. And they include measurable social benefits that both encompass and transcend the school environment. Music can truly orchestrate success for every child.

But the greatest **policy challenge** facing music education today is in making the promise of music come alive for *every child*, achieving the goal of equity in access to quality music education programs, with a focus on cultural equity and racial justice. There is still more work to do.

Since 2011, an initiative in the Metro Nashville Public Schools that prioritizes music education has reshaped Nashville for the more than **81,000 students** served in the district. This public-private initiative has worked to make music available in every middle and high school in the district. A study on the program has shown that **students who engaged in music education courses overwhelmingly had increased attendance, fewer discipline reports, and higher grade point averages** than peers of the same gender or ethnicity who did not take music. In fact, students who took four years of music performed even more strongly as opposed to students who took only one year.

Perhaps one of the most startling statistics presented by this study was that **students who did not take music classes had only a 60% on-time graduation rate, as opposed to 91% of students who took music classes.** Not only did the statistics point to a link, students overwhelmingly said that music education made a direct impact. When music students were asked what they would change, “many students expressed a desire for longer classes that occurred more often, more challenging pieces, and more performance opportunities.”

[Learn more about this program!](#)

Policy Opportunities

Advocates are only successful if they have a policy ask. Asks should be based in the policies affecting our work in communities, schools, districts, states, or the nation. Below, we have outlined some basic information and sample policy asks, for you to utilize in your own context.

Policy Ask:

Maintain the place of music (and the arts) among the “well rounded subjects” in federal education law and support its implementation through proper appropriations.

Be sure to write, email, tweet, or visit your elected officials in Washington, D.C. or at home to tell them why!



The most important policy to ensure the benefits of music for every child is acceptance and uniform implementation of the idea that music is central to the educational experience of every child. National legislation (like the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*) first embraced the fact that the arts, including music, have the status of a core academic subject with the 1994 reauthorizing legislation, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. But the reality in many districts is that music (and other art forms) are often present in ways that do not fully serve the art form or, more importantly, the students. Surveys consistently show that, while the vast majority of schools claim to provide music education to their students, the level at which that education is provided varies widely from place to place. We can hold our local and state educational leaders accountable to the federal law by informing them of the policies and opportunities for funding throughout.

With the passage and implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*, music gained footing as one of the named “Well Rounded Subjects,” allowing for states and districts to pursue policy pathways to more fully support music education programs through teacher professional development, supplemental funding, field trips to cultural experiences, and through student support strategies for Title I schools, for English Language Learners, and the like. These programs are controlled by State Departments of Education often through federally-approved state accountability plans. **Learn more about federal and state policy opportunities in the Arts Education Policy Center.**



Serving students depends on carrying through the policy from federal through state to local contexts. For music to thrive in schools and in the lives of students, it must be treated as a serious discipline equal in stature and importance to any other academic subject with the appropriate supports in place to ensure its delivery. This happens in practice when music is accepted as one of the main drivers to school success through the lens of school or district leadership. These leaders consider items which impact music education such as evaluation and assessment, availability of resources, and public reporting of the status of programs and of students. **Be sure to ask school leaders the right questions by downloading 15 Questions to Ask guide!**

Of course, determining whether progress has been made in a music curriculum has to be done within the context of the resources available to that curriculum. “Resources,” in this case, can include staffing, facilities, equipment, and scheduling. It is the last element—time set aside in the schedule—that is often the key limiting factor that can get between policy and progress for students. Lofty goals for student achievement at any school are simply words on paper until they are backed up with instructional time. Guidelines for the resource of time, along with other resources, are listed in the **Opportunity-to-Learn Standards (OTL)**, developed by the National Association for Music Education to support standards-based music education.

Music education also happens outside of the school building for learners of all ages in community-based or after-school learning programs. These nonprofits and institutions often provide access to highly focused programs with wrap around services to enhance music education while looking after the well-being of the whole child. Many times, community music programs partner with schools to add depth, breadth, and liveliness to the classroom through the **Shared Endeavor Model**, but often they are standalone and focus on specific areas of social justice and addressing the equity gap. **Connect with others who have your shared interest by networking, mentoring, and always learning from your peers!**



Policy Ask:

Provide the proper resources to support a quality music program in your school or community program.

Be sure to ask the principal, superintendent, school board, or city council to do so!



Policy Ask:

Provide grants or other supports for community-based music education programs.

Talk to the mayor, city council, or regional funders about this necessary provision.

Take Action!

Music education maintains a strong presence in American education. But it will remain strong—and extend that strength to provide benefits to all learners—only if advocates continue to monitor and fight for quality programs in every school and community in our nation.

Here are some quick things to do!

Be sure to walk through the six steps of the [Arts Education Navigator online tool](#) to determine your own personal advocacy plan and ensure that you craft the perfect message for advancing music education.

Tip: Jot down your notes and ideas in the spaces provided!



Advocacy Actions

- **Find others in your community:** Who else shares your beliefs about music education in your community? Link up and advocate together!

- **Ask questions of your municipal elected officials or educational leaders:** How can we work together to achieve equity in access and improve quality of music programs?

- **Bring visibility to the cause through social media or the press:** What stories and data should your networks or the public know?

- **Connect with other groups:** Which local, state, or national organizations share your values and how can you get involved?

- **Speak or write to your elected officials in your state or in Washington, D.C.:** How can we change policies to better support music education?

Tools & Resources

Here are a collection of tools and resources, which will better equip you with the connections and knowledge to take action as a music education advocate.

Connect with Others

The **National Association for Music Education (NAfME)** advocates at the federal, state, and local levels to educate elected officials and other key decision makers about the impact and importance of music education programs. Representing music educators, students, and advocates, NAfME is dedicated to ensuring the access, presence, and perseverance of quality music and arts programs that is operated by certified music educators, for all students across the nation, regardless of circumstance. NAfME seeks to change the national conversation about music's role in delivering an outstanding education to all students. [Learn more about NAfME's advocacy efforts.](#)

Connect with Advocacy Tools

The **League of American Orchestras** is committed to improving music education opportunities in local schools. [Visit their webpage](#) for a collection of tools for music education advocacy.

NAfME offers tools and resources to advocate at the local level through their **Broader Minded** campaign. To learn the “beyond the bubbles” arguments for music and join the broader minded movement, [visit their webpage.](#)

National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) publishes the **Why Learn to Play Music?** advocacy brochure, featuring research and statistics which highlight the many benefits of music education. [Download the brochure.](#)

Encourage Visibility

Every March, celebrate **Music In Our Schools Month (MIOSM)** with music educators and music education advocates around the country. Every June, music education supports participants in **Make Music Day**. Every September, all arts education supporters celebrate, advocate, and participate in **National Arts in Education Week**. Be sure to mark your calendars for these events!



Tip: Leverage these national celebrations to engage with decision makers, invite them to your events, or bring the event to them!

Learn the Data

Building on the first release of **Music Matters** in 2011, the Arts Education Partnership reviewed multiple research studies identified within **ArtsEdSearch**—the national clearinghouse of rigorous arts education research—to explore the importance of music on student learning outcomes. This updated resource explores the demonstrated effects of music education and how it helps students develop the foundational capacities for lifelong success. [Download the Music Matters publication.](#)

“Striking a Chord: The Public’s Hopes and Beliefs for K-12 Music Education in the United States 2015,” is a report published by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation and utilized by music education advocates to illuminate public opinions about music education. The study shows that parents and teachers are in agreement about music education; a large majority believe that children should have opportunities to learn to play musical instruments as early as elementary school and that music and arts education are “extremely” or “very important.” [Download the publication.](#)



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