

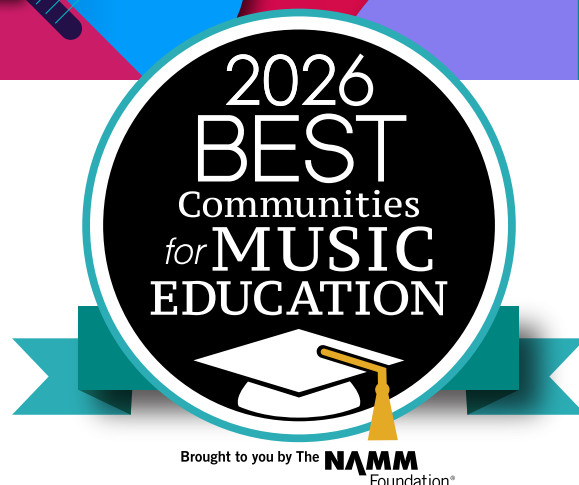
2026
BEST
Communities
for **MUSIC**
EDUCATION

Brought to you by The **NAMM**
Foundation®



2026

**Best Communities
for Music Education**



2026 | Best Communities for Music Education

Promotional Toolkit

Congratulations! The NAMM Foundation has recognized your community for its commitment to music education with the Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Award.

This toolkit provides ideas and resources to raise the visibility of your music education program and to celebrate this important designation. If your district or school has a communications department, please share this kit with the appropriate contact.

Contents

Section 1

About the Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Award Program

Section 2

Ways to Increase Visibility

Section 3

Fact Sheet: Benefits of Music Education

Section 4

Tools & Resources



Section 1

About the Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Program Award

For the past 27 years, The NAMM Foundation has celebrated communities throughout the country with the Best Communities for Music Education (school districts) and Support Music Merit (individual school sites) Awards. Throughout the 27 years, this national award has honored schools and districts across the United States for their unwavering commitment to music education as an integral part of a well-rounded education for all students.

This award celebrates the unwavering dedication of schools and districts that make music education a priority for every student. At The NAMM Foundation, we believe access to quality music programs is essential, and we are honored to highlight the educators and communities leading this important work.

- Julia Rubio, Executive Director of The NAMM Foundation

What is the difference between the District and School Award?

Historically, there were two separate honors — the Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Award for school districts and the SupportMusic Merit Award (SMMA) for individual schools.

Beginning in 2026, there is one unified award: the Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Award. This updated approach celebrates both school districts and individual schools under one banner.

The streamlined structure keeps the focus on excellence and advocacy while making the application process clearer and more accessible for all applicants.

What is the BCME Opportunity Award?

New this year, eligible districts and schools that demonstrate financial need had the opportunity to apply for the BCME Opportunity Award as part of the BCME application process.

Up to five recipients will receive awards of up to \$5,000 each. These funds are designed to strengthen and sustain music education programs where resources are needed most.

Title I schools and districts with demonstrated financial need are eligible to apply.

Schools and districts that have been selected have been notified.

About The NAMM Foundation

The NAMM Foundation is the charitable arm of the National Association of Music Merchants, the global trade association for the music products industry. The foundation works to remove systemic barriers that limit access to music-making and career pathways in the music industry. By investing in bold ideas and innovative solutions, we strive to build inclusive and thriving musical communities. For more information about The NAMM Foundation, please visit nammfoundation.org.

Section 2

Ways to Increase Visibility

The BCME Award provides an important opportunity to promote your school or district's commitment to music education and raise awareness about your music making programs.



1. Spread the Word. Engage the Media.

Media coverage helps to boost local awareness of music education in your community, potentially increasing support for and appreciation of music programs in schools.



Reach Out: Send the press release to local newspapers, TV and radio stations, blogs, and community websites. Also, consider sending it to your elected officials and other stakeholders.



Tell a Story: Include a quote from a student or teacher about the impact of music in their lives. Also, consider alumni who were deeply impacted by music. Remember that people are drawn to human interest stories.



Add Visuals: Include the best photo(s) or video links of your music program and participants.



2. Create Connections.

Host a celebration during a school board meeting, performance, or at your local music store.



Make the Media Part of Your Community: Invite local media to attend and photograph a student musical performance or your music program's certificate presentation.



Enlist Someone to Tell the Story: Ensure your spokesperson is prepared to answer questions. Also, consider having a student speak to the media about why music education is important to them.



3. Maximize Your Social Media Outreach.

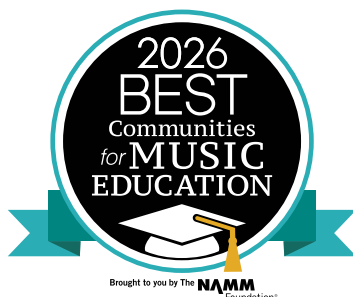
Social media is a powerful way to increase visibility and shine the spotlight on your music program. Use social media to communicate your program's unique aspects and promote local events and celebrations to your local community and beyond.

- Announce the award designation using the tools provided in this toolkit
- Post compelling photos and videos of the program
- Share personal stories and testimonials from your students, music teachers, administrators and/or parents about your music program's impact
- Use the following hashtags, including the official hashtag: **#BestCommunitiesforMusicEducation** and don't forget to tag **@nammfoundation**
- For more ideas, please visit: educator-resources/bcmetoolkit



Press Release Template for Best Communities for Music Education Award

[Contact Name]
[Contact School]
[Phone]
[Email]



[District/Schools]'s Receives National Recognition for Music Education Support

[If your district/schools has won this award multiple times, please note it in the title of the release]

[City, State] – [Date] – [District/School] has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education (Award) from The NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education. For 27 years,, the BCME designation has been awarded to districts and individual schools that demonstrate outstanding access to music education for all students.

To qualify for the BCME designation, [District/School] answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, and support for the music program and community music-making programs. Responses were verified by school officials and tabulated by WolfBrown, an esteemed national independent research and evaluation firm specializing in education and the arts.

["Insert quote from a school official on how music education is important to this district or school and its students," said District/School Official. "Insert quote on the impact that receiving this designation will have on the district's/school's music education program."]

["Optional student/teacher quote about WHY music education is important."]

Research into education continues to demonstrate educational/cognitive and social benefits for children who learn music: 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. In addition, everyday listening skills are stronger in musically trained children than those without music training. Significantly, listening skills are closely tied to perceiving speech in a noisy background, paying attention, and keeping 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. Social benefits include conflict resolution, teamwork skills, and giving and receiving constructive criticism.

[About District/School]

About The NAMM Foundation

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Section 3

Fact Sheet: Benefits of Music Education

www.nammfoundation.org/projects/music-research

Everyday listening skills are stronger in musically trained children than those without music training. Significantly, listening skills are closely tied to perceiving speech in a noisy background, paying attention, and keeping sounds in memory.

Strait, D.L. and N. Kraus, Biological impact of auditory expertise across the life span: musicians as a model of auditory learning. Hearing Research, 2013.

Researchers found that after two years, children who not only regularly attended music classes but also actively participated in the class showed larger improvements in how the brain processes speech and reading scores than their less-involved peers.

Nina Kraus, director of Northwestern's Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory, quoted in Melissa Locker, "This Is How Music Can Change Your Brain," Time, December 16, 2014.

Music training leads to greater gains in auditory and motor function when begun in young childhood; by adolescence, the plasticity that characterizes childhood has begun to decline. Nevertheless, our results establish that music training impacts the auditory system even when it is begun in adolescence, suggesting that a modest amount of training begun later in life can affect neural function.

Adam T. Tierney, Jennifer Krizman, Nina Kraus, "Music training alters the course of adolescent auditory development," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2015.

Research shows that making music changes the brain and that these brain changes have tangible impacts on listening skills, learning, and cognition.

(2017). Music, hearing, and education: from the lab to the classroom; quoted in Northwestern University, September/October 2017.

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.

(2017). Music, hearing, and education: from the lab to the classroom; quoted in Northwestern University, September/October 2017.

Students who take music in middle school score significantly higher on algebra assignments in 9th grade than their non-music counterparts.

Helmrich, B. H. (2010). Window of opportunity? Adolescence, music, and algebra. Journal of Adolescent Research. 25 (4).

Musical training is thought to improve nervous system function by focusing attention on meaningful acoustic cues, and these improvements in auditory processing cascade to language and cognitive skills.

Nina Kraus, Jessica Slater, Elaine C. Thompson, Jane Hornickel, Dana L. Strait, Trent Nicol, Travis White-Schwoch, "Music Enrichment Programs Improve the Neural Encoding of Speech in At-Risk Children," Journal of Neuroscience, September 3, 2014.

Section 43

Tools & Resources

The following templates can be customized and used to create visibility for your award. All materials can be found on The NAMM Foundation website. If you have questions about the resources, please email bethanyg@namm.org

Official 2026 BCME Logo



Provided in various file formats for both print and web.

Official 2026 BCME Banner: School or District 8'x4'(96"x48")



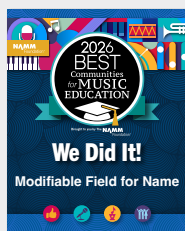
2026 BCME Posters 11"x17" & 22"x28"



Official 2026 BCME Certificate 11"x8.5"



Official 2026 BCME Social Media Tiles:



1080 x 1350 pixels
Static JPG & PDF with modifiable field
(Export PDF to JPG for social media posts)

1920 x 1080 pixels (16x9)
Static JPG & PDF with modifiable field
(Export PDF to JPG for social media posts)



The NAMM Store

Please be sure to tag your posts **#BestCommunitiesForMusicEducation**

In addition to the complimentary templates, we are offering items for purchase. Please visit The NAMM Store to learn more!

STICKERS:
6-Pack & Single

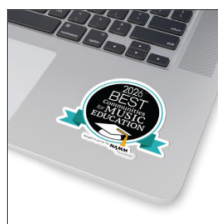
BANNERS:
2x3, 3x5, 4x6

MUGS

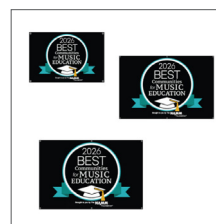
STICKERS



STICKER



BANNERS



MUGS

