

# Santa Monica-Malibu Unified Music Education Program Receives National Recognition

Santa Monica and Malibu named a 'Best Community for Music'

By Alexander Nguyen (Patch Staff) - May 3, 2017 6:11 pm ET

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SANTA MONICA, CA — 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 526 districts across the country in receiving the prestigious award in 2017, and is one of only two districts in Los Angeles County to be recognized. The Best Communities 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,” Superintendent Ben Drati said. “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.

Community music programs have been drawing increased attention because of [a landmark study](#) by Northwestern University brain scientists. These researchers found new links between students in community music programs and academic success in subjects such as reading.

Beyond the Northwestern study, other reports indicate that learning to play music can boost academic and social skills, such as processing math and learning to cooperate in group settings.

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

Monica-Malibu Education Foundation (SMMEF) is instrumental in funding many SMMUSD visual and performing arts programs including third grade recorders, ballroom dance for fifth graders, dance classes for middle school and Malibu High School, theatre, semi-private music lessons and winds, strings and voice programs at SMMUSD Title 1 schools.

Visit [smmef.org](http://smmef.org) to learn more or donate to support arts in all SMMUSD schools.