



NEW JERSEY MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

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Dear Music Educators and Supporters of Music Education:

NJMEA has recently learned of budget proposals from numerous school districts throughout New Jersey that include various cuts to their music education programs. These cuts range from the loss of instrumental music in elementary schools to combining music teacher positions at the middle and high school levels. The most troubling proposals aim to destroy and dismantle entire music programs.

NJMEA's core mission focuses on advancing music instruction at all levels in New Jersey's educational institutions. We feel it necessary to speak out against these proposals and to stand in solidarity with all music educators in New Jersey. Cuts to any music program, no matter how small, are unacceptable. Music education provides incredible and necessary benefits to students from pre-K through twelfth grade. Below are just a few of those benefits.

Music instruction is essential to the social and emotional health of our state's students. The sense of community, awareness of and desire for the welfare of others, and the interpersonal skills fostered in music classes are needed now more than ever. It is essential that students continue to have access to the skills and space that music-making provides to explore, process, and express their emotions and lived experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Social interaction and emotional health are enhanced by the ability to express oneself creatively through music.

Music instruction increases student engagement and hope in school and beyond. A [2015 Gallup Poll of K-12 school district superintendents](#) identified student engagement and hope as critical elements for effective schools - even as important as graduation rates. Research from multiple organizations demonstrates that student participation in the arts improves attendance, behavior, and academic performance. According to an [October 2018 Gallup Student Poll](#), students in art-rich schools with free/reduced lunch program participation of 75% or greater scored higher than the overall mean on student engagement and hope. These students reported feeling cared for by the adults at their schools, being excited for their own futures, holding a positive outlook on their employment prospects, and having confidence they can make a difference in the world.

The mission of the New Jersey Music Educators Association is to advance and improve the quality of music instruction statewide.

Unlike most single grade or subject teachers who see students for one semester or year, music teachers have the unique privilege and responsibility of building and nurturing relationships with the same students over multiple years of their development. These relationships and the lessons learned through music will be critical in helping students adjust to their new reality and keep them engaged in learning.

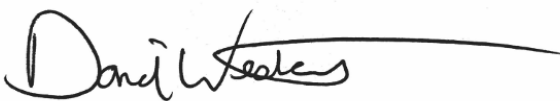
Music instruction contributes to the development of students' creativity and capacities preparing them to enter and contribute to New Jersey's creative economy. With its strong emphasis on team building and self-reflection, music education is supremely suited to support students' interest in learning through collaboration, while simultaneously fostering creativity, critical thinking, and communication. These skills are recognized as the "4 c's" - the most desirable skills needed in the 21st-century worker.

Music instruction is part of a well-rounded education for all students as understood and supported by federal and state policymakers. As defined in ESSA, "music and the arts" are a part of a well-rounded education. Every state in the nation recognizes the importance of the arts as reflected in rigorous PreK-12 state arts standards. Music is a part of a balanced education, providing New Jersey's students with the essential skills and knowledge they need to be productive, college and career ready citizens. As noted in [Arts Education for America's Students: A Shared Endeavor](#): "An education without the arts is inadequate."

While the membership of NJMEA shares the concerns of Boards of Education regarding the financial health of school districts, we are also concerned about the health and well-being of the music students of New Jersey who greatly benefit from their participation in the performing arts.

We have curated a variety of advocacy resources for different audiences that you can use to ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience music taught by highly qualified music educators. Please send these resources to other stakeholders as well. I would like to thank the North Carolina Music Educators Association, New York State School Music Association, and the Wisconsin Music Education Association for their assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



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