

-179 Communities Achieve Prestigious Designation
2011 Marks the First Year That Individual Schools Earn Honor -

http://www.nammfoundation.org/system/files/BestComm2011v1_3.jpg

CARLSBAD, Calif., May 4, 2011—In a year that saw budgetary crises and partisan conflict at all levels of government, the NAMM Foundation today announced the results of its 12th annual Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) survey, which acknowledges schools and districts across the U.S. for their commitment to and support for music education in schools.

In all, 179 communities out of 279 that submitted surveys were recognized, including 172 school districts and seven schools. 2011 marks the first year that individual schools received this impressive designation. The announcement came today as a part of NAMM's National Wanna Play Music Week, (May 2-8) a weeklong promotion designed to encourage people of all ages and skill levels to experience the proven benefits of playing music.

The BCME survey is a nationwide search for communities whose programs exemplify a strong commitment to music education. Established in 1999, BCME recognizes and celebrates schools, their administrators, teachers, board members, parents and students for their support of music education and their efforts to assure access to all students as part of the core curriculum.

The announcement of the 2011 Best Communities for Music Education campaign comes at a crucial time, as school districts nationwide finalize their budgets. According to the NAMM Foundation, the designation exemplifies a distinction worthy of pride, but also a call to action for local music education advocates to help preserve – and in some cases, save – their current music education programs.

“Considering how hard communities are fighting to maintain school music programs, earning a designation this year has become more relevant than ever. We are proud to acknowledge these districts and schools and grateful for their commitment to a complete education that includes music,” says Mary Luehrsen, executive director of the NAMM Foundation, which sponsors the program. “Never has the evidence been more compelling: there is a direct correlation between music education and success in other areas of a student's life. It is therefore crucial to continue funding music and arts education.”

While past designees have reported that making the Best Communities list had a positive effect on their ability to preserve music for their students, Luehrsen cautioned that there is great concern for this year and that local advocacy for music education is important.

“Given that we continue to see some of the deepest education cuts in decades, it's entirely possible that many of the schools recognized in this year's list may still lose or diminish their excellent programs,” she said. “We urge communities to celebrate the designation as a national recognition for their commitment to children – we all just need to do this for kids.”

Each school receiving the “Best Communities” designation scored in the 80th percentile or higher in the survey's grading process. Participants in the survey answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, support for the music program, and other relevant factors in their communities' music education programs. The responses were verified with district officials and advisory organizations reviewed the data.

The 2011 survey was conducted between January 14, 2011 and March 14, 2011 in collaboration with The Institute for Educational Research and Public Service (www.ku.edu/~ierps/cgi-bin) of Lawrence, Kansas, an affiliate of the University of Kansas. Each school district or school was allowed to fill out

one survey, completed by a school administrator and/or teacher with access to school and district demographic and budgetary information.

A copy of the survey can be downloaded for review at <http://www.nammfoundation.org/research/best-communities-music-education-....>

In conducting the annual survey, the NAMM Foundation is joined by advisory organizations in the fields of music and education: Americans for the Arts (www.americansforthearts.org), League of American Orchestras (www.americanorchestras.org), The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation (www.mhopus.org), Music for All (www.musicforall.org), Music Teachers National Association (www.mtna.org), National Guild For Community Arts Education (www.nationalguild.org), Yamaha Corporation of America (www.yamaha.com), Young Audiences (<http://www.yany.org>), National PTA (www.pta.org) and VH1 Save The Music Foundation (www.vh1savethemusic.com).

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<http://www.nammfoundation.org/press-room/namm-foundation-record-number-programs-earn-distinction-best-community-music-education>