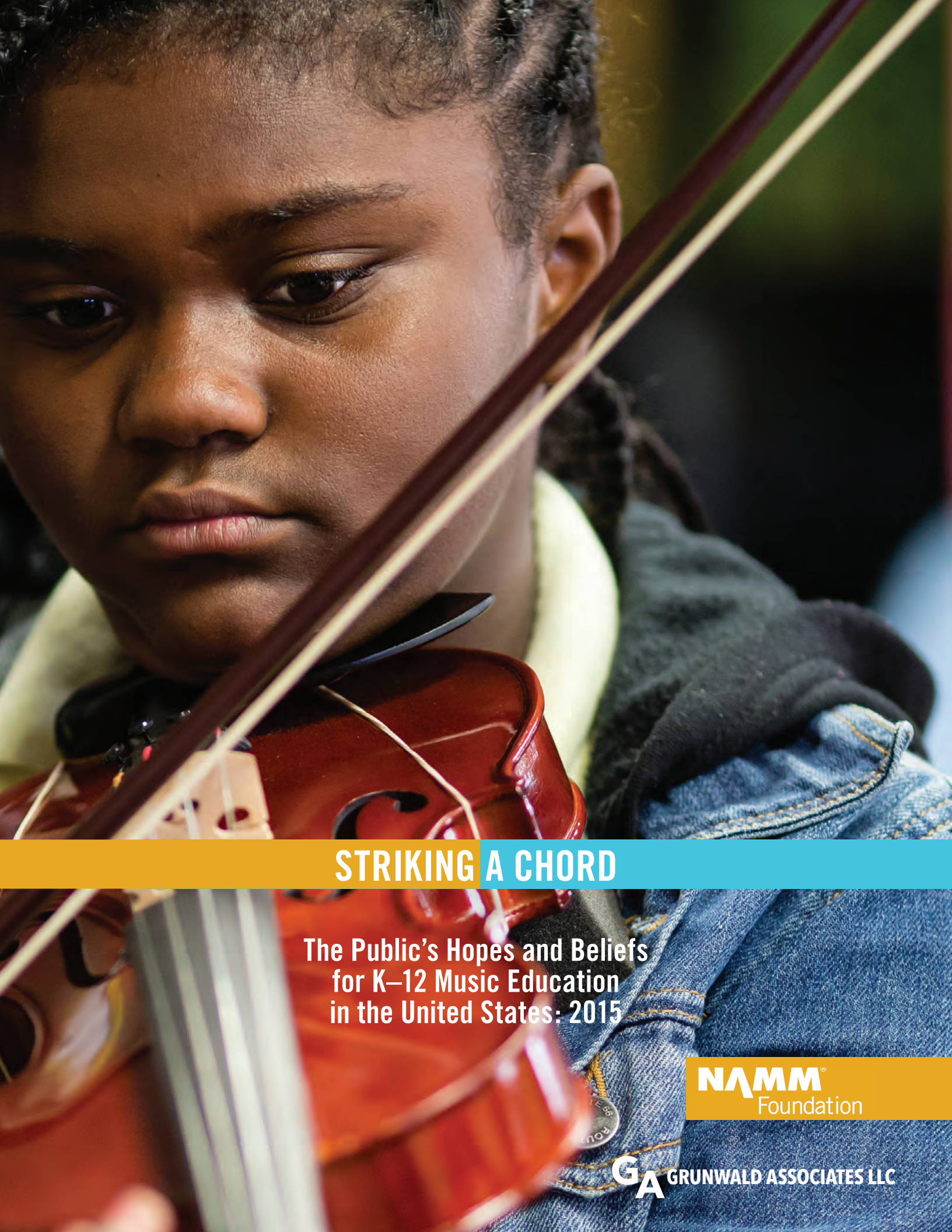

STRIKING A CHORD

The Public's Hopes and Beliefs for K–12 Music Education in the United States: 2015

NAMM Foundation

GRUNWALD ASSOCIATES LLC

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A special thanks to the New Brunswick (NJ) Public Schools, recognized by the NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education with a Best Communities for Music Education designation in 2015. The photographs in this report were taken at New Brunswick High School, New Brunswick Middle School and Livingston Elementary School.

Photography by Rob Davidson

Design and editorial assistance by Vockley•Lang

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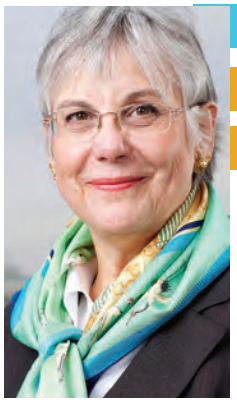


STRIKING A CHORD

The Public's Hopes and Beliefs for K–12 Music Education in the United States: 2015

Music has been found in every society since the dawn of recorded human history. What is it about this art form that has so permeated hearts and minds through the ages? Modern research has been instrumental in shedding light on this important question and is leading us to a deeper understanding of the power of music to improve the human condition and positively impact our lives and communities.

The NAMM Foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs. This work brings to life NAMM's vision of a world in which the joy of making music is a precious element of daily living for everyone; a world in which every child has a deep desire to learn music and a recognized right to be taught; and in which every adult is a passionate champion and defender of that right.

NAMM Foundation's support has been a catalyst for many of the most influential music research projects to date. Seeking out top researchers across specialties from neuroscience to psychology, the NAMM Foundation has played an integral role in the global conversation on the benefits of music learning. In addition to scientific research, the NAMM Foundation had conducted polls and surveys to document the attitudes and beliefs of the general public and tracked the increasing understanding and support for music education that this growing body of research has generated.

So it is with great excitement that we release *Striking a Chord: The Public's Hopes and Beliefs for K–12 Music Education in the United States: 2015,* conducted by Grunwald Associates LLC. In this study, we invited communities nationwide to provide us with information about their music education programs. Owing to many political and economic factors, it is a common narrative that access to music education is not universal and is often under threat for reduction or elimination. Against this backdrop, this study measures the beliefs and attitudes about music education through the eyes of the two most important and knowledgeable stakeholder groups: teachers and parents.

A glimpse into the report demonstrates how strongly these groups feel about the value of music education. Teachers and parents agree that music education has proven, measurable benefits and is a vital part of student success in school. They are also united in their strong disapproval to the cuts that have been made to music programs.

We hope the data spark conversations that help decision makers, educators and parents assure that all children have the opportunity to learn and grow with music.

Joe Lamond
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Association of Music Merchants

Mary L. Luehrsen
NAMM Director of Public Affairs
and Government Relations
Executive Director, NAMM Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the perceptions of K–12 teachers of all subjects and of parents of school-age children about music education in schools. Teachers are the front-line experts on the benefits and impact of music education on students in school. Parents are the primary caregivers of their children—and taxpayers who support the education system and see the impact of music education on their children's lives.

Teachers and parents agree that music education is critical to student success and strongly support substantial expansions in music programs. They're concerned about the impact of budget cuts to these programs—which are nearly the last school expenditures they'd be willing to jettison. Yet there are significant disparities in access to what parents and teachers consider to be quality programs. Both teachers and parents are largely unaware of the opportunities, including available resources, they have to address these issues.

Large majorities of teachers and parents consider access to music education vital for children—and they support it more strongly than they believe their school districts do. But most teachers and parents are unaware that music and the arts are designated as a core part of the curriculum in federal education guidelines.

- Substantial majorities of both teachers and parents view student access to music and arts education as "extremely" or "very" important.
- Nearly five times as many teachers think music and the arts should be a core part of the curriculum as they think their districts do; nearly half of all parents, including a substantial majority of elementary school parents, believe music and the arts should be considered as essential to the curriculum.
- Most teachers and parents are unaware that music and the arts are designated as part of the curriculum that should be available to all students.

Parents and teachers have high standards for music programs. Many perceive significant deficits in both access to and quality of music education, however—including groups that feel their children would benefit greatly from it.

- Both parents and teachers have high standards and expectations for quality music programs, especially the importance of competent, certified teachers.
- On average, students have had only about three years of in-school music education, according to parents; more than a third have had one year or less, with one in six of all students having had no music instruction at all.
- Fewer than half of school music programs have the musical instruments or even sheet music they need for all participating students, both teachers and parents say.
- Parents and teachers in urban schools are clamoring for expansion of programs to match the access to and attributes of programs in suburban schools.
- Hispanic and African-American parents generally feel music provides more benefits to children than other parents do. Like their urban counterparts, however, they feel they're being shortchanged in a number of ways—though they're taking steps to overcome these deficits that could model solutions for other groups.
- Parents and teachers in Western states report that schools trail their counterparts in other regions on a number of measures; they feel more strongly than those in other regions that music should be a core subject. Parents and teachers in the West are the least satisfied about the status of their music programs.

Both parents and teachers see substantial benefits from music education—and support significant expansions in music programs.

- Majorities of both parents and teachers see a myriad of social-emotional, academic, 21st century skill, community, and physical and health benefits from music education—*especially social-emotional benefits.*
- Majorities of both parents and teachers are aware of research on the effects of music on the developing brain, and have personally experienced the benefits of music education on their own children or students.
- Substantial majorities of both parents and teachers want to see the scope of elementary school music education expanded.
- Majorities of parents and teachers believe music education should be *required* in both middle and high schools.
- Nearly half of parents and teachers support integrating music into the professional development of *all* educators.

In an era of limited budgets, music education is one of the *last* things teachers and parents would cut.

- Funding is one of the top requirements for a quality music program, according to both teachers and parents.
- Substantial majorities of teachers and parents believe budget cuts in music programs hurt students and that music is not as adequately funded as other core subjects. Most teachers and parents rate the funding for their own school's music program as average or worse.
- Asked about 15 possible ways to cut school budgets, both teachers and parents are more willing to make cuts in *12* of the 14 other curricular, administrative and service areas than cut music and arts education. Only the number and salaries of teachers are more sacrosanct.

INTRODUCTION TO KEY FINDINGS

THE MUSIC EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Since the implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, which prioritized mathematics, reading and performance on high-stakes tests above other elements of school curricula, and subsequent economic pressures on the finances of many school districts, music and arts education programs have been subject to significant budget cuts and de-emphases. This has occurred despite substantial studies indicating strong correlations between arts education and academic achievement, especially for the country's growing number of at-risk children (see, e.g., Catteral, Dumais & Hampden-Thompson, 2012[1]).

In 2011, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) recognized the crisis in arts education and its relationship to the challenges faced by elementary and secondary schools in general.[2] PCAH's report included a series of recommendations to help address the crisis, including:

- Building collaborations among different approaches
- Developing the field of arts integration
- Expanding in-school opportunities for teaching artists
- Utilizing federal and state policies to reinforce the place of arts in K–12 education
- Widening the focus of evidence gathering about arts education

This report by the NAMM Foundation and Grunwald Associates LLC speaks broadly to basic elements of music education that make laudable and powerful goals like those of the PCAH possible—the availability of musical instruments, the amount of time allotted for instruction and learning, the proportion of students engaged in music education, the professional development opportunities available to teachers and more. To date, the most extensive and impressive data collection in areas such as these and others—including the

availability of arts education, teaching loads for arts teachers, characteristics of arts programs, and arts education activities outside of regular school hours—has been done by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012[3]). This report adds detail to this analysis in a variety of areas and, in particular, examines the extent to which the nation's music education opportunities, operating with current pressures from testing and budgets, measure up to the quality standards key stakeholders actually hold.

More generally, this report focuses on the general and specific *perceptions* of music and arts education in the United States by two important stakeholder groups. Teachers are the front-line experts on the benefits and impact of music education on students in school. Parents are their children's primary caregivers and the taxpayers who support the education system and see the impact of music education on their children's lives.

THIS REPORT EXAMINES THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE NATION'S MUSIC EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES, OPERATING WITH CURRENT PRESSURES FROM TESTING AND BUDGETS, MEASURE UP TO THE QUALITY STANDARDS KEY STAKEHOLDERS ACTUALLY HOLD.

1. Catterall, J.S., Dumais, S.A., & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012). *The Arts And Achievement In At-Risk Youth: Findings From Four Longitudinal Studies*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for The Arts.

2. President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (May 2011). *Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools.* Washington, DC: Author.

3. Parsad, B. & Spiegelman, M. (2012). *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999–2000 and 2009–10* (NCES 2012–014). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

There's a real untapped opportunity to improve music education access and quality through Title I funding—and parent and teacher activism.

- Title I schools generally lag non-Title I schools in many indicators of quality in music education, parents and teachers say.
- Awareness that Title I funds can be used for music education is generally low.
- Parents who are highly involved in supporting their children's schools have higher expectations for music programs—and their expectations are significantly more likely to be met.
- Coalitions of key groups of parents and educators could be mobilized to provide more grassroots support for music programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the NAMM Foundation offers 10 recommendations for parents, educators, policymakers and music education advocates.

1 Increase awareness among parents, teachers, administrators and school boards that music is a core curricular subject by *federal policy.*

2 Ensure that every student who wants to play a musical instrument has access to the instrument of choice and can take it home to practice—with the necessary sheet music and other materials to support learning and performance.

3 Reduce disparities in music education access and quality so that all schools, geographic regions and demographic groups have equal access to a *quality* music education as *defined by teachers and parents*—in particular, schools staffed by certified music teachers.

4 Provide professional development opportunities to all music educators—and consider integrating music into the professional development of *all* educators.

5 Reverse the decades-long cuts to music and arts education to increase funding instead—*this is what education's primary stakeholders want.*

6 Increase the scope of all elementary school music programs to include instrument instruction, music theory and composition, aligned to national standards.

7 Require student participation in music education at the middle and high school levels and expand music learning opportunities to include contemporary and world music and music technology.

8 Increase awareness among administrators, teachers and parents that Title I monies can be used for music education—and increase the number of programs that use these funds for music education.

9 Create coalitions of educators, involved parents and music organizations in the community to help ensure access to quality music education for all students, with a focus on groups that are particularly likely to be passionate participants in this effort.

10 Conduct additional research on students, district and school administrators, and school board members to understand their perceptions of music education.

KEY FINDINGS

TEACHERS AND PARENTS CONSIDER MUSIC EDUCATION VITAL

Both teachers and parents consider access to music and arts education vital for their students and children, with nearly 80 percent of teachers and nearly two-thirds of parents (64 percent) reporting that access to the arts is "extremely" or "very" important, as shown in Figure 1. Parents and teachers of elementary school children, teachers in urban, suburban or large districts, and Hispanic parents are particularly likely to feel this way compared to their peers.

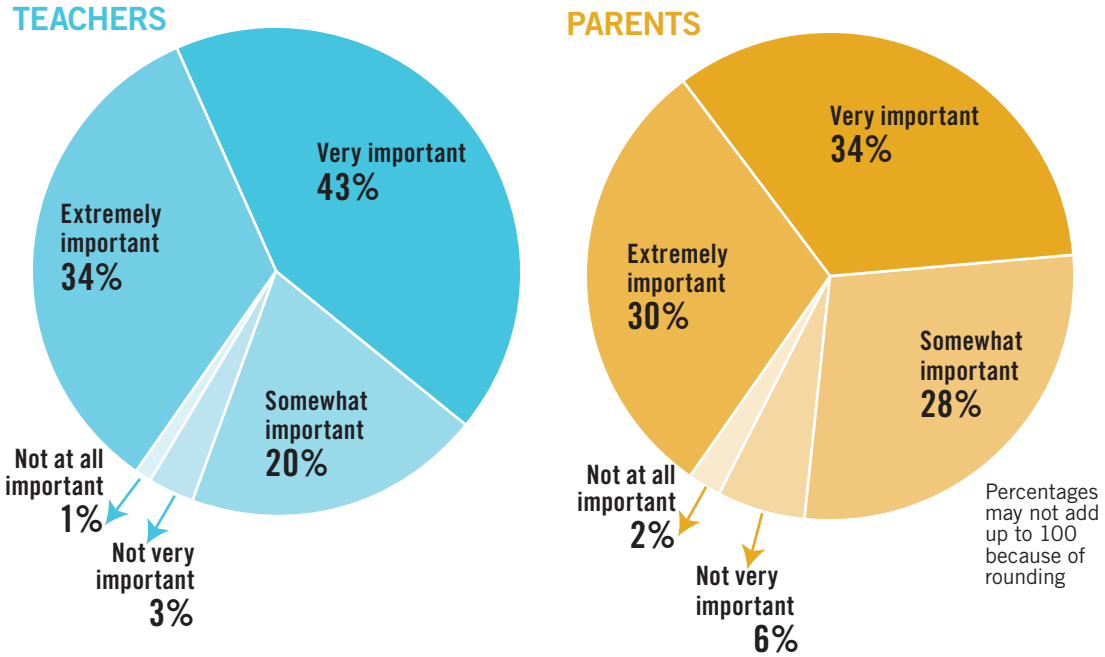
In fact, nearly five times as many teachers (34 percent) consider music and arts education to be core academic subjects as those who perceive that their school districts share this sentiment (7 percent). Nearly half of all parents (45 percent) consider music and arts education as core academic subjects as well, as shown in Figure 2, including a solid majority of elementary school parents (57 percent).

77% OF TEACHERS AND 64% OF PARENTS SAY ACCESS TO MUSIC AND ARTS EDUCATION IS "EXTREMELY" OR "VERY" IMPORTANT

At the same time, music and arts education slightly lags physical education and sports in the extent to which parents believe they should be core academic subjects, by a margin of 51 percent to 45 percent), although teachers rate music and arts education more highly (34 percent to 31 percent). Strikingly, two-thirds of teachers (66 percent) and a majority of parents (55 percent) apparently are unaware that "the arts" are designated as a core academic subject in federal law.

Figure 1.

Access to Music and Arts Education "Extremely" or "Very" Important to Most Teachers and Parents



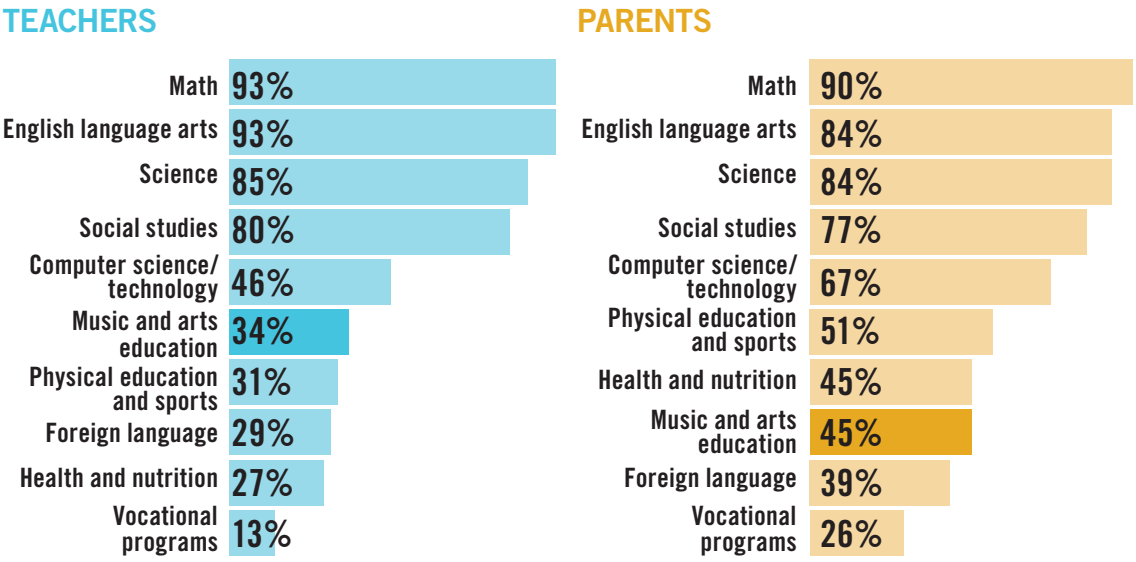
Teacher Q
How important is it for K–12 students to have access to or be able to participate in music and arts education at school?

Parent Q
How important is it for your child to have access to or be able to participate in music and arts education at school?

Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

Figure 2.

Many Teachers and Parents Do Not Consider Music and Arts Education a Core Academic Subject



Teacher Q
Regardless of the policies at your school district, which of the following do you think should be considered core academic subjects?

Parent Q
Regardless of the policies at your child's school district, which of the following do you think should be considered core academic subjects?

Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

TEACHERS AND PARENTS HOLD MUSIC PROGRAMS TO HIGH STANDARDS, BUT DISPARITIES PREVAIL

Both teachers and parents have high standards for the elements of a quality music program. In fact, substantial majorities agree with the importance of each of the nearly 30 attributes of quality about which they were asked, with at least a quarter of parents and one in five teachers saying each of these elements is "very" important, as shown in Figure 3.

Topping the list of important factors is the quality of teachers, which is key to overwhelming majorities of teachers (93 percent) and parents (86 percent). Moreover, the vast majority of teachers (89 percent) and parents (81 percent) believe a quality music program requires *certified* teachers as well. Nearly as many want to be sure there are *enough* music teachers for children, and say that professional development opportunities for music teachers are important.

More than 80 percent of teachers, and nearly as many parents, say that the time allotted to music education—adequate rehearsal time, class duration and class frequency—also is important for a quality music education program. In fact, eight in 10 teachers and more than seven in 10 parents believe the number of minutes of music education *required* every week is an important quality component.

But the reality on the ground, both in general and for specific groups, is often very different. According to parents, their children have had only three years of music instruction, on average. Worse, just about one in three parents (36 percent) say their child has received one year or less of music education, and one in six parents (16 percent) report their child has received no music education at all in their school. Moreover, fewer than 1 percent of students have been involved in music programs throughout their K–12 education, according to parents.

The number and quality of musical instruments, along with materials, are high on parents' lists of "must haves" for a quality program. But many teachers report that these essentials are in short supply. Fewer than half of teachers (42 percent) and parents (46 percent) say their schools have the musical instruments they need for all students who want to learn to play. Other necessities also are lacking—only 41 percent of teachers and 46 percent of parents say their schools have enough sheet music for every participating child.

Furthermore, only 31 percent of teachers and 40 percent of parents say there are enough instruments for every child to play his or her instrument of choice, let alone take these instruments home to practice, with only one in five teachers (20 percent) and fewer than one-third of parents (31 percent) reporting these elements of a quality music program in their schools. There are even greater disparities between how strongly both stakeholder groups feel about the number and variety of music programs in their schools and what's actually available.

Figure 3.

Teachers and Parents Share Similar Views About the Key Elements of a Quality Music Education Program

Percentage Responding That Element Is "Very" or "Somewhat" Important	TEACHERS	PARENTS
Quality of music teachers	93%	86%
Funding	92%	85%
Age and developmentally appropriate curriculum	92%	84%
Number of instruments	91%	86%
Quality of instruments	91%	84%
Opportunities for community to attend school groups' performances	91%	84%
Adequate rehearsal time is provided	90%	83%
Music teachers are all certified	89%	81%
Facilities	89%	82%
Materials	89%	83%
Equipment	88%	80%
Class duration	87%	79%
Class frequency	87%	78%
Number of music teachers in total	86%	77%
Type of music classes offered	86%	82%
Variety of music classes offered	85%	81%
Professional development opportunities for music teachers	84%	72%
Opportunities for school's groups to perform in community events	82%	77%
Opportunities for students to attend performances in the community	82%	76%
Number of minutes per week required	80%	73%
Opportunities for school's groups to perform at music conferences	77%	73%
Sponsored events with industry artists and professionals	72%	67%
Collaboration with teachers in other subjects	72%	68%
Use of technology in music classes	72%	72%
School's groups have been recognized (honor performing group, national competition)	69%	67%
Music is part of integration strategies	67%	68%
Professional development opportunities for music integration for all educators	65%	69%
Collaborations with industry professionals	65%	61%
Use of a district curriculum guide	59%	61%

Teacher Q
Thinking about what you would consider a high-quality music education program in K–12 schools, how important are each of the following?

Parent Q
Thinking about what you would consider a high-quality music education program for your child, how important are the following?

Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

FOR SOME DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS, THE REALITIES OF MUSIC EDUCATION FALL SHORT OF THE POTENTIAL

For specific demographic groups with a passion for music, the disconnects between the perceived value and realities of music education are especially great. For example:

URBAN TEACHERS AND PARENTS.

Teachers in urban schools are more likely to consider music and arts education as core to the curriculum (38 percent) and value access to it (81 percent), compared to teachers in rural areas (30 percent of whom consider music and arts education as core to the curriculum and 70 percent of whom value access to it). Both urban teachers and parents are generally more supportive of expanding music education. Urban parents are more interested in a greater variety of programs both within and outside of school as well. Urban teachers also believe more strongly that music education can build 21st century skills, such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and innovation skills.

But urban teachers are less satisfied with their school music programs, both in general (44 percent of urban teachers are satisfied vs. 52 percent of rural teachers and 62 percent of suburban teachers) and with regard to many specific elements. They are joined in their dissatisfaction by urban parents where arts programs in general are concerned. From the responses of teachers and parents who say they are familiar with their schools' music programs, urban schools appear to have fewer full-time music teachers, although this finding is not statistically significant, and they are less likely to have certified music teachers (77 percent of urban teachers and parents say their schools have certified music teachers, compared to 84 percent for suburban schools and 85 percent for rural schools) or to provide professional development opportunities for them than the suburbs (26 percent of urban teachers and parents say their schools offer none, vs. 19 percent of teachers and parents in the suburbs).

Urban schools offer fewer music programs and less access to music programs than suburban schools (by a margin of 77 percent to 87 percent, according to all parents surveyed), including school programs that provide a combination of in-school and after-school opportunities (16 percent of urban teachers say such programs are available, compared to 30 percent of suburban teachers). To a lesser extent, many of these findings are echoed in rural schools as well.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND HISPANIC PARENTS.

African-American parents (76 percent) and Hispanic parents (75 percent) are significantly more likely than Caucasian parents (67 percent) to enroll their children in school music classes where opportunities exist, and they are more interested in their children participating in virtually every type of music class in or out of school. African-American and Hispanic parents generally believe more strongly in a wide array of potential benefits from music education, are more likely to have seen these positive impacts on their own child and more strongly support expanding music education programs. Ironically, these parents also are more likely to report that there are no music programs in their schools (21 percent of African-American parents and 22 percent of Hispanic parents report this, compared to 15 percent of Caucasian parents).

African-American and Hispanic parents also report that their children receive fewer years of in-school music education (2.82 years for African-American children and 2.76 years for Hispanic children, vs. 3.34 years for Caucasian children,

on average) and that the classes that are offered are shorter than those reported by Caucasian parents)—all statistically significant differences. Both African-American and Hispanic parents nevertheless have more positive attitudes towards their schools' music programs and are significantly more involved in school groups dedicated to improving both their music programs and their schools in general. This could be one reason why both groups also generally report better facilities and more equipment than their peers do when school music programs are available, suggesting a possible pathway to other groups interested in improved music programs. Both African-American and Hispanic parents seem to try to overcome their schools' shortcomings, given that they are more likely to report that their child participates in music activities outside of school.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES.

Some of the most striking divergences in teacher and parent perceptions about music education are regional. Teachers, and to a lesser extent parents, in the West feel more strongly than those in other regions that music and arts education should be considered a core academic subject. But they're also less satisfied than those in other regions with both their own school's arts programs and music programs around the country. And with good reason.

Compared to students in at least one other region (Northeast, Midwest or South)—and in many cases all of them—students in the West have less access to music education in general, lower rates of enrollment in music classes at every grade level and fewer minutes a week of required music education, according to teachers and parents. Students in the West also are more likely to have school music programs that take place only outside of school hours—and they have access to fewer types of programs as well. Schools in the West are less likely to be able to depend on school or district funds for their music programs, and more likely to require funding from private donations, fundraising or both. Music teachers in the West are less likely to have a district curriculum to follow or a music requirement for graduation in their schools. In general, there's less integration of music education with other subjects in the West as well. Moreover, parents in the West say their children are less involved in music programs outside of school.

The region that most shares these characteristics with the West is the South. However, parents and teachers in the South are more satisfied with their arts programs in general—and teachers in this region are less likely to consider access to music education to be important. Teachers in the South are also more satisfied with many specific elements of their music programs, perhaps in part because they also report that they have longer music classes than do teachers in other regions.

To the extent that the West has a regional polar opposite, with few exceptions it's the Northeast, where teachers report that more children are enrolled in music classes at higher grade levels, in more types of programs, and with more school or district funding support, more integration of music with other subjects and, apparently, more full-time music teachers. However, teachers and parents in the Northeast report that music classes are less frequent.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF MUSIC EDUCATION GO FAR BEYOND MUSIC

Both teachers and parents see a wide range of social-emotional, academic, 21st century skill, community, and even physical and health benefits to students who participate in music classes, with majorities of both groups agreeing that music education can have positive effects in every one of the 38 choices with which they were provided. Ten of the top benefits are shown in Figure 4.

Both teachers and parents feel particularly strongly about music's *social-emotional benefits.* Four of the top five benefits teachers see fall into this category, including the potential of music education to help students express themselves (cited by 92 percent of teachers), become more confident (90 percent), and develop better practice habits (89 percent) and more self-discipline (88 percent).

IT'S STRIKING THAT 87% OF TEACHERS AND 79% OF PARENTS STRONGLY BELIEVE MUSIC EDUCATION HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON *OVERALL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.*

Among parents, eight of the top 12 benefits they see are social-emotional in nature, led by the same four positive impacts as teachers cited, and others as well, such as greater involvement with the school community (cited by 76 percent of parents), encouragement to pursue personal dreams (76 percent), and greater focus and alertness (75 percent).

It's also notable that both teachers (89 percent) and parents (82 percent) rate music education highly as a source for greater student creativity, a 21st century skill that's highly likely to help young peo-

ple stand out in an increasingly competitive global economy. It's also striking that both teachers (87 percent) and parents (79 percent) strongly believe music education has a positive impact on *overall academic performance.*

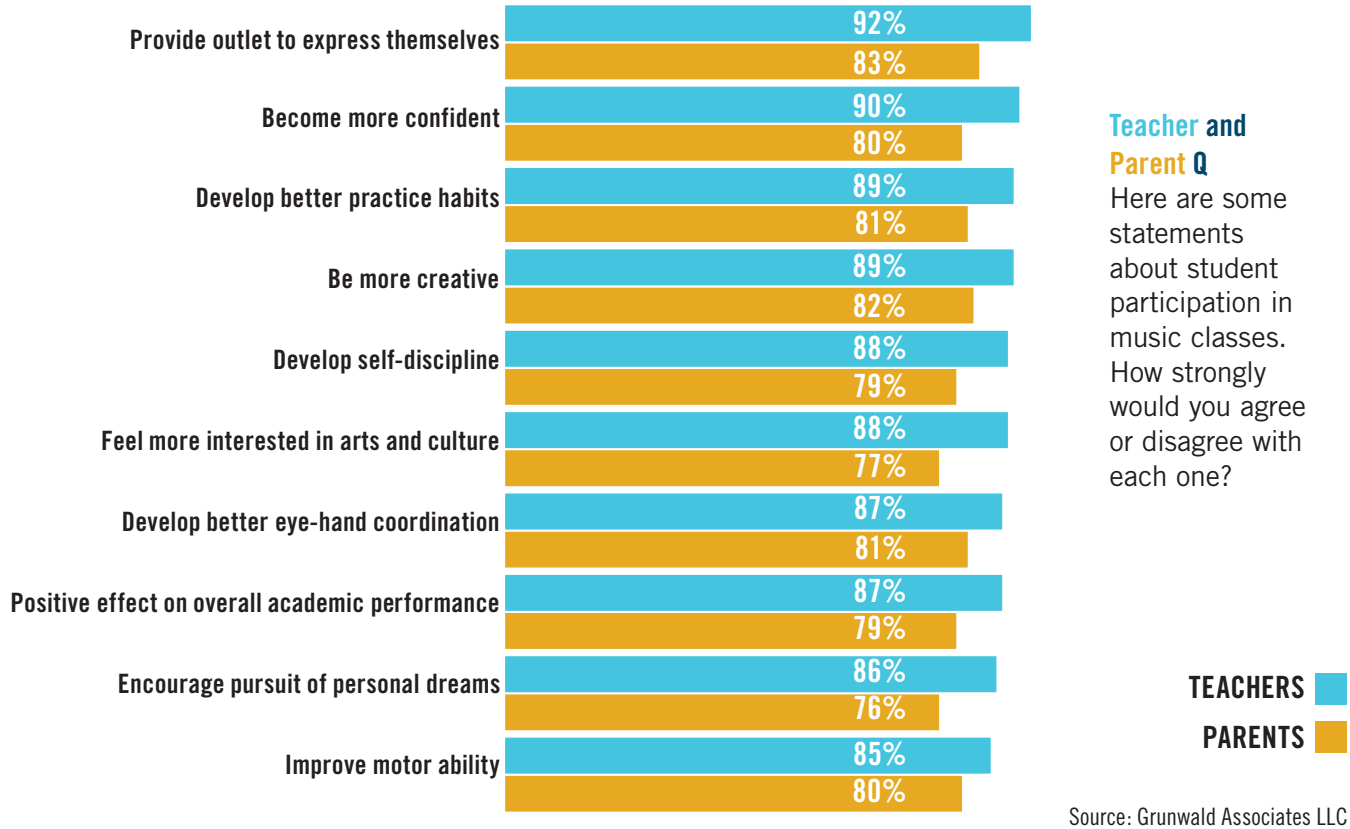
Majorities of both teachers (80 percent) and, to a lesser extent, parents (55 percent) are aware of the research showing music's impact on the developing brain. But for many teachers and parents, their views go beyond beliefs to personal experience. More than three-quarters of teachers (76 percent) say they can tell which students in their classes are taking music classes by their attitudes and performance. Large majorities of parents report a variety of very positive interactions between their children and their music teachers.

Majorities of teachers and parents, ranging from 84 percent to 54 percent, "strongly" or "somewhat" agree on all other benefits about which they were asked, including:

- Feel more involved with school community
- More eager to attend school
- Create links between school and community
- Become more focused and alert
- Become better team players
- Be more innovative
- Strengthen parents' engagement with school

Figure 4.
Music Provides Many Important Benefits, Teachers and Parents Report

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO "STRONGLY" OR "SOMEWHAT" AGREE ON POSITIVE EFFECTS OF MUSIC



Teacher and Parent Q
Here are some statements about student participation in music classes. How strongly would you agree or disagree with each one?

Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

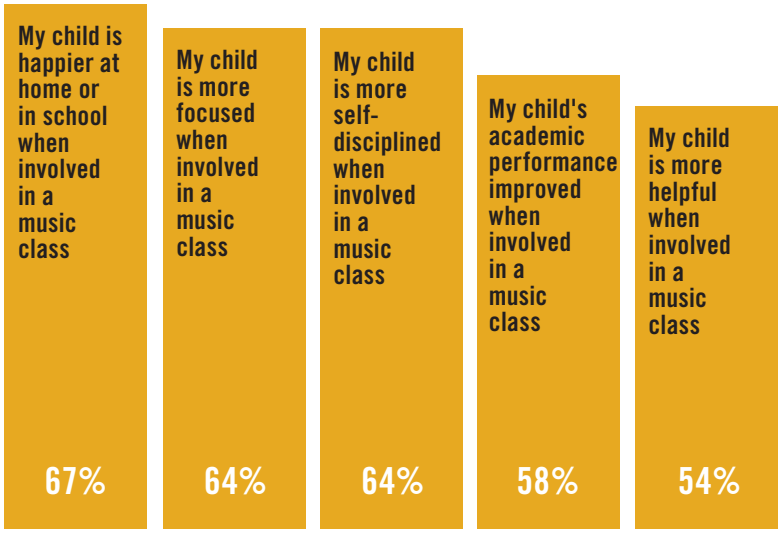
- Become better listeners
- Feel more involved in community
- Encourage participation in other groups
- Become better critical thinkers
- Become better communicators
- Become better problem solvers
- Improve recall and retention of information
- Adjust more easily to changing situations
- Enhance language skills
- Come to class prepared and ready to learn
- Improve reading and comprehension
- Help with math skills
- Become better leaders
- Be more globally aware
- Help graduate from high school
- Increase participation in class discussions
- Help get into the college of their choice
- Help perform academically at the college level
- Improve physical condition and health
- Perform better on standardized tests
- Help finish assignments and chores more completely

Majorities of parents whose children are involved in music classes also credit music education for making them happier, more focused, more self-disciplined, stronger academically and more helpful, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5.

Parents Cite Positive Impacts of Children's Participation in Music Education

PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WITH A CHILD ENROLLED IN MUSIC CLASS IN SCHOOL WHO "STRONGLY" OR "SOMEWHAT" AGREE



Parent Q

Based on your observations of your child when he/she is involved in music classes, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each one?

Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

TEACHERS AND PARENTS SUPPORT EXPANDED MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Not surprisingly, given their strong perceptions, beliefs and experiences, both teachers and parents support substantial expansions in music education programs. Some highlights of their goals:

- **Expansion of scope in elementary school.** Eighty-seven percent of teachers and 81 percent of parents feel children should have the opportunity to learn to play musical instruments as early as the elementary grades. Sixty-nine percent of teachers and 67 percent of parents also believe children should have the opportunity to learn music theory in elementary school. Sixty-nine percent of teachers and 61 percent of parents think elementary school students should be afforded the opportunity to learn to compose music as well.
- **Expansion of requirements in middle and high school.** Sixty-three percent of teachers and 57 percent of parents believe music education should be required in *middle school*. Fifty-two percent of teachers and 50 percent of parents feel music education should be required in *high school*, too.
- **More integration of music into teacher training.** Nearly half of all teachers (49 percent) and parents (47 percent) think the professional development of *all* educators should include integration of music into their subject areas.

87% OF TEACHERS AND 81% OF PARENTS FEEL CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN TO PLAY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AS EARLY AS THE ELEMENTARY GRADES.

PROGRAM CUTS STRONGLY OPPOSED—AND FOR MANY, MUSIC IS THE LAST THING TO CUT

With both teachers and parents strongly supporting major *expansions* in music programs, the current trend of cutting these programs does not meet with much favor. When it comes to their perceptions about the most important components of a quality music program, funding trails only teacher quality as a necessity for the vast majority of teachers (92 percent) among the 29 potential quality factors they considered. Most parents (85 percent) would move ahead one other element that *requires* funding—the number of instruments available—but still rate funding music education as more important than 26 other factors.

83% OF TEACHERS AND 73% OF PARENTS SAY BUDGET CUTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION ARE DETRIMENTAL TO STUDENTS.

More than eight in 10 teachers (83 percent) and more than seven in 10 parents (73 percent) say budget cuts in music education are detrimental to students. More than three-quarters of teachers (76 percent) and more than seven in 10 parents (71 percent) also agree that music education is not as adequately funded as other core subjects. Asked about their own school's music program, fewer than a quarter of teachers (24 percent) and only about a third of parents (36 percent) would describe its funding as "excellent" or even "above average." More than three-quarters of teachers (76 percent) and more than half of parents (64 percent) say the funding for the music program in their schools is adequate or worse.

Parents' and teachers' commitment to music and arts education funding was assessed by a "drag and drop" exercise in which they were asked to select programs and services for reduction or elimination. The results of this exercise are shown in Figure 6.

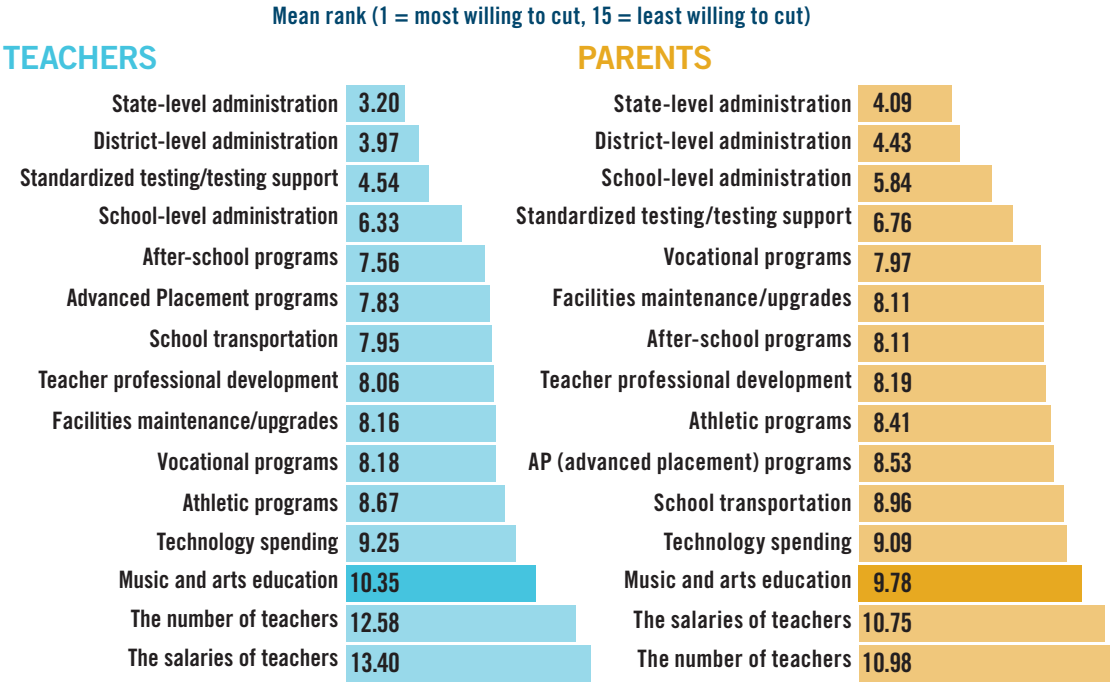
On average, both teachers and parents would be more willing to cut spending in *12* of the 15 areas before they'd cut funding for music and arts education.

76% OF TEACHERS AND 71% OF PARENTS ALSO AGREE THAT MUSIC EDUCATION IS NOT AS ADEQUATELY FUNDED AS OTHER CORE SUBJECTS.

Only the number and salaries of teachers were more sacrosanct and considered more worthy of protection by both groups. Teachers and parents, the key stakeholders in the education system, consider music and arts education to be the last programming areas to be reduced or eliminated in school budgets.

Figure 6.

Eliminating Music and Arts Education Is Not an Option: Teachers and Parents are More Willing to Cut Virtually Every Other Program Instead



Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

Teacher and Parent Q

Assuming a limited budget and the need for cuts, which programs would you be most willing to cut from your child's school? Please rank the following items from 1 to 15, with "1" being the one you're most willing to cut and "15" being the one you're least willing to cut.

THE PROMISE OF TITLE I—AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHER AND PARENT ACTIVISM

Title I is a federal education program that provides funding to schools with high proportions of low-income families. Teachers and parents report that Title I schools experience some of the most widespread problems with their music education programs.

Teachers in Title I schools generally are more convinced than other teachers of the potential social-emotional and 21st century skills benefits music education could provide for their students. But teachers in Title I schools are more likely to report that their schools have no music program at all. In Title I schools that do offer music programs, teacher responses suggest that they have fewer full-time music teachers—and teachers in these schools are more likely to report there are no professional development opportunities for the music teachers they do have.

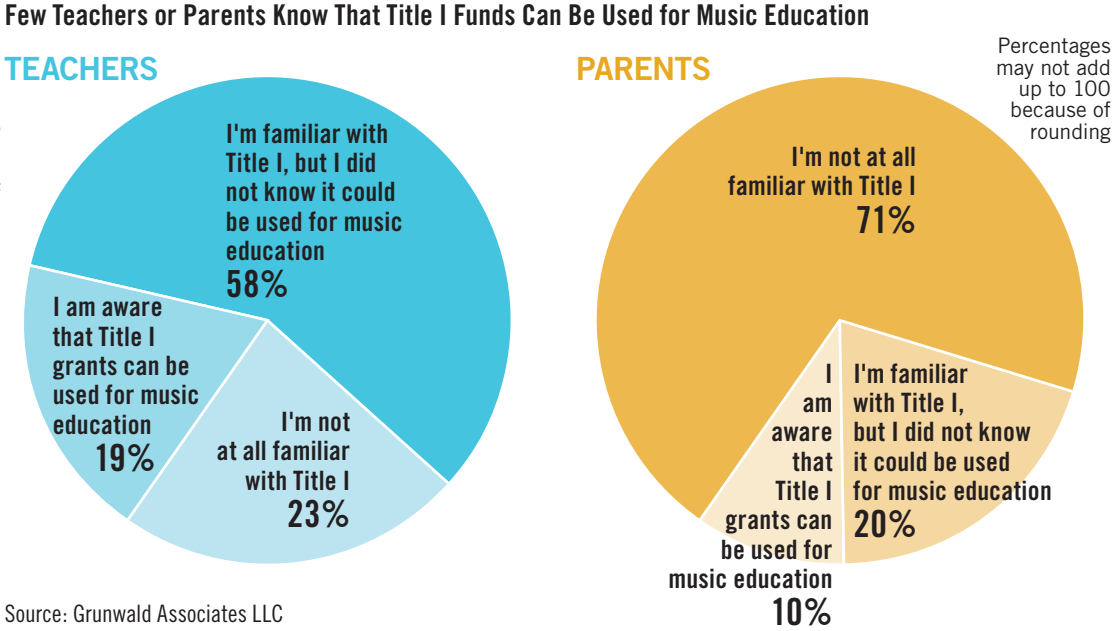
Teachers in Title I schools are more likely than other teachers to report inferior music facilities and less equipment and materials—such as dedicated spaces for music classes, appropriate and properly functioning equipment, instruments and sheet music. Title I schools also offer fewer programs across the spectrum of the potential repertoire—general music and theory, ensembles, band and orchestra, instrument classes, and music technology and recording—teachers report. Teachers in Title I schools are less likely to report that their schools offer music programs that encompass both in-school and out-of-school opportunities or to have support from key stakeholders.

Not surprisingly, given these findings, teachers in Title I schools are less likely than other teachers to be satisfied with their school's arts programs in general, its music program in particular, and many specific elements of the music program as well.

Federal education policy specifically authorizes the use Title I funds for music and arts education. But few teachers—even the majority who know what Title I is—are aware of this significant opportunity to provide or improve music programs in the country. Even fewer parents are familiar with Title I, let alone the fact that Title I funds can be used for music education, as shown in Figure 7.

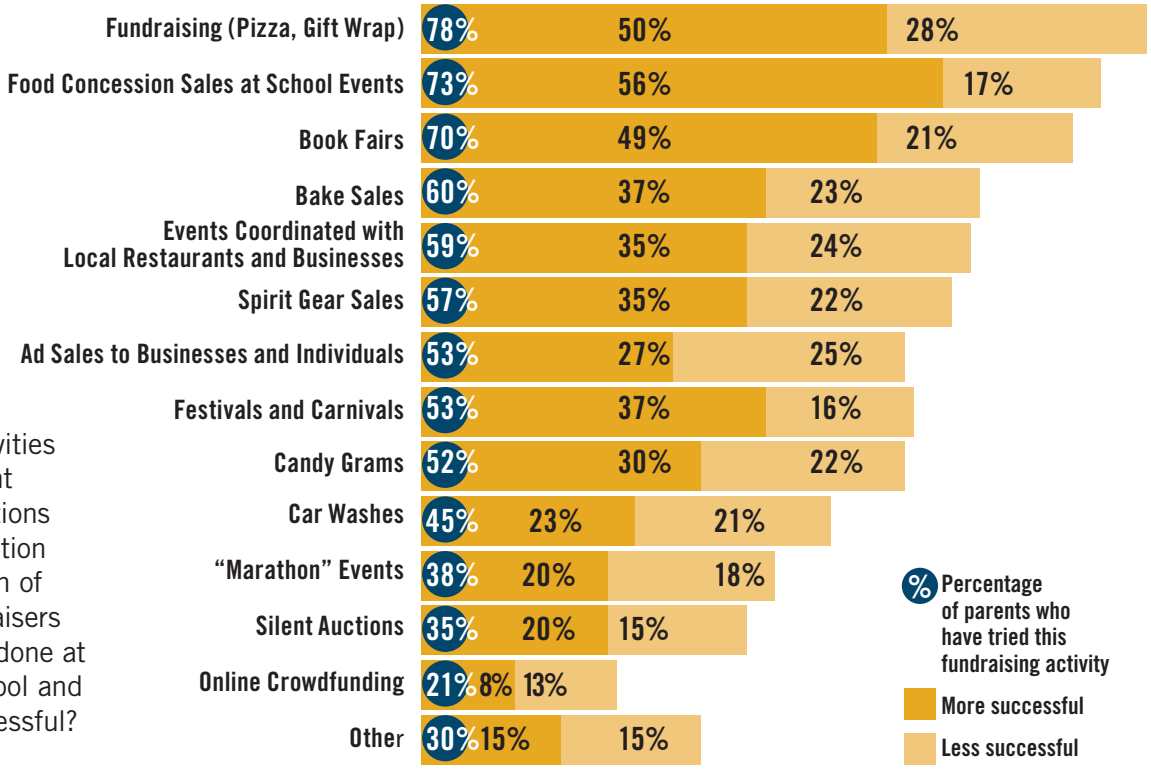
Figure 7.
Few Teachers or Parents Know That Title I Funds Can Be Used for Music Education

Teacher and Parent Q
Are you aware that U.S. Department of Education federal Title I grants could be used for music education? If you're not familiar with Title I, it's okay to just say so.



Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

Figure 8.
Parents Engage in a Variety of Fundraising Activities to Support School Music Programs



Source: Grunwald Associates LLC

Parent Q
Here are some fundraising activities done by different parent organizations for music education programs. Which of these are fundraisers that have been done at your child's school and have been successful?

More broadly, there's a case to be made for engaging more parents and sympathetic teacher groups as advocates for improvement in music education. Parents who are highly involved in supporting their school's music and other programs (including substantial numbers of parents who do not have high incomes) have higher expectations for music programs in their schools—and they're significantly more likely to see these demands for quality met. Highly involved parents are more likely to support substantial expansions to existing programs as well.

Based on their strong beliefs in the benefits of music education, or their perceptions of limited music opportunities for their children, other groups that seem likely to want to be involved in organized coalitions advocating for improvement and expansion of music education include:

- English as a second language (ESL) and special education teachers
- Teachers in large districts
- Teachers and parents in urban communities and in the West
- Elementary school teachers and parents
- African-American and Hispanic parents

Online parent and teacher influencers (individuals who disproportionately tell others about what they find online) are particularly strong and knowledgeable supporters across the board, representing a potential base for grassroots campaigns. Already, parents say they engage in a variety of activities to support school music programs, with fundraising campaigns, food concession sales at school events and book fairs reported to be the most widely used and successful, as shown in Figure 8.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research clearly shows that teachers and parents, schools' core constituents, strongly support music education. They want to improve access, funding and the quality of music education—and they want to see major expansions in these programs at every level of K–12 education.

Based on their perceptions, we offer 10 recommendations that come out of the study, as well as some concrete steps that supporters of music education, including educators and parents, could take to achieve them.

1 Increase awareness among parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and state and federal policymakers that music is a core curricular subject by *federal policy.*

- Emphasize the federal policy *as well as* the myriad benefits that music education provides, so that decision makers fully understand the *rationale* that underpins the policy and don't view it as just one more government mandate they can put aside.
- Seek out and cultivate relationships with *online parent and teacher influencers* in particular (who disproportionately share content with their peers online and strongly support music education), as potentially the most efficient and authentic way to get this message out.
- Urge state and federal policymakers to reinforce the importance of music education and include music and arts education in overall education policy decisions that impact all children.

2 Ensure that every student who wants to play a musical instrument has access to the instrument of choice and can take it home to practice—with the necessary sheet music and other materials to support learning and performance. At root, this is a question of prioritizing funding, but supporters of music education also could:

- Look to models from another curricular area that face similar challenges—educational technology—especially since parents and teachers both feel more strongly about music education than technology spending. Schools are finding ways to make sure there are enough computers and access to the Internet and digital resources for all students. Similar efforts could be leveraged to assure music education opportunity for all students.
- Forge stronger relationships with local arts organizations and businesses to help generate the expertise and/or resources to get more new or used instruments into schools; provide more after-school access for practice and extra help sessions, particularly if it's not possible for students to take instruments home; and create innovative sharing programs.

3 Reduce disparities in music education access and quality so that all schools, geographic regions and demographic groups have equal access to a *quality* music education *as defined by teachers and parents*—in particular, schools staffed by certified music teachers.

- Educate administrators and policymakers about the disparities in the quality of music education in different schools and geographic regions and for different demographic groups—and how strongly teachers and parents feel about these disparities.
- Engage the community in exploring the many elements of quality music programs—and discuss the educational disadvantages for students who do not have access to quality music education.
- Develop case studies that illustrate how disparities in music education can be addressed, particularly for underserved schools and student populations. Look for models in schools with high concentrations of high-need students and strong parent involvement and expose elements of program success.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN EXPLORING THE MANY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY MUSIC PROGRAMS—AND DISCUSS THE EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES FOR STUDENTS WHO DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY MUSIC EDUCATION.

4 Provide professional development opportunities to all music educators—and consider integrating music into the professional development of *all* educators.

- Emphasize that professional development for music educators is essential for increasing quality, reducing disparities in music education and aligning instruction to arts education standards.
- Consider taking another page out of the educational technology playbook. Many technology companies provide free or low-cost professional development in their specialties—and they do it online, where the costs are low, the convenience to educators is high (with no travel costs to the schools) and the impact is potentially greater. A great deal of research attests to the effectiveness of online professional development, especially when participants can develop a sense of community that is sustained beyond the coursework.
- Leverage and learn from innovative, interdisciplinary instructional practices in schools of education in colleges and universities.
- Empower music teachers to work collaboratively with other teachers in their schools to integrate music into the curriculum—and develop flexible scheduling models that allow instructional innovations.

5 Reverse the decades-long cuts to music and arts education to increase funding instead—*this is what education's primary stakeholders want.*

- Deliver a strong and visceral message to policymakers and decision makers that funding is required to make music a core component of the curriculum, which teachers and parents clearly want.

6 Increase the scope of all elementary school music programs to include instrument instruction, music theory and composition, aligned to national standards.

- Make this message part of any campaign mounted for quality music education, and adopt the strategies that have worked in other curricular areas, such as educational technology, for increasing students' access to instruments and teachers' access to professional development.

7 Require student participation in music education at the middle and high school levels and expand music learning opportunities to include contemporary and world music and music technology.

- Emphasize teacher and parent support for music education throughout the K–12 years, focus on *improvements in school environments* and *school–parent relationships* that music education produces.
- Develop case studies of schools that have successfully required or expanded music education, or both, at upper levels—and particularly how those schools fund increases in staffing, musical instruments and materials, and facilities.

8 Increase awareness among administrators, teachers and parents that Title I monies can be used for music education, and increase the number of programs that use these funds for music education.

- Focus on the hardest places to reduce disparities and increase music education quality—high-poverty schools that have the fewest local resources.
- Put pressure on administrators and other decision makers to use Title I monies for music education.
- Explore funding from other public programs and private organizations dedicated to helping high-poverty and low-performing schools and increasing equity—and help administrators, teachers and parents apply for this funding.

9 Create coalitions of educators, involved parents and music organizations in the community to help ensure the recommendations above are realized, with a focus on the demographic groups identified in this report that are particularly likely to be passionate participants in these efforts.

- Cultivate passionate supporters of music education, from the national level to local communities, to build momentum for change with maximum economy, authenticity and effectiveness.
- Target messaging and support to the local groups most likely to bring passion to the cause, such as urban teachers, elementary school parents, and parents and teachers in Western states.
- Form alliances with organizations that represent parents nationwide—aligning with groups that support involved parents, and developing relationships with national African-American and Hispanic groups, especially those focused on education.

- Partner with organizations that represent teachers, such as the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and teachers of English language learners and special education students, that embrace goals for a well-rounded education for all students.
- Reach out to online parent and teacher influencers who strongly support music education across the board. Online influencers come from all demographic groups and, by definition, are particularly passionate and effective at getting the word out online, which has become the dominant and most cost-effective way to campaign for changes of this type.

10 Conduct additional research on students, district and school administrators, and community leaders to understand their perceptions of music education.

- Recognize that students are the biggest stakeholder group in education—and they have considerable influence on the opinions of parents and teachers. Students also are increasingly autonomous in making music education decisions at the middle and high school levels.
- Recognize that district and school administrators and school board members ultimately determine the extent to which quality music programs are implemented. Understanding their perceptions will help target messaging and advocacy to win their support.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

The primary objective of this study was to understand attitudes, beliefs and hopes about the role of music education in the K–12 curriculum and its contribution to student success in school and preparations for productive lives.

To this end, an online survey was conducted using an established, representative demographic panel, with interviews in January and February of 2015. The main sample consisted of 1,800 interviews, including 1,000 teacher interviews and 800 parent interviews. Parent interviews were augmented by 295 additional interviews with African-American parents and 276 additional interviews with Hispanic parents to achieve robust sample sizes in these populations for comparison.

All educators were classroom or special subjects teachers teaching in the United States. All parents were ages 18–64, with one or more children ages 5–18 enrolled in a U.S. K–12 school. The charts below indicate the extent to which the samples were representative with respect to other demographic categories.

In the case of the parents' sample, mothers were sampled at a much higher rate than fathers, on the grounds that mothers are generally more aware of their children's education and related experiences.

TEACHER SAMPLE POPULATION

GRADE	
Elementary	51%
Middle	24%
High	25%
SUBJECT(S) TAUGHT	
English language arts/social studies	59%
Science, technology, engineering, math (STEM)	58%
Electives	23%
English as a second language/special education	22%
Life skills	17%
Arts	12%
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	
Less than five years	13%
Five years or more	87%
DISTRICT SIZE	
Less than 1,000 students	14%
1,000 to 4,999 students	26%
5,000 to 24,999 students	33%
25,000+ students	27%
SCHOOL TYPE	
Public	87%
Private	9%
Parochial	4%

SCHOOL SIZE	
Less than 500 students	39%
500 to 999 students	38%
1,000+ students	23%
SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS	
White (non-Hispanic)	53%
Black/African-American	20%
Hispanic/Latino	20%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%
Other	3%
SCHOOL SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS	
Wealthier families	9%
Middle-class families	42%
Low-income families	49%
Title I Schools	61%
REGION	
South	33%
Midwest	23%
Northeast	22%
West	22%
METRO STATUS	
Suburban	49%
Urban	27%
Rural	24%

PARENT SAMPLE POPULATION

GENDER	
Female	81%
Male	19%
AGE	
18–34	17%
35–49	54%
50–64	30%
Mean	44
MARITAL STATUS	
Married	73%
Divorced, separated or widowed	15%
Single	7%
Domestic partnership	5%
ETHNICITY	
White (non-Hispanic)	76%
Black/African-American	12%
Hispanic/Latino	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%
Other	2%
EDUCATION	
Some high school or less	2%
High school graduate	28%
Trade/technical school	24%
College graduate/bachelor's degree	35%
Attended/completed graduate school	12%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
Less than $25,000	15%
$25,000 to $49,999	24%
$50,000 to $74,999	22%
$75,000 to $99,999	17%
$100,000 to $149,999	16%
$150,000 or more	6%
Mean	$72,000
CHILD'S GRADE LEVEL	
Elementary school	34%
Middle school	33%
High school	34%
Student Title I Eligible	30%
SCHOOL TYPE	
Public	89%
Private	9%
Parochial	2%
METRO STATUS	
Suburban	57%
Urban	24%
Rural	20%
REGION	
South	37%
Midwest	24%
Northeast	19%
West	20%

Striking A Chord: The Public's Hopes and Beliefs for K–12 Music Education in the United States: 2015 is available to download.
www.nammfoundation.org/striking-chord
www.grunwald.com/reports

A more detailed market research report based on this survey, including findings of interest to industry, is available commercially from Grunwald Associates.
www.grunwald.com/reports/music-education-study.php

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

All respondents were recruited and completed their surveys online, and were incentivized for their participation. The survey covered similar topics for teachers and parents, with some targeted questions for each group.

Data from the two target groups were analyzed independently. When possible, results were compared across groups to identify similarities and differences. Analysis also investigated possible subgroup differences (e.g., grade level, subject taught, metro status, region, ethnicity, Title I eligibility).

All differences reported between groups of teachers and parents are statistically significant at the 95 percent level of confidence ($p < 0.05$), unless otherwise indicated. Additional directional data are reported to indicate noteworthy findings.

ABOUT NAMM FOUNDATION

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its 9,200 members around the world. The NAMM Foundation works to advance active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs.
www.nammfoundation.org

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