



# NEWS RELEASE

Department of Communications and Community Outreach  
6901 Charles Street Towson, MD 21204  
443.809.5908 (English) 443.809.1250 (Español) [www.bcps.org](http://www.bcps.org)

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## **Baltimore County Public Schools music education program receives national recognition – for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year**

TOWSON, Md. – Baltimore County Public Schools has been honored for its outstanding commitment to music education with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from [The NAMM Foundation](#).

The Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students. To qualify for the Best Communities designation, BCPS 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.

"Baltimore County Public Schools continues to lead the state, region, and nation in providing exceptional arts education for our students," said Sherri Fisher, BCPS director of career and technical education and fine arts. "This award marks 18 years of excellence for our community. I am so proud of the students, teachers, administrators, and Performing Arts Office staff for their commitment to music education."

Sonia Synkowski, BCPS performing arts coordinator, added, "BCPS continues to be a welcoming and nurturing environment for our music students, and our BCPS music educators should be commended for their commitment to high-quality music instruction and to their students. This year, we celebrated more than 400 students who were recognized as all-county musicians and welcomed more than 1,600 audience members to their culminating performances. This is just one example of how music is valued and shared with our BCPS community."

Since the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 and a stated emphasis on a well-rounded education, many school districts have re-committed to music and arts education programs. ESSA provides designated funding for well-rounded educational opportunities through Title IV, Part A: Student Academic Success and Achievement grants. NAMM Foundation research has suggested that these grants are being widely used by school districts to address instructional gaps in access to music and arts education.

Baltimore County students can choose among extensive offerings including courses in music and audio technology, world music, and Advanced Placement Music Theory. Students perform throughout the community in choral groups, jazz ensembles, steel pan ensembles, orchestras, marching bands, ukulele, and student composition. In addition, partnerships with the area's leading arts organizations provide opportunities to see and interact with professional musicians.

Research into music education continues to demonstrate educational/cognitive and social skill benefits for children who make music: Researchers found that participants, after two years of music education, showed more substantial improvements in how the brain processes speech and reading scores than their less-involved peers. In addition, research shows that students who are involved in music are not only more likely to graduate high school but also to attend college as well. Everyday listening skills are stronger in musically-trained children than in those without music training. Significantly, listening skills are closely tied to the ability to: perceive speech in a noisy background, pay attention, and keep 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.

### **About The NAMM Foundation**

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its approximately 10,400 members around the world. The foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs.

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[Baltimore County Public Schools](#), the nation's 22nd largest school system, is focused on raising the bar and closing gaps to prepare our students for the future. Thanks to innovative and talented leaders, teachers, staff, and students, BCPS celebrates [many honors](#).