

# Equity and Access in Music Education



## ***A Position Statement of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME)***

A well-rounded education for our nation's students should not only include the development of knowledge and skills in math, reading and writing, but should also include the development of musical and artistic literacy, allowing them to create, perform and respond to music throughout the entirety of their lives. Research from a variety of sources indicates that all students do not have equal access to music education.

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### **Position**

Excluding any American student from music education denies them access to one of the subjects deemed necessary for a well-rounded education and is contrary to the mission of NAfME: to advance music education by promoting the understanding and making of music by all.

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Counterarguments to this position include the fact that requiring music education for all American children contradicts the ability of local schools, school districts and states to determine what curricula students should study in public school. Music education is useful only for those deemed musically talented not for all students.

Including music within the curriculum for all students, however, enhances the ability of students to be creative, to communicate, to collaborate and to express themselves – all important 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills affecting future citizen's quality of life and their success in college and/or career. A comprehensive, standards-based music education taught by certified and highly effective music educators leads to the development of these skills, enhancing our schools, our communities and our nation. The research is clear: students participating in music making are more highly engaged, with higher levels of self-efficacy and collaboration than students not in music. Excluding students from high quality music education programs is contrary to the intent of public education in our nation – to create pathways toward lifelong success.

### **Plan for implementation**

National and state leaders for NAfME can support equity and access in music education by:

1. Actively lobbying and advocating for inclusive policies, laws and regulations at the federal and state levels supporting music education for all students.
2. Pursuing a research agenda and data collection that documents access and equity issues in music education for our nation's students, as well as ways to remedy disparities where they exist.
3. Promoting, through NAfME's professional development channels and journals, information to our members on equity and access issues, as well as ways to address these issues locally.

Members of NAFME can support equity and access in music education by:

1. Encouraging all students to be active in the music programs offered in their schools, including promoting music offerings for students who have not been active music students in prior years (expanding access).
2. Working with school leaders to create schedules that allow all students access to music classes, including students receiving remediation in other academic areas (promoting access and equity).
3. Developing new kinds of music programs which are of interest to students (expanding access).

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<sup>i</sup> Relevant research studies include:

*Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999-2000, 2009-2010.* National Center for Education Statistics, April, 2012. Music availability data based on poverty of schools (free/reduced lunch count) found beginning page 14. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012014rev>

Elpus, K., & Abril, C. R. (2011). High school music ensemble students in the United States: A demographic profile. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59(2), 128–145. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022429411405207>

Miksza, Peter and Gault, B. M. (2014). Classroom Music Experiences of U.S. Elementary School Children: An analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of 1998-1999. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62(1), 4-17.

Stewart, C. (1991). *Who takes music? Investigating access to high school music as a function of school and social factors.* University of Michigan.

A bibliography of related research studies will be linked to the final statement online. We encourage reviewers to send additional research studies of relevance to this topic to [lynnt@nafme.org](mailto:lynnt@nafme.org) for consideration. Thank you.