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### **Ridgewood's Music Education Program Receives National Recognition**

**RIDGEWOOD, NJ – April 13, 2020** – Ridgewood Public Schools has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from The NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education.

Now in its 21st year, 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, Ridgewood Public Schools answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities and support for the music programs. Responses were verified with school officials and reviewed by The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas.

"We are fortunate and proud to have a robust and competitive K-12 music education program beginning with a comprehensive general/vocal music component in the elementary grades and incorporating curricular offerings in band, orchestra and choir from grades 5 through 12. The district also offers a variety of co-curricular ensembles, choral groups, an award-winning marching band, and a music production club. We believe that music adds tremendous value to a student's educational experience, teaching them to be great listeners, leaders and teammates," said Dr. Daniel Fishbein, Superintendent of Schools. "As a community with a long-standing history of support for the arts, this designation is a testament to the significance of music education to the families in Ridgewood."

This award recognizes that Ridgewood Public Schools is leading the way with learning opportunities as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The legislation guides implementation in the states and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which was often criticized for an overemphasis on testing-while leaving behind subjects such as music. ESSA recommends music and the arts as important elements of a well-rounded education for all children.

When asked to reflect upon the importance of music education, Ridgewood High School Band Director, Jeffrey Haas said, "Great music education reminds us that schools are places where we must care for children and nurture their spirits, creativity, passion and compassion. It reminds us that we are not a nation of data, but one of thinkers, creators and innovators; that we suffer defeats and tragedies; and that we can rise from these setbacks to face each day courageously. Great music education reminds us that we are still human."

Research into music education continues to demonstrate educational/cognitive and social skill benefits for children who make music. After two years of music education, research found that participants showed more substantial improvements in how the brain processes speech and reading scores than their less-involved peers and 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. Not to mention, social benefits include conflict resolution, teamwork skills, and how to give and receive constructive criticism.

A 2015 study supported by The NAMM Foundation, "[Striking A Chord](#)," also outlines the overwhelming desire by teachers and parents for music education opportunities for all children as part of the school curriculum.

The Ridgewood Public Schools, committed to a tradition of excellence and innovation, in partnership with the community, provide a rich and challenging learning environment, enabling students to maximize their unique potential to become lifelong learners and productive, responsible citizens. The largest school system in Bergen County, the district comprises 10 schools and serves nearly 5,800 students. The Ridgewood Public Schools are continually recognized on state and national levels for school and individual achievements. For more information, visit [www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us](http://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us).

#### **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. For more information about the NAMM Foundation, please visit [www.nammfoundation.org](http://www.nammfoundation.org).

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