

In 2023, with a stroke of her pen, Gov. Kathleen Hochul joins past governors Malcom Wilson, Hugh Carey, Mario Cuomo, George Pataki, Eliot Spitzer, David Paterson, and Andrew Cuomo in proclaiming the month of March as Music In Our Schools Month in New York State. This 50th annual event, themed *Connect, Belong and Create* for 2023 was originally formed in Nassau County in the fall of 1972 as a day-long celebration sponsored by the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA). It was the first coalition that advocated support for music education programs throughout New York State.

To obtain national exposure for the event, NYSSMA had passed the event on to then-MENC: The National Association for Music Education. Since, it has become a time of year when music education becomes the focus of schools across the nation. Schools and communities throughout the country and overseas celebrate with concerts and other activities based on the annual theme. Classrooms, concert halls, civic buildings, clubs, parks, libraries, and shopping malls are just some of the arenas in which the public can observe the processes and results of music education.

The Legislature of the State of New York has a history of supporting NYSSMA and Music In Our Schools Month. In 1980, it financed a weekend of music by the all-state band, orchestra and chorus in the Convention Center in Albany. This event expanded into one known as The Capital Experience, a program that includes daily concerts by student bands, choruses and orchestras throughout the Plaza from all over New York State. This event gives students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit the Capital to perform for a larger audience.

NYSSMA, the New York State School Music Association, is the largest state affiliate of present-day NAFME the National Association for Music Education. The mission of NYSSMA is to advocate and improve the education in music of all people by promoting appropriate music activities and programs in the schools and communities throughout New York State.

NYSSMA holds hundreds of solo and ensemble festivals across New York State each year where over one hundred thousand (100,000) students receive adjudication from New York-certified music educators. Approximately three thousand (3,000) music educators converge each December for the annual Winter Conference for professional development opportunities, seminars, clinics and performances by its five all state instrumental and vocal ensembles that feature more than five hundred fifty (550) students.

NYSSMA is the largest most successful NAFME state unit in the country:

- Approximately 6,000 members proudly belong to NYSSMA.
- 100,000 students participate annually in spring adjudication festivals held around New York State
- The NYSSMA Winter Conference attracts almost 4,000 participants and offers 200 workshops and showcases.
- Over 160 vendors and colleges exhibit at the Winter Conference held in Rochester in November
- About 6,000 students audition for the All-State ensembles, and just over 550 are selected to participate annually.
- The New York State Summer Music Conference is devoted to professional development and music reading sessions for potential school use and is held in Albany in August.
- The School Music News is mailed to every NYSSMA member throughout the year and keeps everyone fully informed.
- The NYSSMA Manual is the definitive resource for setting standards and expectations for each instrument and voice part at every level.
- NYSSMA maintains communication with members, students, parents, school officials and media using various social media outlets.