



**National Association
for Music Education**

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Managing Editor of Junior Scholastic
Scholastic Corporation
557 Broadway
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Letter to the Editor

We are writing in response to your recent article in the “Debate” section of *Scholastic News* magazine, which posed the question “Should kids learn music in schools?” While the article highlighted the benefits of music education, we believe it is important to clarify that this question is not one for debate.

Since the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by Congress in 2015, the National Association for Music Education (NAFME) and countless advocates have worked tirelessly to shift the narrative surrounding music education. Music is not a “nice-to-have” subject, but an essential component of a *well-rounded education*, defined by law as “courses, activities, and programming . . . as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.” This legal framework lists music alongside other subjects such as math, science, social studies, and language arts as integral to a child’s development. Research has documented that participation in school music promotes student engagement, leading to improved social and academic outcomes, particularly for at-risk students. Participation in school music also promotes skills valuable to the workforce such as motivation, attentiveness, self-discipline, teamwork, persistence, empathy, respect, and leadership (e.g., dos Santos-Luiz, 2016; Silverstone, 2018). Learning music in schools helps prepare children to participate in music activities in a variety of settings, not only in school but also at home, in places of worship, and in community activities, for example, all of which have the potential to enhance the quality of their lives in many ways throughout their lifespan.

The recent article in *Scholastic News* unintendedly undermined the work of thousands of music educators, NAFME, and others in advocating for music as equal to other school subjects. The message that might have been conveyed to countless students, teachers, administrators, and parents is that music is non-essential, expendable, and unequal to other disciplines in the curriculum, a position contrary to federal law and the most current education research.

At NAFME, we are always eager to collaborate with other organizations to amplify the message that music education is essential for every student. The more we can work together to promote music’s role in a well-rounded education, the better we will serve students and help them reach their fullest potential. If *Scholastic* plans to continue the discussion on the importance of music education for students, we would be happy to offer our expertise.

Sincerely,

Deborah Confredo
President, NAFME