



NYSSMA®

A State Unit of NAFME, National Association for Music Education

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The History of Music In Our Schools Month

Nationwide Designation Recognizing Music Education Started in New York

In 2026, 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 53rd annual event was originally formed in Nassau County in March of 1973 as a daylong 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 Capitol 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 (4,000) music educators converge each December for the annual Winter Conference for professional development opportunities, seminars, clinics and performances by its eight all state instrumental and vocal ensembles that feature more than eight hundred fifty (850) students in total.

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Some statistics:

- Approximately 4,000 members proudly hold membership in NYSSMA.
- 100,000 students are adjudicated at annual festivals held around New York State each spring.
- The NYSSMA Winter Conference attracts almost 4,000 participants, offers 200 professional development workshops and showcases, and welcomes over 160 vendors and colleges to exhibit in Rochester in November.
- About 6,500 students audition for the All-State ensembles, and just over 825 are selected to participate annually.
- NYSSMA's magazine, *School Music News* has a circulation of 4,000.
- 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 print, broadcast, and social media outlets.

