

## U.S. Secretary Of Education Reinforces Importance of the Arts in Schools

**T**he NAMM Foundation hosted a live, public teleconference with U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan to discuss his recent letter sent to school and education community leaders outlining the importance of the arts as a core academic subject in U.S. public schools.

More than 1.75 million national music and arts education advocates were encouraged via a national network of coalitions to participate in the call to hear Duncan express his concerns about access to arts education in U.S. public schools, and how these programs can be supported in the future.

The call was initiated after Duncan issued a letter to school and education community leaders stating, "At this time when you are making critical and far-reaching budget and program decisions for the upcoming school year, I write to bring to your attention the importance of the arts as a core academic subject and part of a complete education for all students. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) defines the arts as a core subject, and the arts play a significant role in children's development and learning process..."

"The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively," he stated. "These qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from eco-

nomically disadvantaged circumstances. However, recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results found that only 57 percent of eighth graders attended schools where music instruction was offered at least three or four times a week, and only 47 percent attended schools where visual arts were offered that often."

"Concerned citizens in cities, towns and communities should share this letter with state and local school leadership," said Mary Lueh-rsen, NAMM's director of public affairs and government relations and executive director of the NAMM Foundation, who moderated the call. "The Secretary has clearly stated that arts education is part of the core curriculum and is vital to a complete and quality education for all children. All of us need to work together to assure that all children have access to a complete education that includes high quality, standards-based learning in music and the arts."

The SupportMusic Coalition conference call also reiterated the points in Duncan's letter about how state and local actions can be reinforced to assure access to arts education. Duncan reminded listeners that under the ESEA, states and local school districts have the flexibility to support the arts through Federal Title programs and U.S. Department of Education programs, including professional development of arts teachers as well as for strategic partnerships with

cultural, arts and other nonprofit organizations. In addition, Duncan stated that local school districts can use funds under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the arts along with other district expenses.

Surveying elementary classroom teachers next spring as well as music and visual arts specialists at the elementary and secondary levels about their programs and resources.

Reporting findings from this comprehensive profile in early 2011, the first report like this since the 1999-2000 school year. The data is expected to help practitioners and policymakers make more informed decisions about arts education.

During the call, Duncan highlighted the series of music events at the White House that demonstrates the administration's ongoing efforts to stress the importance of arts education beginning with a Jazz Education workshop in June with 140 students from across the country. At the July White House event reinforcing the importance of arts education, he joined the President and First Lady in featuring country music artists Alison Krauss and Brad Paisley.

To view Secretary Duncan's letter, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov). The letter is also available along with the full transcript of the teleconference at [www.supportmusic.com](http://www.supportmusic.com).

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