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New Study Reveals Strong Relationship Between Quality Music Education Programs and Higher Standardized Test Scores; Making Music Helps Make the Grade

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CARLSBAD, Calif., June 19 /PRNewswire/ -- Students in high-quality school music education programs score higher on standardized tests compared to students in schools with deficient music education programs, according to a study published in last week's issue of the Journal for Research in Music Education. This is the first study ever to examine the quality of school music programs as a factor affecting test scores, independent of the socioeconomic level of the school or school district.

The study comprised 4,739 elementary and middle school students in four U.S. regions and revealed a strong relationship between elementary (third- or fourth-grade) and middle school (eighth- or ninth-grade) students' academic achievement and their participation in school music programs that differed based on quality.

Results from the elementary schools show:

- Students in top-quality music programs scored 22 percent better in English and 20 percent better in mathematics than students in deficient music programs.
- These academic differences were fairly consistent across geographic regions.
- Students at the four elementary schools with high-quality music programs scored better than students participating in programs considered to be of lower quality.

Results from the middle schools show:

- Students in top-quality instrumental programs scored 19 percent higher in English than students in schools without a music program, and 32 percent higher in English than students in a deficient choral program.
- Students in top-quality instrumental programs scored 17 percent higher in mathematics than children in schools without a music program, and

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33 percent higher in mathematics than students in a deficient choral program.

- Students at schools with excellent music programs had higher English test scores across the country than students in schools with low-quality music programs; this was also true when considering mathematics.
- Students in all regions with lower-quality instrumental programs scored higher in English and mathematics than students who had no music at all.
- Students who participated in low-quality choral programs generally scored the lowest.

"It is crucial to note that this project has revealed a relationship between quality music instruction and heightened academic performance," stated Dr. Christopher Johnson, professor of music education and music therapy and associate dean of the school of fine arts at the University of Kansas, and lead investigator for the study. "Clearly, music supports academic performance, and quality music programs are related to higher test scores."

Though the arts, including music education, were designated as a core academic subject by the No Child Left Behind Act, the act does not specify standards for **arts education**. Local communities and school districts continue to make curriculum decisions that emphasize instructional time for reading and math, which may well impinge on access to music and **arts education**. This study demonstrates the importance of considering music education programs in any definition of a quality curriculum, thereby ensuring that all children have equal opportunities to succeed in school.

"Music education provides a solid foundation for children, giving them benefits in childhood that lead to success in life," said Joe Lamond, president and CEO of NAMM. "School administrators, teachers and parents all agree that music and **arts education** contribute to children achieving their full potential, which is the purpose of our educational system and something we all care deeply about."

The study was funded by the NAMM Foundation under its "Sounds of Learning" initiative, and was published the week of June 10, 2007, in the Journal for Research in Music Education.

About the NAMM Foundation

The NAMM Foundation is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving and public service programs from the international music products industry. For more information, interested parties should visit [nammfoundation.org](http://www.nammfoundation.org).

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