

THE NAEP ARTS ASSESSMENT

How the D'Addario Foundation Is Helping



This past fall, the National Center for Education Statistics released their 2016 report on the National Association of Educational Progress standardized test results from thousands of eighth-graders from across the country. Although some areas showed improvement since the previous test in 2008, results in music and visual arts remained flat. What does this mean for the state of music education in the United States today? And how is the D'Addario Foundation working to help?

On a scale of 300, students scored an average of 149 points on the musical portion. The oft-cited example from the 2016 test involved listening to the introduction to Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue: students were asked to identify the instrument playing the solo, and only about half correctly chose the clarinet. Here are a few more discouraging results:

- 66% of 8th grade students have attended a musical performance in a theater
- 63% take a music class in school
- 35% play an instrument on their own outside of school
- Only 14% take private music lessons

While standardized testing is not the best nor the only way to measure success in music education, it certainly gives us a broad picture of the current state of music education in public schools. From the above numbers, less than two-thirds of students have access to a music class at school or have attended a live musical performance.

The NAEP assessment did not cover creating or performing music due to budget constraints, so the results don't give us a picture of the level of proficiency of 8th graders who do have access to music classes. Still, focusing only on students' ability to respond to music, there is clear room for improvement. Regardless of performance ability, students deserve access to music education along with all other subjects taught in public schools.

In the US, 40% of high schools don't require music or arts classes to graduate, and many schools are unable to offer in-school music education. Yet, children who study music are five times more likely to graduate from high school, earn higher grades, and enroll in college, compared with students who do not study music. In underserved communities, this can mean lifting a student out of poverty and permanently

improving his or her quality of life.

The D'Addario Foundation awards grants and product donations to high-quality independent not-for-profits that are bringing music education programs back into schools and communities of need. As **Michelle Obama** stated in her remarks at the 2016 President's Committee for National Arts and Humanities After-School Program Awards: "All of these young people have some kind of potential in them. And if we don't invest in them as a nation, regardless of where they come from or what color they are, if we don't invest in them, we lose. Imagine this talent bottled up in these kids unexplored, un-invested. There are millions of kids like this in this country who do not have the resources to become everything that they could be. And shame on us if we can't do this better. ***But fortunately, these programs are doing the job that sometimes the bigger society fails to do.***"

Music education is not only a powerful vehicle for social change but also personal change. Access to music education changes lives and strengthens communities. It is so important for students to have the option to study music to boost their creativity and self-confidence.

Written by Sarah Blackman, D'Addario Foundation Board of Advisors

Among those recognized at this event was D'Addario Foundation supported, [Sphinx Organization \(http://www.sphinxmusic.org/in-the-news/\)](http://www.sphinxmusic.org/in-the-news/). [Click here \(http://www.daddariofoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IMG_8888.mov\)](http://www.daddariofoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IMG_8888.mov) for a video of Sphinx students performing at the White House.

For a full transcript of Michelle Obama's speech, [click here \(https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/11/15/remarks-first-lady-national-arts-and-humanities-youth-program-awards\)](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/11/15/remarks-first-lady-national-arts-and-humanities-youth-program-awards).

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