

Save the Music Foundation
Form 990
EIN 13-6089816
January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

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Save The Music Foundation (“Foundation”) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to creating systemic change in the American public school system by restoring instrumental music programs and by raising public awareness about the importance of music education. The Foundation was created to address the inequity in availability of music education for students in many of the most challenged communities in the U.S. Since its creation, Save The Music Foundation, working with local school districts, has restored music education programs in more than **2,992** schools in **369** school districts around the country – impacting the lives of hundreds of thousands of students. During that time, the Foundation has donated more than **\$68 million** worth of new musical instruments, equipment, and technology to school districts across the country.

The Foundation values music as a critical learning tool that keeps students engaged in school, helps develop well-rounded individuals, and encourages skills that are vital for success in the 21st century.

Program staff members from the Foundation work closely with superintendents, school board members, principals, arts coordinators, and music educators in each school district to identify schools that are eligible to participate. The Foundation works with local policymakers and advocates to help ensure schools that are not currently eligible to participate in the Foundation’s restoration of music education programs take the steps needed to become eligible. The Foundation works to enable every school within the district to have access to music education. The Foundation expands its reach in serving all public-school students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Foundation has developed a unique model to foster equitable access to comprehensive music education for all children. Through strategic partnerships with school districts, the Foundation provides brand-new musical instruments, equipment, technology, method books, professional development, and program support to public elementary, middle, and high schools, jump-starting dormant music programs across the country. To make certain that music programs remain a core part of the curriculum in public schools, and that the programs live on in perpetuity, the Foundation works with schools that have agreed to implement a sequential instrumental music program based on local, state, and national standards for music education.

Grant Offerings and Schools Served

The Foundation offers six different types of grant packages to public schools based on grade level, need, and the school’s music program goals. The grant packages are decided upon with the input of district administrators, school leaders, and the Foundation’s Program staff. A school must make the commitment to conduct their instrumental music program as part of the regular school day, provide a designated space for music instruction and instrument storage, and commit to hiring a full-time, certified music educator. By guaranteeing that each grant recipient school fulfills the schedule, space, and staff requirements, the Foundation fosters a sustainable music program.

In the 2025 fiscal year, the Foundation delivered grant packages (Core, Intro to Music, J Dilla Music Tech, Middle School Music Tech, and Hometown Music Tech) to 99 schools, totaling more than 22,000 musical instruments and pieces of musical equipment, in 44 school districts (listed below) across 16 states. These grants impacted more than 72,000 students and music educators by increasing their access to quality musical instruments, instructional books, equipment, technology, and resources. More information about each grant package follows.

44 School Districts that Received Grant Packages in Fiscal Year 2025:

Akron Public Schools, OH	Jersey City Public Schools, NJ
Anaheim Union High School District, CA	Kanawha County Schools, WV
Atlanta Public Schools, GA	La Mesa-Spring Valley Schools, CA
Baltimore City Public Schools, MD	Lincoln County Schools, WV
Centralia Elementary School District, CA	Los Angeles Unified School District, CA
Cincinnati Public Schools, OH	Marion County Schools, WV
Cleveland Metropolitan School District, OH	Memphis Shelby County Schools, TN
Cobb County Schools, GA	Mercer County School, WV
Columbus City Schools, OH	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, TN
Compton Unified School District, CA	Miami-Dade County School District, FL
Dallas Independent School District, TX	New York City Department of Education, NY
DeKalb County School District, GA	Newport Mesa Unified School District, CA
Detroit Public Schools Community District, MI	Oakland Unified School District, CA
Downey Unified School District, CA	Orange Public Schools, NJ
East Orange Public Schools, NJ	Passaic Public Schools, NJ

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Elizabeth Public Schools, NJ	Paterson Public Schools, NJ
Fayette County Schools, WV	Roane County Schools, WV
Fulton County Schools, GA	Southfield Public Schools, MI
Garden Grove Unified School District, CA	Sunflower County Consolidated School District, MS
Harrison County School District, WV	Sweetwater Union High School District, CA
Irvington Public Schools, NJ	Toledo Public Schools, OH
Jackson Public Schools, MI	Wyoming County Schools, WV

Core Grant

The Core Grant – in the form of Band, String, Mariachi, or Sonidos Latinos – has been the cornerstone grant that the Foundation provides to school grant recipients across the country. Each Core Grant is valued at approximately \$80,000 and jump-starts a new instrumental music program at a school. The Core Band Grant includes 36 musical instruments - woodwind, brass, and percussion. The String Grant includes up to 36 string instruments - violins, violas, cellos, and basses. The Mariachi Grant includes 36 musical instruments – brass and string instruments, both fretted and unfretted, as well as Mariachi bowtie and belts. The Sonidos Latinos Grant includes 33 instruments from the band package – brass and classical percussion – along with 13 pieces of Latin percussion – congas, timbales, bongos, claves, etc. All Core Grants include music stands, instructional method books, professional development support for music teachers, and Foundation program support for 10 years. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 31 Core Band Grant packages, 7 Core Strings Grant packages, and 5 Core Sonidos Latinos Grant packages, impacting more than 25,500 students and music educators.

Intro to Music Grant

The Intro to Music Grant was developed in 2018 and includes everything a music teacher needs to provide elementary students Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5 with sequential, standards-based general music instruction focused on active music-making and engagement. The grant is valued at approximately \$32,000 including developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant instruments and resources: digital piano, acoustic guitar, Orff Instruments, world drums, recorders, hand-held percussion, Boomwhackers, a classroom set of ukuleles, instructional method books, professional development support for music teachers, and Foundation program support for 10 years. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 29 Intro to Music Grant packages, impacting more than 15,000 students and music educators.

J Dilla Music Tech Grant

The J Dilla Music Tech Grant was developed in 2018 and focuses on delivering the future of music learning through innovative music tech tools and curriculum for high school students. Our goal is to bring out students' inner creativity, talent, and confidence by teaching the fundamentals of electronic music creation, recording, and production. In

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2019, the Music Tech Grant was named after the late, influential industry rapper and hip-hop record producer J Dilla. The grant is valued at approximately \$73,000, which includes hardware and software to support instruction in audio recording, audio engineering, DJ-ing, beat-making, along with in-depth training for music teachers, including a one-on-one mentorship with a local music education community partner and Foundation program support for 10 years. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 12 J Dilla Music Tech Grant packages, impacting more than 19,000 students and music educators.

Middle School Music Tech Grant

In addition to the J Dilla Music Tech Grant for high school students, the Foundation has created a music technology grant package for middle school students, grades 4 through 8, with similar goals. The Middle School Music Tech Grant is valued at approximately \$38,000 and includes music creation software, technology, and equipment, along with a one-one-one mentorship with a local music education community partner and Foundation program support for 10 years. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 12 Middle School Music Tech Grants, impacting nearly 8,000 students and music educators.

Hometown Music Tech Grant

In 2020, the Foundation launched a partnership with SongFarm, a nonprofit organization working to build recording studios in underserved high schools, so kids have equal access to creative opportunities. The Hometown Music Tech Grant package's mission is similar to that of the J Dilla Music Tech Grant and is valued at approximately \$73,000. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 3 Music Tech Grant packages, impacting more than 4,500 students with access to quality musical instruments, equipment, technology, and contemporary audio production software along with a one-one-one mentorship with a local music education community partner and Foundation program support for 10 years.

Keys + Kids Grant

The Keys + Kids Grant supports any type of music education program, including vocal/choral, general music, musical theater, or instrumental. The grant is valued at approximately \$22,000 and includes a contemporary digital hybrid piano, keyboards, instructional method books, professional development support for music teachers, and Foundation program support for 10 years. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 0 Keys + Kids Grant packages, impacting nearly 0 students and music educators.

School Districts that Received Supplemental Donations in Fiscal Year 2025:

Supplemental donations were given to Successful Incorporated, a 501(c)(3) organization serving deserving band students and school band programs in Tennessee and Mississippi.

Program Support

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A grant of instruments, equipment, and resources provides the impetus for music programs to be restored, but this is only the beginning of the Foundation's partnerships with school districts nationwide.

Grant recipient principals are provided with hands-on guidance in building an in-school music program. The Foundation's Program staff assists principals and music teachers in developing their music program through workshops, personal meetings, and ongoing support such as professional development, site visits and additional partnership opportunities through both Foundation local and national partners.

In instances where school programs, initially supported by the Foundation, faced the imminent risk of elimination, proactive measures were taken. In each scenario, a letter expressing the Foundation's apprehensions about the potential discontinuation was provided to the school's principal, members of the school board, and the superintendent of the school district. The correspondence referenced the initial agreement between the Foundation and the school district, serving as a reminder of the mutual commitment to sustaining the program. Subsequently, meetings were orchestrated to engage with senior leadership within the school districts, providing a platform for constructive dialogue. Notably, these concerted efforts proved effective, as most of the programs were successfully preserved and spared from elimination.

The conversations that take place while advocating in local communities prove most effective when decision makers, community members, stakeholders, and funders are already familiar with the importance of music education. For this reason, the Foundation employs several strategies on a national scale to build the groundwork for successful local advocacy.

In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation Program staff offered new grant recipients – music teachers, school leaders, district administrators, and support staff – the opportunity to learn more about their grant and how to successfully sustain their music programs in the new school year. The Foundation offered three virtual information sessions in August and September. A total of 90 grant recipient contacts from 27 school districts attended.

Teacher Professional Development

The Foundation and its school district partners strategically co-create opportunities for music educators to engage in professional development and learning that focus on growing their skills and building their music programs. Since the 2022-23 school year, the Foundation has prioritized professional development opportunities for educators as a necessity for every grantee school district and community. These opportunities are tailored to fit the needs of each school district partner. The professional development, or Teacher Programs, funds were spent on producing workshops, sponsoring scholarships for teachers to attend conferences and enroll in continuing education courses, as well as offering a mentorship program between teachers and local organizations and experts. Teacher Programs are detailed below.

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In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation sponsored 30 workshops and keynote experiences for music educators in 17 active grantee school districts and communities. Expert clinicians presented topics such as music technology, foundations of ensemble instruction and instrumental pedagogy, elementary music teaching and learning methods, classroom culture and community, mindful music making, language arts integration. The Foundation often produces elements of the workshops including clinician contracts, participant registration, session materials, agenda and schedule, feedback survey, and hands-on day-of support.

The Foundation partnered with 8 organizations to sponsor 9 different scholarships for 47 music educators in active grantee school districts to enroll in a continuing education course. Scholarships include the full cost of tuition along with a cash stipend as applicable. These courses enhance and elevate teaching practices, thus empowering educators in the classroom and empowering their students.

Partner, Course – School District(s) or Community, State – Number of Scholarships

- Music ConstructED, Learning Course Subscription and Graduate Course – Sonoma Valley Unified School District, CA – 2
- Cobb County School District, Orff Levels Course – Atlanta Public Schools and Fulton County Public Schools, GA – 6
- Los Angeles County Orff Chapter, Orff Levels Course – Garden Grove Unified School District and Compton Unified School District – 5
- World Music Drumming, Drumming Level 1 – Akron Public Schools, OH – 4
- Kent State University, Orff Levels Course – Akron Public Schools, OH – 7
- Wayne State University, J Dilla Music Tech Teaching Workshop Course – Cleveland Metropolitan School District, OH – 2
- World Music Drumming, Festival Brazil! – Miami Dade County School District, FL – 11
- Northern New Jersey Chapter of American Orff-Schulwerk Association, Orff Levels Courses – Elizabeth Public Schools, East Orange Public Schools, Jersey City Public Schools, Orange Public Schools, and New York City Public Schools, NJ – 7
- New York City Chapter of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association, Orff Levels Courses – New York City Department of Education, NY – 3

The Foundation partnered with 2 organizations to sponsor 2 different scholarships for 9 music educators in active grantee school districts to become members of music education organizations. Scholarships include the annual membership cost. The memberships provide music teaching resources, opportunities to attend workshops and conferences, and connections to fellow educators.

Partner, Membership – School District(s) or Community, State – Number of Scholarships

- New York City Chapter of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association, Chapter Membership – New York City Department of Education, NY – 1

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- Los Angeles County Orff Chapter, Chapter Membership – Garden Grove Unified School District, Compton Unified School District, and Pasadena Unified School District, CA - 8

The Foundation partnered with 7 organizations to sponsor 7 different scholarship programs for 51 music educators in grantee school districts to attend an educational conference. Scholarships may include conference registrations, stipends for travel and meal costs, and hotel stays, depending on the ease of traveling to the event. Conferences provide opportunities to learn proven practices for the music classroom and connect with fellow educators.

Partner, Conference – School District(s) or Community, State – Number of Scholarships

- California Music Educators Association, California All-State Music Education Conference – Sacramento Unified School District, Los Angeles Unified School District – 5
- The NAMM Foundation, The NAMM Show – Anaheim Union High School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, Compton Unified School District, San Gabriel Unified School District, CA – 16
- Minnesota Music Educators Association, Midwinter Convention – Saint Paul Public Schools, MN – 3
- New Jersey Music Educators Association, Annual All-State Conference – Elizabeth Public Schools, Jersey City Public Schools, Orange Public Schools, Passaic Public Schools, and Paterson Public Schools, NJ – 18
- Conn Selmer, Conn Selmer Institute Midwest Conference – Newton Municipal School District, MS – 1
- Ohio State University, String Teacher Workshop Course – Sacramento Unified School District, CA – 1
- The Midwest Clinic, The International Band and Orchestra Conference – West Virginia county schools, WV – 7

The Foundation partnered with 18 grassroots organizations and educators in active grantee communities with a high level of expertise to provide mentorship, guidance, and individualized content support to 77 grantee music teachers. Hands-on professional development has the impact of empowering teachers and elevating their skills and techniques to then pass on to their students. For music technology grantee teachers, the local music tech support partner is engaged to ensure the grant is implemented successfully in their classrooms. Mentorships with organizations are active for the duration of the school year.

Partner (Type of Mentorship) – School District(s) or Community, State – Number of Mentees

- We Make Noise Phoenix (Music Tech) – Mesa Public Schools and Phoenix Unified School District, AZ – 3

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- We Make Noise Los Angeles (Music Tech) – Anaheim Union High School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, Compton Unified School District, San Gabriel Unified School District, and Downey Unified School District, CA – 11
- Brian Solis of Southwestern College (Music Tech) – Sweetwater Unified School District, CA – 1
- Blue Bear School of Music (Music Tech) – Oakland Unified School District, CA – 4
- Young Musicians Unite (Music Tech) – Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL – 6
- Music Education Group (Music Tech) – Atlanta Public Schools, DeKalb County Schools, Cobb County Public Schools, and Fulton County Schools, GA – 14
- Darren Saunders (Music Tech) – Baltimore City Public Schools, MD – 2
- Michigan State University Community Music School-Detroit (Music Tech) – Detroit Public Schools Community District, Woodhaven-Brownstown School District, and Southfield Public Schools, MI – 3
- 4 Learning (Music Tech) – Minneapolis Public Schools, MN – 3
- Record High (Music Tech) – Jersey City Public Schools and Irvington Public Schools, NJ – 3
- We Make Noise New York City (Music Tech) – New York City Public Schools, NY – 9
- Dr. Jay Dorfman of Kent State University (Music Tech) – Akron Public Schools, OH – 2
- Memphis Music Initiative (Music Tech) – Memphis-Shelby County Schools, TN – 2
- Ryan Easter of The DrawingBoard Experience (Music Tech) – Cleveland Metropolitan School District, OH – 2
- Southern Word (Music Tech) – Nashville Metropolitan School District, TN – 4
- Dr. James Mike Bogle of Dallas College (Music Tech) – Dallas Independent School District, TX – 2
- Words Beats and Life (Music Tech) – District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, D.C. – 1
- Mindfulness Through Music (Instrumental and Elementary Music) – Claiborne County School District, Newton Municipal School District, Sunflower County Consolidated School District, MS – 5

Virtual Gatherings

In fiscal year 2025, Save The Music Program and Policy staff members hosted 14 virtual gatherings, including roundtables for grant recipient educators, and free workshops for the Foundation’s network of music teachers and administrators as well as the public.

The Foundation hosted roundtables for district arts leaders throughout the school year (August through May) to gather school district-level music and curriculum coordinators

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and supervisors nationwide who have received, or will receive, a Save The Music grant. Participants were invited to discuss challenges, successes, sustainability, education policy, and advocacy as a group with the goal of creating a national community of district arts leaders. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 5 of these sessions impacting nearly 50 district arts leaders.

The Foundation hosted roundtables for music teachers who have received a music technology grant along with the network of local support mentors. Attendees shared success and challenges from the classroom, as well as ideas for curriculum and classroom lessons. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 2 of these sessions impacting nearly 30 educators and partners.

The Foundation produced and hosted public workshops for its network of music teachers and administrators as well as the public. The sessions were hosted in collaboration with experts, like-minded organizations, as well as Foundation partners in which their resources are featured in Save The Music grant packages. Presenters gave resources and conducted demonstrations for teachers to learn more about instructional strategies and student engagement. Session topics and partners included the Foundation's Music Tech Set-Up Guide featuring We Make Noise, ukulele playing and teaching with Music Will, project-based learning with Splice, MakeMusic Cloud with Alfred Music, and using Soundtrap in the classroom. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation delivered 7 of these sessions impacting over 100 educators.

Music Industry and Community Connections

The Foundation partners with artist management companies, music industry leaders, and musicians for in-classroom or in-office events, interviews, and performances at grantee schools. These school visits provide an opportunity for students and teachers to learn and explore career pathways in the music industry. Students are more likely to discover a potential job or role in music with more access to those in the industry. Artists and executives often visit schools in their hometown or current home location, creating connections that are impactful in the community. In fiscal year 2025, partners for music industry connections included Becky G, SiriusXM, Bose, Amazon Music, Billboard, Switchfoot, Old Dominion, Dasha, AEG, Warner Music Group, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Online Teaching & Learning Resources

In fiscal year 2020, the Foundation's Music Education Resources page was launched to support teachers, students, and families engage with music while learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. In August 2020, the Music Education Resources page was relaunched with a new, user-friendly design in time for the 2020-21 school year. Since then, the website has significantly expanded by listing resources that include advocacy organizations, digital curriculum and lessons, free music classroom apps and software, and original content by the Foundation. Email communications and social media have

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been used to promote this page regularly. The Music Education Resources page continues to evolve and in fiscal year 2025, it featured links to more than 150 relevant online platforms, apps, tools, websites, and articles for educators, students, and families.

Advocacy

School Leaders

The Foundation targets school leader conferences to spread the word about the vital need for music education. Each year, school administrators gather to share information that will enable them to make important decisions about the curriculum in their schools. The School Superintendents Association (AASA) has granted the Foundation and other music-education advocates a section of their convention spaces to be used as a special pavilion devoted to spreading the word about the importance of music education. Since 2005, Save The Music has been joined by instrument manufacturers, retailers, and the NAMM Foundation's Support Music Coalition in the music pavilions.

The Foundation honors – in front of thousands of school district leaders and administrators from across the country – school district leaders who have been supportive of music education at AASA's Annual National Conference. In the 2025 fiscal year, the Save The Music's National Award for Distinguished Support of Music Education was presented to Dr. Adrienne Battle, the superintendent of Metro Nashville School in Nashville, Tennessee. In total, the Foundation has delivered a total of 74 grants since 1999 to the school district where music education remains a priority.

Conference Workshops

The Foundation often provides workshops on the benefits of music education at national and regional conferences. Topics for these workshops include building and expanding community music education ecosystems. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation partnered with:

- District of Columbia Music Educators Association in Washington DC on 1/10/25 for a 45-minute presentation
- NAMM Show in Anaheim, CA on 1/22/25 and on 1/25/25 for an hour-long presentation each
- AME Institute in Burbank, CA, on 6/25/25 for an hour-long presentation
- ACTE Conference in Nashville, TN on 12/9/25 for a 45-minute presentation
- Mississippi Bandmasters Clinic in Natchez, MS on 12/12/25 for a 50-minute presentation
- Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, IL on 12/18/25 for an hour-long presentation

Convenings

A convening is an event over the course of one to three days where stakeholders, speakers, and special guests are gathered to discuss the future of music education in their

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community. Stakeholders include public school educators, local community music programs, foundations and national funders, city leaders, cultural institutions, arts service organizations, universities, and local musicians. Stakeholders build relationships and networks, share resources, and commit to a shared vision of strengthening music education in their community. In fiscal year 2025, the Foundation co-produced *Remixing the Industry*, a two-day event for students and stakeholders in New York City, to discuss the state of music education and its connections to career pathways in the music industry. Approximately 70 students and 10 teachers and school staff were in attendance on the first day for student-focused content, and approximately 39 stakeholders attended the second day for community-focused discussion.

Social Communications

The Foundation shares grant recipient updates and stories of impact on its social media platforms and in email communications with Foundation stakeholders. Stories include interviews with students, teachers, and principals, pictures and videos of students playing instruments in school or in performance, and events that occur around the Foundation's investment of instruments at a school. In these communications, funders and partners are often acknowledged, as well as the district's continued support of music education in their community. Sharing stories of impact shows the Foundation's constant relationship with its grant recipient schools and its advocacy for continued music education in public schools. Social Communications also includes research on how music education – and support from musical artists, community leaders, and local or state lawmakers – positively impacts children. Hundreds of posts are made each year to thousands of users and followers. The Foundation sends 11 emails per year to the program and grant recipient network for grantee-specific news and opportunities.

Honors

No honors were received in 2025.