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West Central's Music Education Program Receives National Recognition

(Hartford-Humboldt, SD) – April 8, 2020 – West Central has been honored with the Best Communities for Music Education designation from The NAMM Foundation for its outstanding commitment to music education.

Now in its 21st year, the Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement in efforts to provide music access and education to all students. To qualify for the Best Communities designation, West Central answered detailed questions about funding, graduation requirements, music class participation, instruction time, facilities, support for the music programs, Responses were verified with school officials and reviewed by The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas.

“The fine arts play an integral role in the comprehensive curriculum offerings at West Central. Parents and community members appreciate and show extraordinary support for our instrumental, vocal, and theater programs. The collective efforts of students, staff, parents, and community make West Central a place where the fine arts flourish.” ~ Brad Berens, Superintendent of Schools

This award recognizes that West Central is leading the way with learning opportunities as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The legislation guides implementation in the states and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which was often criticized for an overemphasis on testing-while leaving behind subjects such as music. ESSA recommends music and the arts as important elements of a well-rounded education for all children.

Research into music education continues to demonstrate educational/cognitive and social skill benefits for children who make music. After two years of music education, research found that participants showed more substantial improvements in how the brain processes speech and reading scores that their less-involved peers and that students who are involved in music are not

only more likely to graduate high school, but also to attend college as well. Everyday listening skills are stronger in musically-trained children than in those without music training. Significantly, listening skills are closely tied to the ability to: perceive speech in a noisy background, pay attention, and keep sounds in memory. Later in life, individuals who took music lessons as children show stronger neural processing of sound; young adults and even older adults who have not played an instrument for up to 50 years show enhanced neural processing compared to their peers. Not to mention, social benefits include conflict resolution, teamwork skills, and how to give and receive constructive criticism.

A 2015 study supported by The NAMM Foundation, "[Striking A Chord](#)," also outlines the overwhelming desire by teachers and parents for music education opportunities for all children as part of the school curriculum.

The West Central School District educates 1,378 students in grades K-12. An elementary (Pre-K-2), the middle school (6th-8th), and the high school (9-12) are located in Hartford. Another elementary (K-5) is located in Humboldt.

The West Central Music Staff

Daniel Eye - Middle School/High School Instrumental

Laurie Gratz - Middle School/High School Vocal

Samantha Meirose - Hartford Elementary Music/MS Instrumental Lessons

April Yocius - Humboldt Elementary Music/5th Grade Instrumental

About The NAMM Foundation

The NAMM Foundation is a nonprofit supported in part by the National Association of Music Merchants and its approximately 10,400 members around the world. The foundation advances active participation in music making across the lifespan by supporting scientific research, philanthropic giving, and public service programs. For more information about the NAMM Foundation, please visit www.nammfoundation.org.

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