

FEATURE

Susan Weber – NYSSMA® Awards Committee Chairperson



NYSSMA® Honors Its Members

The following awards were presented at the December 2023 Winter Conferences by President Russ Faunce.

The NYSSMA® Presidential Citation

The NYSSMA® Presidential Citation gives recognition to outstanding NYSSMA® member school districts that act as models for music education programs in New York State. The district must provide a well-rounded music program at all levels, as well as programs that actively participate in NYSSMA® events and activities.

2023 NYSSMA® Presidential Citation is awarded to Syosset CSD, under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Rogers, Superintendent of Schools and Dr. Christopher Hale, Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts K-12, where each day they live by the motto, "Preparing their students for a continually changing world."

The district mission is to prepare students to thrive in both the future they imagine and one that may evolve in ways yet to be envisioned; to enable and encourage students to realize their full intellectual potential and to inspire lifetime learners, and, lastly, to prepare students to face the evolving challenges in their lifetime and to make exemplary contributions in an increasingly diverse society.

District families demand a strong music education experience beginning in kindergarten and continuing through graduation. The Board of Education members are active music parents and are outspoken advocates for the music program in the Syosset Schools. The district values inclusivity and access, and recently created a Dulcimer Ensemble with middle school special education students.

Syosset CSD music teachers are regular presenters and attendees at the NYSSMA® Winter Conference, NafME National Conferences and All-Eastern conferences. And, the district was recently recognized as a "Best Community" for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation for the 22nd year.

The NYSSMA® Award of Excellence

The NYSSMA® Award of Excellence gives recognition to NYSSMA® member school districts that act as models for music education programs in New York State. The district must provide a well-rounded music program at all levels, as well as programs that actively participate in NYSSMA® events and activities.

2023 NYSSMA® Award of Excellence is awarded to the Plainview Old Bethpage CSD, under the leadership of Dr. Mary O'Meara, Superintendent of Schools, and Michael Rogers, Director of Music and Performing Arts, where each day they live by the motto, "Every student matters, and every moment counts."

The district mission is to prepare civic-minded students who participate productively in a diverse and ever-changing world as self-directed, confident, creative, curious, respectful, and empathetic learners. The district prides itself on an exceptional and robust music and performing arts program, including modernized initiatives that feature music technology, innovative ideas, progressive ensembles, guitar programs in which students build their own guitars, student-run and teacher-run a cappella programs, state-of-the-art music labs, and an electric string orchestra program.


NYSSMA® Distinguished Service Award

NYSSMA® Distinguished Service Award gives recognition for exceptional support and outstanding accomplishments in the service to NYSSMA® toward the advancement of music education in the schools of New York, public or private.

2023 Distinguished Service Award is given to Michael Brownell, a NYSSMA® Past President and the current NafME Eastern Division President, who believes that the capacity for all students to learn is based upon how we teach. He has spent countless years demonstrating this philosophy as he continues his outstanding service to the profession of music education.

Michael's understanding of alternative approaches to student learning has driven the work he brings to his leadership projects and plans. He has a passion for inclusive music education, comprehensive learning, and wide-ranging performance opportunities. Michael Brownell's biggest strengths are his ability to connect with others, his passion for the work he does, his progressive approach to broad music and arts education advocacy, and his innate voice of reason in his approach to ensuring music and arts education for all.

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2023 Distinguished Service Award goes to Marc Greene, a NYSSMA® Past President and NAFME Eastern Division Past President. Marc is always keeping his focus on what is in the best interest of students, and this is why he is sought out by so many to advocate and serve in making music education the best it can possibly be in all scenarios.

Marc's curricular work with the New York State Education Department provided the needed guidance for creating High School Level Elective coursework for every New York State high school student. His work on the Executive Blue-Ribbon Commission for Alternative Graduation Pathways helped to shape the current IAAP pilots and forge a path for high-quality standards-based graduation options in both music and the arts.

Marc's vision and work as President of the New York State Council of Educational Associations (NYSCEA) brought back the need for teaching the whole child, allowing New York State to embrace the Every Student Succeeds Act. Marc continued that work as NAFME Eastern Division President where he successfully sculpted a path forward for making music education stakeholders accountable for how students learn and achieve.

NYSSMA® Established Educator Award

NYSSMA® Established Educator Award gives recognition through service to music education for outstanding accomplishments by one or more of our members in the advancement of music education in the schools of New York, public or private, through the collegiate level with 10 years or more into their careers.

2023 NYSSMA® Established Educator Award is presented to Kerry Miro who is in her 30th year as a pre-K through 5th grade music teacher at Boquet Valley Central School District, Lake View Campus. She has been active in NYSSMA® with the Classroom Committee for the past 20 years. Her favorite part of being a music teacher is the kids. "You come to school and you could be having the worst day ever, but spending time with the kids is what makes a difference," Mero said. "Seeing them light up, or understand something for the first time or put a song together, and they say the funniest things."

2023 NYSSMA® Established Educator Award is given to William Scott He began teaching in Rochester City School District in 1969. He served 42 years as a voice instructor and voice department chair. His career included music education at the Hochstein School here in Rochester. In high school he took four years of music theory resulting in his taking the NY State Music Theory Regents exam.

Bill auditioned for voice in college and chose to attend SUNY Fredonia. He took a brief break from college to spend three years in the U.S. Army, on tuba! In fact, he started playing the tuba in junior high school and continued doing so through high school. However, he never took part in the Tuba Christmas.

Bill was also involved in the development of young vocalists through his work with the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA®), serving as an all-state vocal adjudicator and frequent guest conductor for all-state and all-county choirs. He says, "I am very privileged to be able to say, in all of my years of teaching – whether it was at Hochstein or the public schools – that never once did I feel like I was going to work. It was always a pleasure, always a joy."

NYSSMA® Early Career Achievement Award


NYSSMA® Early Career Achievement Award gives recognition through service to music education for exceptional support and outstanding accomplishments by one or more of our members in the advancement of music education in the schools of New York, public or private, through the collegiate level in the first five to nine years of their career.

2023 Early Career Achievement Award goes to John Fatuzzo who started his teaching career at the Ravena-Coymans-Selkirk High School where he worked for five years before moving to the Guilderland School District. The many accolades that he received from both districts show a teacher who is extremely dedicated to his students. He has become a leader among his peers of veteran teachers. He has revitalized the high school jazz band and raised the standard of performance of the Symphonic Band.

He is always seeking out new performance opportunities, regularly having the ensembles perform at the Empire State Plaza for Music in Our Schools Month and for NYSSMA® Majors. He is always willing to exceed expectations by volunteering to be on committees that work to push the music program, as well as revamping the Music Technology and Band curriculum. To quote his administrator, "He is a natural leader, works collaboratively for the betterment of the department, is tireless in the way in which he advocates for his students, and produces amazing results."

2023 Early Career Achievement Award is awarded to Zachary St. John who has been teaching at Mineola Middle School, as well as working with the Championship Competitive Marching Band at Mineola High School for the past eight years. He is a reflective educator who is committed to improving his already excellent craft of teaching. He has taken time and effort to understand the components of effective teaching, incorporating a well-rounded approach where students are highly engaged in performing, creating, connecting to, and responding to music.

He is passionate, dedicated, and kind hearted, which is seen by the growth of the marching band from 72 musicians to 141 during his leadership. He has helped his middle school students to create individual portfolios so that they can track their growth in the band program.



As if teaching weren't enough, Zack's reflective and curious nature has led him to create an action research project that explored how the manner in which students are held to account in practice habits and assessments impacted their overall skills. This research project caught the attention of district administrators in all areas and impacted teaching practice district wide. This work has led to a national scale research project in collaboration with five high-profile universities throughout the country.

NYSSMA® Outstanding Contributor Award

NYSSMA® Outstanding Contributor Award gives recognition to an individual, business, or corporation who has contributed in an extraordinary manner to the support of music education in New York State.

2023 Outstanding Contributor Award is given to Visit Rochester, the official tourism promotion agency for Monroe County, NY. Their mission is simple. They sell and market Greater Rochester as a preferred destination for business and leisure travel.

To this end, Visit Rochester also advocates for appropriate destination development, investment and increased community awareness, and appreciation and support for the visitor industry. Visit Rochester has built and maintains a 20+- year working relationship with NYSSMA®. They are a membership-based organization with more than 400 members that represent local lodging, retail, restaurants, services, and community organizations that all strive to provide the best visitor experience.

Visit Rochester regularly makes NYSSMA® a priority for their students, parents, teachers, and staff. Visit Rochester truly sees and supports a vision for musical excellence by embracing the idea that the City of Rochester, in collaboration with NYSSMA®, support a well-rounded and significant music education for the students in New York State. The following people accepted the award:

Don Jeffries – President and CEO.

Wendy O'Duffy – Vice President for Sales.

Amanda Fox – Vice President for Operations and Events.

Please visit the NYSSMA® website (www.NYSSMA.org) and click on committees to find more information about the awards listed below, including several newer awards designed to highlight outstanding educators and programs.

- Presidential Citation/ Award of Excellence for outstanding district-wide music programs.
- Outstanding School Award for outstanding music program in a building within the following cities: Buffalo, New York, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers.
- Distinguished Service Award for distinguished service to NYSSMA®.
- Outstanding Contributor Award for an individual, business, or corporation supporting music education (non-New York State music educator).
- Early Career Achievement Educator Award for contributions of music educators in New York State at the local level who have been in the field between five and nine years.
- Established Educator Award for distinguished service by music educators at the local level who have been in the field a minimum of 10 years.
- Music Education Innovation Award for recognizing new and creative approaches to music education within or outside the school day.

All award applications are due June 30.

The 2023 NYSSMA® Awards and Recognition Committee:
Jenny Cerne, Robert Dumas, Tyler Mason-Draffen,
Taylor Prosper and Helen Timerman.

Respectfully submitted by:

Susan Weber, Chairperson

NYSSMA® Awards and Recognition Committee