



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT

March 2012

Dear School Administrator:

The U.S. Department of Education is pleased to support Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM) in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History and more than 25 governmental, cultural, and community organizations. Every April, JAM draws global attention to the vibrant world of jazz and its unique role as an American cultural treasure.

This original art form creatively melds diverse musical traditions and is emblematic of American history, culture, and the stories of people from coast to coast. Therefore, it is especially fitting that this year's theme is "Jazz Crossing Borders and Cultures." In learning about this art form, young people can examine both the musical and cultural traditions that influenced jazz and the American values that jazz represents, such as diversity, creativity, innovation, discipline, freedom, and teamwork.

We are proud to again support this initiative, which celebrates jazz as a transformational force. The Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History launched JAM in 2001 and now counts among its partners the Argus Fund, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Library Association, BMI, the Ella Fitzgerald Foundation, the National Park Service, the National Association for Music Educators, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Public Radio, the Public Broadcasting Service, the United States Conference of Mayors, Voice of America, Sirius/XM Satellite Radio, and the U.S. Department of State, which will launch the first "International Jazz Day" on April 30 with UNESCO.

During Jazz Appreciation Month, we encourage educational institutions to learn more about this American art form and its impact on the world.

Enclosed are two copies of the 2012 JAM poster, which features Frank Sinatra, the internationally acclaimed vocalist, actor, and entertainer. With a career spanning approximately six decades, Sinatra received such prestigious awards as a Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Medal of Honor, a Presidential Medal of Freedom, a Congressional Gold Medal, an NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award, over 10 Grammy Awards, and multiple Academy Awards, including one for "The House I Live In," whose lyrics were written in the 1940s by a New York City public school teacher, Abel Meeropol. Sinatra's portrait on the JAM poster was created by American artist LeRoy Neiman.

More JAM posters, ideas, learning resources, and activities to celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month can be found on the Smithsonian Jazz Web site at [www.smithsonianjazz.org](http://www.smithsonianjazz.org). This site includes suggested activities for all types of organizations and ages, a state-by-state and international calendar of upcoming JAM events, oral histories of jazz artists, learning activities, jazz blogs and webcasts, and a bibliography of children's literature with jazz themes. Much of this material was developed with middle school students in mind, and we hope it will be of use to you. (Please note that the U.S. Department of Education does not endorse any curriculum or materials mentioned on the Smithsonian Jazz Web site.)

I appreciate all you do for our nation's youths and hope your school will join in this year's JAM celebration.

Sincerely,

  
James H. Shelton, III  
Assistant Deputy Secretary  
Office of Innovation and Improvement

Enclosures