

## JENNIFER JIMENEZ NAMED RECIPIENT OF THE 2026 MUSIC EDUCATOR AWARD™, PRESENTED BY THE RECORDING ACADEMY® AND GRAMMY MUSEUM®

**JIMENEZ AND NINE FINALISTS WILL RECEIVE CASH HONORARIUMS, WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE CHUCK LORRE FAMILY FOUNDATION.**

**WHO:** Jennifer Jimenez of South Miami Senior High School in Miami, Florida, is the recipient of the **2026 Music Educator Award™** presented by the Recording Academy® and GRAMMY Museum®. Jimenez will be recognized during the Recording Academy®'s Special Merit Awards Ceremony on Sat, Jan. 31. In addition, nine music teachers have been announced as finalists for the award. Initial nominations were submitted from all 50 states. A complete list of the recipients is below.

<b>Music Educator Award</b>			
<b>Winner</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>
Jennifer Jimenez	South Miami Senior High School	Miami	Florida
<b>Finalists</b>			
Jean-Paul Balmat	Mission Bay High School	San Diego	California
Stephen Blanco	Las Vegas High School	Las Vegas	Nevada
Jasmine Fripp	Tennessee State University	Nashville	Tennessee
Lisa Sunset Holt	Cedar Park High School	Cedar Park	Texas
Alyson Humphrey Smith	A.C. Steere Elementary School	Shreveport	Louisiana
Kevin McDonald	Wellesley High School	Wellesley	Massachusetts
Bill Podolski	H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program	Arlington	Virginia
Kevin Schoenbach	Oswego High School	Oswego	Illinois
Matthew Shephard	Meridian Early College High School	Sanford	Michigan

**WHAT:** The **Music Educator Award** recognizes current educators who have made a significant and lasting contribution to the music education field and demonstrates a commitment to the broader cause of maintaining music education in the schools. The recipient will be recognized during Grammy® Week 2026.

The award is open to current U.S. music teachers, and anyone can nominate a teacher — students, parents, friends, colleagues, community members, school deans, and administrators.

Teachers are also able to nominate themselves, and nominated teachers are notified and invited to fill out an application.

Each year, one recipient is selected from 10 finalists and recognized for their remarkable impact on students' lives. They will receive a \$10,000 honorarium and matching grant for their school's music program. The nine additional finalists will receive a \$1,000 honorarium and matching grants. The remaining 15 semifinalists will receive a \$500 honorarium with matching school grants.

The Music Educator Award program, including honorariums, is made possible by the generosity and support of **The Chuck Lorre Family Foundation**. In addition, the American Choral Directors Association, National Association for Music Education, NAMM Foundation, and National Education Association support this program through outreach to their constituencies.

Nominations and applications for the **2027 Music Educator Award** are now open via [grammymusicteacher.com](http://grammymusicteacher.com).

#### **ABOUT JENNIFER JIMENEZ**

Jennifer Jimenez, a Kennedy Center Sondheim Inspirational Teaching Award winner and previous Grammy Music Educator Award Finalist, is currently in her nineteenth year as Director of Bands and Elective Department Chair at South Miami Senior High, an urban public school in the third-largest school district in the nation (MDCPS). Mrs. Jimenez, a native of Nebraska, fell in love with teaching and the Miami community during her days as a student at the University of Miami, where she was later inducted into the Band Hall of Fame. Throughout her teaching career, Mrs. Jimenez has served as a standard-bearer for excellence, community building, and music education advocacy. Her firm belief that "band is the family that you choose" has led her and her students to build a unique community that uplifts and inspires students and families. Her passion and standard of excellence have culminated in student performances at Carnegie Hall and two Super Bowls. In addition to her teaching, Mrs. Jimenez is an avid grant writer, securing over \$84,000 for her program. She has supported aspiring teachers by being a clinical supervising teacher and has supported her colleagues through district and state presentations, serving as an adjudicator, and through her active roles in the Florida Bandmaster's Association and a charter and state board member for Women Band Director International's Florida chapter. As an advocate of music education for her students and community, Mrs. Jimenez earned Florida International University's Graduate Research Award for her work focusing on underrepresented populations in music education. Additionally, she has collaborated with the Greater Miami Youth Symphony (GMYS) to bring free and reduced-cost music programs and camps to the students of Miami. An active professional musician, Mrs. Jimenez, is the principal percussionist for the Miami Symphony Orchestra. Mrs. Jimenez enjoys a beautiful community and family, including her husband, Desi, their children, Noah and Eden, and their puppy, Obi-Wan.

#### **ABOUT THE RECORDING ACADEMY**

The Recording Academy represents the voices of performers, songwriters, producers, engineers, and all music professionals. Dedicated to ensuring the recording arts remain a thriving part of our shared cultural



heritage, the Academy honors music's history while investing in its future through the [Grammy Museum](#)®, [advocates on behalf of music creators](#), supports music people in times of need through [MusiCares](#)®, and celebrates artistic excellence through the [Grammy Awards](#) — music's only peer-recognized accolade and highest achievement. As the world's leading society of music professionals, we work year-round to foster a more inspiring world for creators.

For more information about the Grammy Awards and the Recording Academy, please visit [Grammy.com](#) and [RecordingAcademy.com](#). For breaking news and exclusive content, join the Recording Academy's social communities on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#). For media assets, please visit the [Recording Academy Press Room](#).

#### **ABOUT THE GRAMMY MUSEUM**

The GRAMMY Museum is a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating and exploring music from yesterday and today to inspire the music of tomorrow through exhibits, education, grants, preservation initiatives, and public programming. Paying tribute to our collective musical heritage, the Museum values and celebrates the dynamic connection in people's diverse backgrounds and music's many genres, telling stories that inspire us, and creative expression that leads change in our industry.

For more information, visit [www.grammymuseum.org](#), "like" the GRAMMY Museum on Facebook, and follow [@GRAMMYMuseum](#) on Instagram and TikTok.

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