

ESPERANZA HS JAZZ SELECTED FOR GLOBALLY PRESTIGIOUS ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON FESTIVAL IN NYC

ANAHEIM CA - 1/30/2026 - Esperanza High School's **Jazz Ensemble I** has been selected as one of only 20 finalists nationwide to compete in the 31st Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program & Festival. The event, held at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City, is the pinnacle of high school jazz education in North America.

Under the leadership of director Brad Davis, **Esperanza HS Jazz I** was chosen from a pool of hundreds of applicants across the United States and Canada. The selection process involved a rigorous blind audition of three recordings from the Jazz at Lincoln Center library.

“Essentially Ellington festival is the high water mark for high school Jazz,” Mr. Davis remarks. *“We are so honored to be included in this list of amazing bands from around the country and I am so proud of our students and how hard they worked to make this dream happen. This is a true testament to their dedication to their craft, and to our community’s dedication to our students and the high standards that we hold ourselves to. It’s an unbelievable honor.”*



Esperanza Jazz I takes the stage with CSULB in their annual “Count Meets the Duke” concert. (12/2025)

During the three-day festival from **April 30th to May 2nd, 2026**, students will participate in workshops, jam sessions, and rehearsals led by members of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and compete in a performance judged by a panel of jazz legends, including Wynton Marsalis.

Esperanza Jazz and Mr. Davis have history with *Essentially Ellington*, being selected to compete in the national festival 14 years ago. Current senior trombone player, Gabriella Shanedling, comments: *“We are excited to be a part of this honorable experience. We cannot wait to step into the shoes of the last band that worked hard enough to earn the same opportunity.”*

The Esperanza Band program is currently seeking community support and sponsorships to help offset the significant travel and instrument shipping costs for the ensemble. Local businesses or individuals interested in supporting these student-ambassadors can find more information at ehseu.org or donate directly at <https://ehseu.org/contact-us/donate-here/>

About Esperanza High School Jazz: The Esperanza High School Band Program, located in Anaheim, California, is a premier performing arts department known for its excellence in jazz, concert, and marching arts. The program focuses on fostering musical mastery and professional discipline, consistently placing among the top ensembles in Southern California.

About Essentially Ellington: The *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program & Festival is the nation's premier jazz education initiative. Created by Jazz at Lincoln Center, the program aims to elevate the musicianship of high school students by providing them with the tools and mentorship to perform the music of Duke Ellington and other jazz masters.