

Dear Music Family and Friends,

Thank you for your ongoing support of the MBUSD Music Program. **Below is a brief summary of the report compiled by national music expert, Dr. John Benham**, detailing the cuts which have been made to the program and the profound and devastating effect on the program if steps are not taken now to reverse them. Please read and help us save our music program!

(If you'd prefer to view the full report, [click here](#)).

There is an online school board meeting coming up next Wednesday, April 15th. Please consider submitting a public comment in advance of the meeting to voice your concerns about the program cuts, and please attend the online meeting. A meeting agenda and links to submitting your comment and viewing the meeting will be distributed in the next few days.

For more info, go to MiraCostaBands.com or www.manhattanbeachmusic.org

Or contact Mira Costa Band Boosters:
Carolyn Mukai at carolyn.Mukai@verizon.net
Michele Gentile at mgband@yahoo.com

Thank you again for your support of music in MBUSD!

The MBUSD Music Parent Coalition

Did you know?

- The cutting of music classes will soon lead to the collapse of our music program.
- A single music class can teach up to twice as many students as any other class, which means it can be almost half the cost of any other subject.
- There are MANY proven benefits to music (i.e., improved academic performance, increased levels of social-emotional wellness, and enhanced cognitive brain development), but even if there weren't, it would still make sense to keep all our music classes and expand the music program to include as many students as possible, as this would free up funds to invest in other subjects by reducing class sizes in those subjects.

On the flip side, cutting music now is a lose, lose situation for the future:

- Reduced # of music classes = increased cost to the school district (music students will have to take classes in other subjects, and with smaller class capacity in those subjects, more teachers will be required to teach them, which means more teacher salary cost \$\$\$).
- The level of music training, as well as academic and social-emotional learning, will decrease, and student advantages (i.e., increased college acceptances) that pertain to learning music will be diminished.
- And that's even before we talk about more families leaving the district as a result of the loss of the music program and the financial implications of that.

Report Summary

- The MBUSD music program is nationally and internationally recognized as one of the premier programs in the United States, culminating with the High School Music Program being awarded a Grammy, recognizing it as one of the top U.S. public high schools that are making an outstanding commitment to music education.
- However, in the last few years, prior to the 2019-2020 academic year, there has been a systemic decline in the apparent support of the MBUSD administration, which has had devastating impacts on the ability of students to continue participation and subsequently resulted in declining enrollments:
- Music Appreciation was eliminated as a high school course option.
- The reduction of one middle school choir required the teacher to place boys and girls in the same ensemble, contrary to best educational practices.
- Elementary school concert performances by middle school and/or high school ensembles have been reduced, even though these were during regularly scheduled music times. These performing experiences

are very valuable for the older students as well as those in the elementary grades.

- Music teachers have been prevented from interacting with parents about scheduling their students in music classes at the middle school.
- Music classes have been eliminated when teachers were on leave.
- Parents and students indicated that guidance counselors in both middle school and high school have discouraged students from taking music and, instead, were encouraged to take the wheel or other electives in its place.
- Grade 6 middle school choir was inadvertently left off the registration sheet, and when informed immediately about the error was refused in the request to put it back on. There has been a 40% reduction in middle school choir offerings in the last two years.
- Teachers and parents who have repeatedly requested meetings with members of the administration to discuss the music program have been regularly refused.
- There is a lack of adequate facilities (usage) and equipment, e.g. stage lighting, for middle school concerts.
- In addition, in the past 2 months, in its February 26 and March 4 (2020) meetings, the School Board made the following cuts:
 - 50% reduction to the Mira Costa Choir Program and 50% reduction to the Mira Costa Orchestra program.
 - Elimination of the elementary music teacher position for 1st and 2nd grades.
 - Elimination of the music assistant position for all music programs (choir, band, and orchestra) grades 3 through 5.
 - Cutting of Zero period for 6th grade at MBMS, which may have an impact on the music program going forward, as Zero period is required for all 6th grade students who wish to participate in music and also take a second elective.
 - Cuts have been applied arbitrarily, without consultation with either the music faculty or significant community input, and without consideration of:

- the ability of students to continue to participate in the music program;
- the short- and long-term impacts on the budget;
- **elimination of 22% of the entire music faculty has been implemented at a significantly greater percentage than any other single curricular area.**

• **The School Board spent approximately 18 minutes during the February 26th board meeting** discussing the elimination of Zero Period PE for grade 6 students, which appeared to be a spontaneous insertion into the proposed reductions. Little discussion was held on the potential or specific impacts on the grade 6 music curriculum or its residual impact on the program in grades 6-12. For the administration and school board to take away the second elective option for all grade 6 students for a mere \$16,696 in program cost without adequate input from the music teachers and community seems precipitous.

• **Discussion on reductions to the music program lasted less than 5 minutes** at the February 26th board meeting, with no specific recognition of the implications of the decision.

• **There is no mention of the reductions to the high school music program in either the February 26th or the March 4th School Board meeting**, and it is likely that the board was unaware that the administrative recommendation included those cuts or it surely would have become part of the discussion.

• Smaller ensemble classes have been cut without considering that smaller music classes fulfill a vital role in the development of the advanced students. It is similar to other academic areas in which the district strives to provide options for lower enrollments in advanced classes.

• There is no specific administrative oversight of the program, student outcomes, or the faculty. Therefore, there is no advocate for the program, making it an easy target for attack and/or neglect when other issues arise such as the elimination of 6th grade Zero Period PE. Whether this individual is an administrative position or teaching assignment is not the primary issue. The issue is that no one is in charge.

• There is a lack of communication about the music program between administrative levels. There is also a lack of participation and communication with music teachers and the community. **The rights and responsibilities of the various constituents in the educational and citizen community have been**

circumvented by the administration and school board, either by default or intent.

• The recommendation of the administration, as approved by the school board, demonstrates an attitude relegating music education to extra-curricular and expendable, denying all the research, decisions at the federal level (ESSA) and recommendations of national administrative organizations (ASCD). **In general, the music program as designed fails to meet basic national standards for music education. One major example is the failure to provide equal access to the various aspects of the music program for all students.**

• There is clear evidence that the music program is in need of complete review. The qualitative level of excellence achieved by the few students remaining in the program by the high school years is, without question, a tribute to the perseverance of both the students and the teachers. However, the quantitative characteristics of the program indicate the presence of significant factors that at least inhibit, if not prevent, student options to participate in the music program. **It is possible, in fact probable, that the current reductions recommended to and approved by school board action forecast a continued decline in student participation leading to the potential collapse of the entire program. The current situation is unsustainable.**

Conclusions and Recommendations:

While the wisdom of the approved reductions in the music program are at best questionable from a financial validity, the resulting devastation to the music curriculum and the lifetime loss of opportunity to the students is without justification.

The community recognizes the need for fiscal responsibility within the school district in a time of difficult funding.

The community recognizes that a strong music program is important to the image and economy of the school district and the community.

The community recognizes the importance of maintaining a strong music program for the social-emotional, academic, and intellectual development of the student.

The community recognizes that parents of music students make significant financial investments in the school district with the rental/purchase and maintenance of their own music instruments and the raising of funds to assist in the operation of the music program.

The community recognizes that there will be a significant decline in student participation should the district consider any reductions in the music curriculum.

The community recognizes the potential for the collapse of the entire music program.

The community recognizes that without such a prestigious and high-achieving program, enrollment in the district would likely decline, leading to further reduction in revenues from the state, as well as lower donations to MBEF, which would, in turn, lead to further cuts in a dangerous downward spiral.

The community recognizes the potential for increasing student participation in band, orchestra, and choir, and its financial advantage to the district.

The community recognizes the potential for the music program to be used to increase enrollment through increasing the number of out-of-district permits provided at all levels and thus further increase revenue.

Therefore, it is with careful consideration that we request:

- the formation of a Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding the music program;
- that the school board and administration rescind, or at least put on hold, its actions approving any reductions in the music curriculum until this Task Force can make its recommendations to the Board.