

Greetings,

I've drafted this letter over and over again, because each time I do, I let my emotions take over and I end up writing pages-long screeds that will surely never be read (or felt).

Cutting elementary instrumental music instruction would be devastating both to our students and to our community. Stamford is a tough sell to people looking to buy homes and raise a family here: the internet is full of people posting that they would consider Stamford, but the schools are scary/bad/limited. Our music program, though, is a gem, and if it were supported even more, we could have music programs that are at the level of our surrounding communities. Take away elementary instrumental music, though, and you're hobbling the entire music program and giving Stamford's school system another mark against it.

I'm sure other letter writers have already cited the many studies linking music instruction to improved academic performance, so I will share my own son's story instead.

When he started fourth grade, my son Sam filled out a form stating what instrument he'd like to learn how to play. He chose saxophone. He thrived over the next two years under the direction of Mr. Darren Stec: the foundations were set. In middle school and high school, he took his skills to another level under the instruction of Ms. Blair Roberts.

Today, Sam is in 11th grade, and has made Western Regionals all three years of high school (as well as in middle school, though the pandemic interrupted this), participated in the WestConn Honors Music Festival, earned the role of "horn sergeant" in the Westhill Marching Band, marched in countless local parades, plays gigs with the Westhill Jazz Band, plays his second instrument (upright bass) in the WestConn orchestra, and is in the process of preparing to apply to colleges as a jazz saxophone performance major. Availing himself of the opportunity to learn an instrument in elementary school led him to discover his passion. And he's far from the only one.

Sam would never have picked up a saxophone if he had not been given the opportunity at Northeast Elementary School.

I'll also point out that sending our elementary school bands to march in the annual Veteran's Day parade, as we do, is a visible indication that our schools do indeed care about and support Veteran's Day and see it as a participatory learning experience.

Stamford seems to place all of its emphasis on sports, which is a shame, because music is a lifelong pursuit and creative outlet, even if you aren't a professional. I can't picture football or soccer parents writing to the Board of Education or Board of Finance begging them not to cut their programs. Please invest in our students' futures by building out our full music program, not by removing opportunities and making us all the poorer for it.

Sincerely,

Anne Flounders

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