

Dear Dr. Lucero and members of the Board of Education, Board of Finance, and Board of Representatives,

My name is Noah Schaffer and I am a proud graduate of Stamford Public Schools. A pivotal point in my academic journey was my introduction to instrumental music as a 4th grader at Northeast. For the first time in my life, I was given a medium for self-expression in a way that I felt to be entirely pure and honest. Since then, music has remained a constant in my life, and I would not be where I am without it. I cannot begin to emphasize how disappointed I am with the Board of Education's decision to defund instrumental music in Stamford's Elementary Schools.

As a 23 year old living in Chicago, my life experiences have been unequivocally shaped by instrumental music. My closest friends are the people I bonded with in high school and college marching band. Whenever I am struggling, I know I can always find comfort in playing music with someone. As an undergraduate student, I had the unique opportunity of combining my Computer Science degree with music, doing research at the intersection of music and AI. This is something that changed my life entirely, and is a field I hope to pursue for the rest of my career. None of this may have been possible had I not taken instrumental music at Northeast. I frequently wish I had been introduced to instrumental music earlier, because it would have made my life even better than it is now.

I'm deeply frustrated that creative disciplines such as visual art and music are often thought of as less crucial to the American education system than science, history, English, and math. Learning instrumental music can teach pattern recognition, communication and creativity-- all of which helped me complete two engineering degrees as much as math and science did. More importantly, instrumental music teaches dedication, perseverance, and resilience, which have not only assisted my academic and professional endeavors, but have made me a better person.

By defunding elementary school instrumental music, you are stripping thousands of kids the opportunity to learn a life-changing skill at an age where it matters the most. I sincerely hope you reconsider.

Noah Schaffer

Northeast Elementary School '11
Turn of River Middle School '14
Westhill High School '18