

March 20, 2012,

Dear Members of the DBAC,

I am concerned about the proposed cuts to specialists in music and art. While I understand that staffing and enrollment need to be in alignment, I hope that will not mean cuts to the programs themselves.

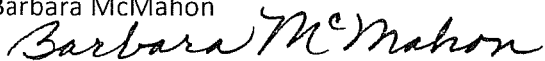
Our students benefit in many ways from the current programs in music and art. The specialists make an effort to take themes and content that students are studying in their academic subjects, and where possible, they connect the skills they are teaching with what students are learning in class. A perfect example of this is in our fourth grade study of Greek mythology. Robin Hruska has built a unit on ancient Greek art into her fourth grade curriculum. Students create a flat ceramic modeled on ancient Greek pottery in which students take a story or character from mythology which they depict in their pottery piece. These pieces are displayed on our curriculum night when parents look at all our projects. In connection with our study of geometric concepts in the fourth grade, Robin teaches rotational symmetry to our students through the imaginative creation of rotating designs with their own names. Students really understand the mathematics that connects with the art. In our music program, Jeremy Rothbaum connects our study of Bainbridge Island history in the classroom with the creation of a show, "A Musical History of Bainbridge Island." Further, he teaches a good deal of American history through the teaching of his songs from various historical periods. His fourth grade musical program, "Never Give Up" is an uplifting and inspirational show centered around self-esteem and the development of character.

Parents advocated last year for a new Options program. A major curriculum approach they wished to utilize was the integration of subject areas, along with a more thematic approach to learning. Children enjoy and benefit from learning that takes place in a holistic integrated way. We at Blakely School have long desired to make learning connected and meaningful for children. Our programs in music and art integrate with our curriculum in every grade level. Our specialists have built programs that make learning fun and focused on the skills and knowledge students need for a deep and enhanced school experience.

Please do not cut our programs in music and art. It is true that Specialist assignments need to be rearranged or reallocated to bring staffing and enrollment into alignment. That is understandable in a time of shrinking resources. However, it is my hope that the programs themselves will remain intact for children in the elementary schools.

Sincerely,

Barbara McMahon


Grade 4 teacher

Blakely Elementary School