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## Lowell General Music Program

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**Karen Callan** <callan.karen@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 12, 2024 at 7:34 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my shock and dismay that General Music will not be offered to students at Lowell Elementary School in the 2024-2025 school year.

I am a retired Music Educator, having taught nearly 40 years for Missoula County Public schools. I believe that music education is an essential part of the elementary child's education. Through singing, moving, playing and creating, young children experience joy, gain confidence in creative abilities and develop skills in the language of music. Music is a pathway to all other curricular areas integrating math, language arts, social studies and science.

Developing musical knowledge and skills during the elementary years can only be achieved by a highly trained music educator who has mastered the scope and sequence of the music curriculum developed by our school district. All elementary students deserve to study music, a subject worthy unto itself as a curriculum area but which also enlivens every other curricular area. Music presents countless opportunities to build community in the elementary school when children share their music with peers, families and the larger Missoula community.

I question the stated reason for eliminating the General Music program at Lowell, that there are no qualified applicants. I have spoken to at least one qualified applicant who applied for this position at Lowell Elementary School. I believe there are others who would be willing to apply. Lowell students deserve the same Music Education opportunities that all other elementary children have in our district.

I find it ironic that our district is beginning an arts integrated academy just as an established music program is being cut from one of our elementary schools.

Please reconsider this decision to eliminate General Music next year at Lowell Elementary. It is a disservice to Lowell students and the repercussions of this decision will be felt not only in their future years in our district but also in the music program of the entire district.

Sincerely,

Karen Callan  
MCPS Music Educator (retired) 1979-2017  
Past President, Montana Music Educators Association  
Past President, Montana General Music Teachers Association  
Past President, Treasure State Orff Chapter, an affiliate of the American Orff Schulwerk Association

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## Thank you for painting at Prescott School and idea for the next project!

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Jeanne Joscelyn <jeannejoscelyn@hotmail.com>

Tue, Jun 18, 2024 at 11:19 AM

To: Burley McWilliams <bmcwilliams@mcpsmt.org>, Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, Micah Hill <mhill@mcpsmt.org>

June 17, 2024

Hello Burley!

Thank you very much for arranging the painting at Prescott School! The south side of the school looks so much better! The peeling paint was quite a blight. One neighbor told me that she was very happy about the upgrade and I'm sure there are many more happy neighbors!

We also appreciated the painting over of the graffiti on the north side of the building!

With the better weather our family has been working on the front of the grounds with mowing, weed eating, and planting flowers in the planter box. Additionally, a volunteer has been doing great work weed eating the area by the swings and the bushes around the play area. She has been a big help. And I think others will join her as the summer progresses.

We also are glad that the district mowed the playground about a week ago (maybe this was Brandon who I met last summer who was such a help picking up the lawn bags!). With all the rain and the mowing, the area is looking better than it has for a long time!

We were wondering if you had some ideas on what could be next for the summer maintenance or perhaps even some inside maintenance.

We understand that you are short on help, however, there are things that need to be done that may not be too expensive.

One idea we and some neighbors had was to continue working on the area where a sprinkler system was installed last summer. Is the contractor responsible for the sprinkler installation finished with his end of the project? Or maybe the district employees were doing this project? The filling of the trenches and the leveling of the soil need to be done as people could be hurt walking and running on the grounds, perhaps twisting an ankle, etc. With the sprinkler system completed children could safely play sports and other activities on the field. We would be happy to help with this work, along with others, I'm sure.

With the weather cooperating (hopefully!) I think there will be more volunteer help.

Is there any way we can get access to the outside front faucet for watering the flowers that we planted. Last year we hauled water, however, using a faucet would be a lot easier. We would really like a faucet turnkey handle and would use it responsibly. Perhaps Brandon could help us with this?

Also, we recently purchased a power washer for use on our property. And we would really like to use it to clean off the asphalt around the Prescott School building. We could also use the pressure washer to spray off the bricks on the bottom of the building walls which have mold growing on them. We will need access, i.e. a turnkey handle, to a faucet for these chores, also.

With our, other citizens, and your ideas we could get Prescott School back to the well-maintained school it once was prior to the lease to a private school, which, unfortunately, did not take good care of the building or grounds. And then hopefully discussions of reopening the school can take place🙏.

Thank you again for your help!

Jeanne Joscelyn, 1335 Clarkia, Missoula, MT 59802 [jeannejoscelyn@hotmail.com](mailto:jeannejoscelyn@hotmail.com) 406-303-0703 cell

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## Music Teacher at Lowell, Arts Education in MCPS

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**Mike Ruybalid** <mikeruybalid@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 25, 2024 at 11:23 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, mhill@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, chayes@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org, jwalsh@mcpsmt.org, mwhicher@mcpsmt.org, Keegan Witt <kwitt@mcpsmt.org>, Robert Rob Woelich <rwoelich@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Superintendent Hill and members of the MCPS School Board,

Please consider this email serving as public comment for the upcoming MCPS School Board meeting on June 25, 2024. While I do work at the University of Montana (UM) in music teacher education, these views are my own and are being sent from my personal email address and from my personal device.

I wish to express my disappointment regarding the removal of the general music teacher position at Lowell for the 2024-25 school year. While I am appreciative that band and orchestra will remain at Lowell, per the comments of Trustee Walsh in the June 11 school board meeting, the removal of a music teacher position from a school in MCPS, a school district that sits in an thriving arts community, is what many in the local arts community were afraid would begin to happen now that the MCPS Arts Education Director position has been eliminated. Please understand that we in the arts community are now fearful that this is just the beginning. We are wondering if decisions like this will occur in other schools in MCPS in the coming years with music teacher positions being cut or reduced in FTE? We hope that that will not be the case.

While I understand that classroom teachers at Lowell may be asked to meet the music education needs of the students at Lowell in the 2024-25 school year, I believe this is an unfair expectation to put on these teachers. As one who works in teacher education, I am fully aware of the plethora of responsibilities placed on classroom teachers. To add one more subject to address in their teaching load just adds to their already full plate. Furthermore, to teach music is the job of a specialist who receives four (or more) full years of intense music education coursework and training. To see the list of coursework from our local university that pre-service music teachers are expected to complete, please click here: <https://catalog.umt.edu/colleges-schools-programs/arts-media/music/bme-music-education/#requirements-text>. These course requirements are likely quite similar to the requirements at other colleges and universities across the country.

As a current music teacher educator in the state of Montana, I am aware of the difficulties of filling vacant teaching positions. Our teacher pay in Montana is embarrassingly low, our cost of living continues to rise, and the support from the state needs to be more. While I do agree that these are issues that need to be dealt with at the state level, I request more assurance from the MCPS School Board that the arts will be supported in the district. As many individuals have spoken to in recent public comment in the last few months, the arts have provided a sense of support to many and given many people a community to be a part of (e.g., through participation in ensembles). To see the removal of a music teacher position does not provide this assurance of the arts being supported in MCPS. What I fear it may do is cause teachers entering the teaching field to not consider MCPS as a potential place to take a music teaching position. We're already hemorrhaging teachers to other states with better pay. If teacher candidates believe music teacher positions in MCPS are expendable, this may give more reasoning for them to look elsewhere for teaching positions.

I appreciate the assurance shared by Trustee Walsh regarding the Lowell music teacher position at the June 11 meeting that "[t]he district will reopen the position for a general music teacher in the spring of 2025, and are committed to filling it for the 2025-2026 school year." I look forward to hearing more about this next academic year and look forward to seeing a robust effort to get a general music teacher back at Lowell.

Thank you for your time.

-Mike Ruybalid, Ph.D.  
mikeruybalid@gmail.com

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Michael John Ruybalid, Ph.D.  
mikeruybalid@gmail.com

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