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Many parents, myself included have been quiet out of respect for Westland parents, giving them time for questions and to express concern. **But now there needs to be a discussion on all the other budget reduction options** that will drastically reduce the quality of our educational system.

As the Chelmsford Friends of Music president, I'm here to **advocate for the 1400 students and parents that are participating in band, chorus and orchestra at McCarthy, Parker, and the high school.** I don't pretend to speak for them all and I encourage them to send emails with their input. We know you have work to do and hopefully you will consider what I say when discussing options over the next few weeks.. **My intention is to express the grave concerns of many parents about this budget crisis and to ask a few questions about possible solutions, which you can answer now or in the course of your discussions.**

It's so easy to say that since music is not part of the MCAS testing curriculum so it should be one of the first things to go. I'd like to give you 4 reasons why music performance, in particular is crucial to a high quality school system.

REASON #1

- music performance students perform higher in school tests and standardized test. In many cases, their increased performance is tied to the number of years they participate. In a UCLA study of 25000 SAT test takers, music performers outscored their non music counterparts by 100 points. If you're a parent with college bound seniors, you know what a difference 100 points can make.

REASON #2

- Music performance is probably the most cost effective class you have. My 8th grade son Jarred plays in the 7th/8th grade band. Every day at 10am, 140 students are directed by Larry Willis and Matt Sexauer. That is a RATIO OF 70 students to-1 teacher. The parents buy or rent the instruments, there are no textbooks, just chairs stands and 1 teacher/70 students. No other class could be viable with this ratio and it's amazing how much they achieve.

REASON #3

- Band, orchestra and chorus provide a special community for students, a group in which to socialize and function as young adults. **Disrupting that community** would affect these students as strongly as a school closing.

REASON #4

- Music gives students an additional opportunity to excel, both as an individual performers and a group. Individual musicians qualify each year for Districts, All State and last year Chelmsford was honored with 2 All Eastern Chorus selections, Joe Constantine and Caitlin Baummer. The Marching band won it's first ever MICCA Silver medal last month. Last spring, the McCarthy and CHS Orchestra won Gold medals and have performed in Worcester, Tanglewood and Symphony Hall.

These accomplishments will not be repeated with the future students at the high school if you reduce the middle school music program from 8 teachers to 4 Most of us expect that music reductions will be part of the solution. But that's not a fair share reduction that's a LION'S SHARE!

I was elected to the CFOM presidency and I represent more than 1400 students. Our mission is to maintain the high quality music program that we have; hopefully make it even better. As school committee members, your mission, likewise, is to improve the quality of our education system. Right now the school plans for fiscal year 07 require sacrifice. The only people making the sacrifices are the 5000 plus students, none of whom can vote and none of whom have been given a say. I am willing to pay more for fees (within reason) in order to keep certain offerings in the school. In addition, I am also willing to provide my time and I'm sure there are hundreds of parents that will do the same. However, this is not just a parent student issue. This is a community problem and it will require time and financial sacrifices by the teachers, the administrators, the town and the state groups that have all been charged with the responsibility of educating our children. Our kids count on us to advocate for them. We count on you to advocate for our kids and I urge you to continue to lobby, on our behalf to our town and state government. With your guidance, we will help you. In closing I'd like to ask a few questions about funding:

1. What are you willing to do or recommend be done to advocate for our kids with town officials? What's the strategy that should be employed?
2. I know Mr. Lynch does not want to touch the stabilization fund, but are you willing to explore that option with him?
3. In what ways will you be seeking help from the Teacher's Union in order to solve this budget crisis, without reducing teaching staff?
4. What jobs/services are performed in the schools right now by paid staff, that could be performed by volunteers or reassigned to other staff?