



EUGENE SYMPHONY

November 19, 2020

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To: Interim Superintendent Vandercar and Eugene 4J Board of Directors

When the COVID health crisis began, we all started navigating unprecedented and challenging times. Throughout the pandemic, we've had to adjust to being isolated from others – from our families, our friends, and the circle of people with whom we engage on a regular basis at our schools and workplaces. Over the past nine months, we have heard many stories about people finding connection to others through music, and we are heartened by Eugene 4J School District's commitment to ensuring that students have access to their music programs as a source of critical connection with others. **On behalf of the Eugene Symphony Board of Directors, staff, and musicians, thank you for making music education a priority in your district during these difficult times.**

Through the Eugene Symphony Association's Education Committee, we have heard from local music educators about the creativity, adaptivity, and passion these individuals are devoting to their programs and students. Music, which thrives through collaboration and teamwork, has required substantial and sustained innovation in order to excel via distance learning. For many students, music class is the anchor of their educational experience, and we are elated to hear accounts of music educators pivoting to create meaningful and engaging social distanced (in person) and virtual (from home) opportunities for their students.

Shira Fadeley, Music Coordinator (TOSA) K-12 and Roosevelt Middle School Band teacher and Choir co-teacher, represents the Eugene 4J School District on our Education Committee. Shira has recently shared some of the great work being done by teachers in your district:

At the elementary level, all students are receiving virtual music instruction in real time from a music specialist through Zoom, as well as original teacher-recorded lessons through the Seesaw platform. Music teachers are also supporting students and classroom teachers during other instructional times with brain and movement breaks, and are providing key SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) and other classroom support. Students are receiving written, recorded, and live feedback on their musical skills and performance work. Music teachers have also found ways to revive club activities with ukuleles, guitars, and marimbas. 4J is planning to move to a hybrid, in-person teaching model when metrics allow, starting with the youngest students and building from there. A record number of 4J music students are participating in Carnegie Hall's Link Up Program through community partnership with the Eugene Symphony. Link Up's focus this year includes the all-American genres of Jazz and Swing. Students study major works through song, dance, and by learning to play the recorder.

Middle and high school bands, choirs, and orchestras are meeting live with teachers on Zoom and are learning skills through a variety of methods accessed through the Canvas curriculum platform. Music teachers have supported each other to provide innovative instruction and actual performance opportunities supported by a variety of technologies and

software. A conscious decision was made to continue instruction with the focus a student signed up for – if they chose choir, they are getting a choral experience. In addition to offering performance ensembles, 4J music teachers are also teaching music technology, advanced placement and IHS music theory and history, guitar classes, musical theater, and history of Rock and Roll. Julie Bounds, who teaches band and History of Rock and Roll at Sheldon High School, was recognized in *Eugene Weekly* as one of the region's outstanding teachers in the recent Best of Eugene edition. During this time of distance learning, students and families are recognizing and voting for a teacher and content area that is keeping them engaged and feeding their souls.

Music is more important than ever for our students. Music and the arts are not just creative outlets; they are safe spaces for students, and facilitate social-emotional learning. It is likely that when students return to classrooms they will have gaps in their academic learning and emotional growth; music is proven to help with both areas. Music, going forward, will help us heal from all the upheaval and challenging times we have all experienced recently.

Thank you again for supporting these critical programs and for keeping music (and connection) available to students during this difficult time. We ask that the district continue to make music education a priority by keeping music education funded and by providing this critical component of a holistic education.

Eugene Symphony is committed to championing strong music programs in local schools, and we value your partnership in making this a reality for the young musicians in our community.

Sincerely,

Paul Roth, Chair, Education Committee

& Ashlee Cribb, Chair, Music Advocacy/Pathways Subcommittee

on behalf of the Eugene Symphony Board of Directors