

TO DR. MOLINE AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ROYAL OAK PUBLIC SCHOOLS,

Just this weekend (Sat., Nov. 7) I had an interesting performance with ROHS's Chamber Singers, singing at Royal Oak's Veteran's Day Program, Held at the Desmond Funeral Home on Woodward. You see, whenever anyone calls us (Dave Jensen and myself) we always respond and represent OUR city and school district at whatever function needed. WE ARE ALWAYS THERE. I have worked for 30 years in most of the K - 12 schools in Royal Oak.

After the performance, the children and I received numerous praises of a wonderful job, especially since we sang 4 choral numbers, 3 in a cappella fashion. While mingling around with the audience at the refreshment tables, I met Marie Donigan, Royal Oak's House of Representative, and State Senator John PappaGeorge. I of course, mentioned all of the financial problems facing our district especially since our district is listing vocal and instrumental music as a cut for the next school year. Senator PappaGeorge stated to me that Lansing does not dictate the curriculum. Individual boards of educations have the power to design their own curriculum.

With that said, I am imploring our Board of Education to save our music classes and accompanists! Thirty years ago, I was drawn to the City of Royal Oak because it had the reputation of a district that REALLY VALUED THE ARTS, SPECIFICALLY, THE PERFORMING ARTS. I gave up the chance of working in a high school level immediately out of college. I gave up that chance, even knowing that it would probably take me 20 years before I could come back to the high school level, for which I was most highly qualified. I put all of my hopes and dreams into the music department of Royal Oak's Public Schools. Last summer, I gave up half of my summer to try and raise money for our high school auditorium. In the past 30 years, NEVER have I seen a whole department slated to be cut out of the curriculum and out of the hearts of our children. At ROHS, Mr. Jensen and myself have approx. 400 students - which is 23% of the student body. That fact alone states the strong value that music has for our students and parents.

ROYAL OAK IS VERY UNIQUE! It has many adult music groups in the community, where other city's DO NOT. Royal Oak has the Royal Oak Musicale, the Royal Oak Arts Council, The Royal Oak Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Oak Band, the Baldwin Theatre, Stage Crafters, the Royal Oak Music Theatre, and the Royal Oak Children's Choir - a children based group.

The above mentioned groups are for adults, except for the Royal Oak Children's Choir, which requires a fee to belong. As you can see, there are no venues for students to get their musical training outside of the school day. Where will our children get their musical training if the music program dissolves? There are numerous articles about the pros for studying music, and ROMS band director, Mr. Keith Kohring, did that speech for the board last spring. I am sure we could come up with that handout again, if needed. Also every year I see students going on into music as major's or minors in college. To be a part of those students' career choices, is the highest honor I could ever receive as a

teacher of the arts!

THANK YOU FOR DECIDING TO KEEP OUR ACCOMPANISTS FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR! Our programs would be crippled without an accompanist. High school music is very difficult to play and perform. Middle schoolers, while their music is not as difficult, also need direction from a director with the help of an accompanist. The director cannot multi-task, such as giving directions with their hands (conducting), playing the piano, and directing with their head. Teaching self-control is essential in the middle school years. The presence of a director in front of the children while performing in both high school and middle school, is necessary. All of the above cannot happen if the director is behind the piano.

In the high school, I am required to do specific pieces according to levels of difficulty, described by the MSVMA (Michigan School Vocal Music Association), of which our high school is a member. This membership allows us to send students to Solo and Ensemble Festival, Choral Festival, at both the district and state levels. There are required lists of literature that music must be chosen from. These lists include music in all three levels - Primary, Intermediate and Advanced Levels. I presently have choirs performing in all three levels. All levels are extremely demanding to play and sing and definitely require a professional accompanist. Taking away our high school accompanist would have crippled all of our performances, no matter what the venue. You see, the accompanist is a strong and vital link to our success. Thank you again for choosing to keep our accompanists.

When cuts are being made, please look at the greater picture. It seems that taking a little "off the top" from all departments, as has been done in the past 30 years, would be more fair to all and to the well rounded education of our children. **KEEP MUSIC CLASSES IN OUR CURRICULUM AND KEEP ROYAL OAK SCHOOLS STRONG IN THE PERFORMING ARTS! KEEP ROYAL OAK UNIQUE!**

Yours in the Performing Arts,

Deborah E. Buffa

Royal Oak High School Choral Director