

Kimberly Liang, re Reinstatement of Full Band, Choir, Vocal and Instrumental Music Classes

The importance of having in-person orchestra and band in schools cannot be understated. Music ensembles provide good opportunities for social and emotional well-being. Some of the best memories I have are when I was making music with other people, and I know that many other students feel the same way.

The people in my orchestra have become my tribe - we understand each other and have gotten to connect on a different level. It is just not the same when we are online or outside. When we are outside it is difficult to hear each other and can be cold which makes it hard to play the instruments properly. When we are online it is difficult to connect with the musicians and teachers because we all need to be muted and can't play together in real time. I have been missing out on important musical opportunities since the pandemic began.

There are ways that we can play safely inside. The Ontario Music Educators Association outlines safety protocols that can be done inside like distancing, bell covers, instrumentalist masks, not sharing instruments and playing in well-ventilated spaces. These protocols come from scientific research on how aerosols work with wind instruments and are being used across the province. Schools in Toronto District School Board and York Region District School Board are able to play indoors while using these safety guidelines. We need a concrete plan on how and when we can return to playing safely. I am grateful for my teachers who have found ways for us to keep playing music but we need to return to music just as we are returning to sports.

We would also like to be able to play in our ensembles (AMR) and not online. I know that the rules state that we can only have two classes a day but music, like sports, needs to be done together, in-person in order for students to fully participate. Music is curricular and should be able to occur during the regular school day.

I will do my best to continue to practice my instrument but I miss playing with other musicians. I am worried that I am losing important ensemble-playing skills by not participating in making music in-person and in real-time with my peers. It has been over a year and a half since I was able to make music with others and I, along with my fellow musicians, are ready for this to happen with safety mitigations in place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.