



Statement by the Music Education Policy Roundtable On Atlanta School District Music and Arts Cuts

Earlier this week, the Atlanta Public School Board (APS) announced a plan to reallocate and reduce educator positions, in response to a \$31 million increase in mandatory spending. The [FY16 abolishment and reclassification plan](#) calls for a reduction in staff of 305 teacher and administrator positions; of this total, approximately 18 band and orchestra teaching positions will be eliminated—all at the elementary school level. Of those 18 positions, the Atlanta School District will have 10 fewer band teachers and 8 fewer orchestra teachers for the upcoming 2015-16 academic year, according to [Meria Carstarphen](#), Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools.

All elementary schools will continue to have weekly general music education, which includes choral and general introduction to musical instruments. As the plan states, “As we prepare to transition to the new operating model...the opportunity to utilize discretionary money to make more local staffing decisions does not negate the fact that we must tighten our budgets. Thus, the school based position abolishments were necessary to right-size the staffing levels in our schools.”

The Music Education Policy Roundtable recognizes that the APS Board made efforts to maximize the effectiveness of limited funds by focusing band and orchestra programs at the middle and high school level, while retaining general music programs at the elementary level. However, we call on APS to consider other factors that limit the availability of music programs not just at the elementary level, but at all grade levels. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the availability and quality of music and arts programs have been gradually reduced due to a variety of pressures (such as increased time for test preparation). When classroom time is reduced, long-term engagement and benefits are similarly reduced. It is our vision that more resources should be made available to provide all students at all grade levels access to a broad curriculum that includes a dedicated, rich experience with music and arts.

Research suggests music programs are highly valuable in engaging students with school (particularly at-risk students,) improving overall participation and attendance rates, and correlating with better grades in all subjects. The benefits of music education also reach beyond these quantifiable markers of achievement. Music education at all grade levels encourages the development of essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem-solving—skills that serve students in school and throughout their lives.

The Music Education Policy Roundtable encourages the Atlanta School Board to allocate future resources to enrich and strengthen music programs that will most benefit students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Further, we strongly encourage all teachers and supporters of the music and arts community to help the School Board recognize the benefits of early music education for students. We welcome the opportunity to engage in further dialogue with the Atlanta Public School System regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,

The Music Education Policy Roundtable

**American String Teachers Association
National Association for Music Education
American Choral Directors Association
American Orff-Schulwerk Association
American School Band Directors Association
Barbershop Harmony Society
Chorus America
College Band Directors National Association
Drum Corps International
Education Through Music
El Sistema USA: A National Alliance of El Sistema
The Gordon Institute for Music Learning
Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association, Inc.
GRAMMY Foundation
iSchoolMusic.org
Jazz at Lincoln Center**

**League of American Orchestras
Little Kids Rock
Music for All
Music Teachers National Association
Music Publishers Association
National Association of Music Merchants
National Association of Music Parents
National Music Council
Organization of American Kodály Educators
Percussive Arts Society
Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia
Quadrant Arts Education Research
The Recording Academy
Strathmore Hall Foundation
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