

Public Comments submitted at the September 14, 2021 Board Meeting

Public Comments

3 Speakers in person on VI.A.5 COVID Updates - Robert Kersnick, Claudia Zait, Russ Peters

4 comments on B.2.d. (submitted online via the form)

Agenda Item B.2.d.

Speaker - Arianne Walker

Comment - I don't understand why we would charge an after school enrichment program like the Upstage theater program such a hefty facilities use fee to use our campuses when the program benefits our students in the district. They would then have to pass those costs along to parents making the program prohibitively expensive. We should support these wonderful enrichment programs for the student body in any way we can, including access to our facilities without exorbitant use fees. Thank you.

Agenda Item B.2.d.

Speaker - Nathan Bartos

Comment - I am writing to urge the Board to allow outside programming use of school facilities without untenable fees. Over the years, enrichment and the arts have gone from integral parts of public elementary education to being solely being offered privately which is already cost-prohibitive for many families.

I can fully understand if a facilities fee was designed to cover overhead costs, but not if they are an attempt at revenue generation.

Perhaps large sports leagues, who can apportion cost among the hundreds of participants, could possibly bear this economic burden. Arts programming, especially those hosted at elementary schools, cannot. They consist of a small number of families. Small enrichment programs fill the arts gap at individual elementary schools. They are extensions of the school day and serve/benefit the schools individually. These programs have taken up the mantle of projects like outdoor education, chess instruction, music appreciation, and putting on school plays. They are private enrichment programs integrated with public education.

Were facilities fees to be levied, there are several potential outcomes, none of them good. The cost could be passed immediately onto the parents, who already bear the high cost of programming. Even fewer students would be able to partake in fine arts education, with only the most affluent being able to benefit. Were decreased enrollment to take place, the programs would likely seek smaller facilities elsewhere at lower cost. This would result in the need for kids to be picked up and transported to an alternate location - something far more difficult for families of lesser means - and further reduce the sense of community at the schools. Another possibility is that the programs would simply cease due to cost.

In every scenario, students would be denied the benefits of fine arts education and no there would be no increase in revenue for the district - children would lose out on a valuable aspect of education with lower income students receiving disparate impact. At a minimum, if fees are critical, I would hope the Board would consider a tiered fee based on enrollment, or reduced fees for programs that are hosted by a school and serve only that student body.

Agenda Item B.2.d.

Speaker - Monica Craven

Comment - Upstage is a fantastic theater program. My daughter loves Upstage. I understand that there may be some slight janitorial fees but to delay starting the program because you are in negotiations about facility

fees just makes OPUSD look bad. These are tough times - please don't charge Upstage crazy fees it only hurts the families of Oak Park. Thank you.

Agenda Item B.2.d.

Speaker - Lori Getz

Comment - Upstage has been a very big part of filling the gap in the arts at Brookside elementary school as well as the other elementary schools. We no longer have a music program and our art program is limited and this is an opportunity for our children to be creative. I would ask that the district does not increase the cost of this program Which is already costly. By adding an additional fee for the use of the facility it will become completely unaffordable. It is also a bit disconcerting to me that upstage was not notified of the change in policy until after they had already invited families to participate. I would hope in the future that the district would be better about communicating these things and taking into consideration that they themselves cannot offer these programs so there needs to be an affordable solution for families to be able to participate. Thank you very much