

Email addresses of boards members to copy and paste to the "To:" line:

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Subject:

Maintaining Dedicated Performing Arts Spaces in Cleveland High School Modernization

Dear Portland Public Schools Board of Directors,

I am writing as a concerned parent of Cleveland High School band students regarding the upcoming school modernization project. We have learned that, due to budget constraints, there are discussions about potentially eliminating or combining dedicated spaces for band, theater, and choir programs. As engaged stakeholders in our children's education, we strongly advocate for maintaining separate, dedicated spaces for each of these vital performing arts programs.

Modernization projects at Lincoln, McDaniel and Grant included separate spaces for band, theater, and choir programs. Other designs like Benson, Franklin and Roosevelt failed to do this, creating "shared" spaces and/or eliminating the preferred option of a choral space. Cleveland High School, which offers band, choir & theatre classes needs the appropriate educational opportunities and facilities for their students. Providing anything less would create an inequitable distribution of resources within PPS.

The practical requirements for each performing arts discipline are distinct and specialized:

- Band programs require specific acoustic treatments and secure storage for valuable instruments
- Theater programs need open space for movement and technical equipment for productions
- Choir programs require appropriate acoustics and tiered risers for proper vocal projection

Combining these spaces would severely impact the quality and capacity of each program. Schedule conflicts would force programs to reduce class offerings, limiting student participation and potentially contributing to program decline. The long-term consequences could significantly diminish Cleveland's robust performing arts culture.

Cleveland's performing arts programs have consistently demonstrated their value to our school community:

- Our band program regularly participates in state competitions and community events

- Theater productions engage hundreds of students annually, both on stage and behind the scenes
- The choir program provides essential music education and performance opportunities
- These programs consistently contribute to student engagement and academic success

We understand the challenges of budget constraints. However, we believe that maintaining dedicated spaces for performing arts is not just an amenity—it's an essential investment in our students' education and development. The performing arts develop crucial skills including creativity, collaboration, discipline, and public speaking, which are valuable across all academic areas and future careers.

In 2020 the Cleveland HS was awarded the National Federation of High Schools "School of Excellence" Award for Performing Arts. Only one school in the country receives this award each year. In addition, Cleveland HS was the 1st urban school to receive the award.

The Cleveland High School band program specifically has won numerous awards including recently being recognized in 2024 as a Division Winner of the Programs of Excellence Blue Ribbon Award by the National Band Association.

We respectfully request that the Board:

1. Maintain three separate, dedicated spaces for band, theater, and choir in the Cleveland modernization plans
2. Ensure these spaces meet current educational standards and program needs
3. Consider the long-term impact on educational equity within PPS
4. Share detailed plans for performing arts spaces with the Cleveland community for input

Thank you for your consideration of this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

[sign with your name]