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Meet the School Board Candidate Music in MBUSD Issue Sheet

As part of the Town Hall, the Manhattan Beach Music Coalition asked each candidate a set of questions that were specific to the issues facing the Music Program. It was agreed in advance that the publication of each issue sheet would happen once the candidate had submitted responses (issue sheets would not be held up waiting for others to respond). Our thanks goes to the candidates for their willingness to share their views on the crucial topic of music education for all.

Candidate: Heather de Roos

Website: <http://heatherderoos2020.com>

Heather de Roos is a proud mom of a Manhattan Beach Middle School 8th grader, married to a ukulele player and a 16-year homeowner in Manhattan Beach. Heather has 10 years of community leadership experience including Vice Chair of the LA County Natural History Museum Board, VP Fundraising Neptunian Women's Club of Manhattan Beach, MBEF Board Member, MB PTA Council President of all seven schools, Grand View PTA President and more. She also has 20 years of professional experience in HR, Consulting and Retail Management with a M.B.A and a Bachelor of Science in Math.



What is your personal relationship with the arts (music, theatre, dance, visual arts and/or media arts)? Did you have arts in your school? What meaningful arts experiences did you have growing up and how did they impact you?

I view the arts as a crucial part of a child's development. I am fortunate to have been an artist and a patron of the arts throughout my life. Here are a few examples:

As I moved nearly every two years before college, I always found art classes to be my safe space. I still remember loving the smell of paint in those classrooms. I could always find "my people" in the art classroom whatever school I was in. I also took visual arts classes K-12 and in undergraduate school.

My mother was a prima ballerina in a dance company and a dance instructor. I took dance classes in ballet & tap from her thru elementary school. As I look back, it was a wonderful bonding experience between us.

*I was an actor in two drama productions, *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Inherit the Wind* in high school. That experience taught me the importance of practicing to perfect a role and working as a team.*

Unfortunately, I never got a chance to play an instrument. In third grade, students were required to take a musical aptitude test. I didn't pass. That experience left an impression on me for many years - that an expert said I couldn't do it so I didn't get a chance to try. I never want a student to have the experience I did. Everyone should be given a chance to try multiple times and practice, if they have a passion.

In my adult life, I have become a patron of the arts — Member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, LACMA, KCRW, and PBS SoCal. One of my great joys of my life is to attending live performances at the Forum, Royce Hall, Hollywood Bowl, the Pantages and more.

As Grand View PTA President, I expanded VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts Programming). I wanted students to have the outlet in the arts as I did as a child. I also added Kinder Music Rhapsody programming, Visual Arts Programming with dedicated space for classes, created additional mural projects around Grand View Campus with local artist Kid Wiseman, started Summer Reading Art Contest, and was an active participant in the PTA National Arts Contest, Reflections.

What is your philosophy about music education? Do you believe it is a critical and essential cornerstone in our schools? What role do you believe the music program plays in our district?

My philosophy about music education is it should be an integral part of our K-12 education because it will help aid students' development as well rounded, lifelong learners. Music education also fosters student, parent and community engagement.

ESSA (the Every Student Succeeds Act), which was signed by President Obama in 2015, establishes that music and the arts are core curriculum in grades K-12. What is your perception of the extent to which MBUSD has adopted that policy? What factors need to be implemented to meet Visual and Performing Arts policies and standards established by ESSA and by the California State Board of Education?

The Visual & Performing Arts standards (VAPA) for California can be found here: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/>. Each of the five areas of the arts have shared

anchor standards and performance standards which need to be implemented. My perception is that visual and performing arts requirements are being met at this time but I will need to better understand gaps in our achievement from our Head of Curriculum if elected.

The Declaration of the Rights of All Students to Equity in Arts Learning states that all students have the right to participate in high-quality, sequential standards-based arts learning. Do you believe all students in MBUSD are currently able to exercise that right? If not, in your view, what barriers currently exist? If elected, how will you support these rights for all students?

Students in MBUSD do have the right to participate in arts programming, but access may be difficult. An example where students are limited in their access is in middle school and high school. Students must start on the music track and continue on it from 3rd grade. There is no onramp later in middle school or high school if a student wants to try to pick up an instrument again. I know your Coalition is working on additional onramps, which is terrific. As a Board Member I would could want to find out if there are any barriers to registration and if any class is oversubscribed determine if additional classes may be added.

The California State Board of Education adopted the California Arts Education Framework for Public Schools (TK-12) on July 8, 2020, which supports the California Arts Standards (adopted in January of 2019) which establishes curricular standards for arts education in California. How will you ensure that these Visual and Performing Arts curricular standards are implemented in the district, and once implemented, how would you work to ensure compliance?

I would rely on two primary sources to determine if we are meeting standards: 1) Getting input from our head of Curriculum Dr. Whittaker Stopp ; and 2) Listening to feedback from our teachers, parents and experts in Budget Workshops, which are held annually to determine what additions/changes need to be made.

As you may be aware, the district does not currently have a finalized curriculum for the K-12 Music Program. As a board member, would you support finalizing the K-12 curriculum for the Music Program, and what steps would you take to achieve this?

Yes, I would support finalizing the K-12 Curriculum for the Music Program as well as all programs under VAPA standards. The Board would need to see the level of effort and cost required to complete a full assessment. Implementation may be required in stages across multiple years to complete successfully.

Would you classify music a core curricular academic subject, co-curricular, or extracurricular? Why, in your view, does it fall in that category?

Classification primarily depends on the student, their grade level and their interest. K-12 students have the option to choose music as an extracurricular. In K-2, the general education teacher can teach basic principles as well as weave in music into other core subjects. For instance, at Grand View, 1st graders are introduced to musical theater as they perform the Three Piggy Opera. Students 3-5 should have music as a core subject taught by a music teacher. Grades 6-12 students can elect either core curricular or extracurricular, depending on their own level of interest and engagement.

Do you support having a Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator at the District level?

There needs to be some kind of coordinating entity for the work to be done well and be an ongoing effort. I would work with the Board to discuss the best options for implementation which fits the MBUSD budget. Based on that evaluation, the responsibility could be a dedicated individual, or part of an existing position such as the head of curriculum with support from representatives at each school site.

What, if any, do you see as the primary academic and social benefits of offering music in elementary, middle and high school?

One of the primary academic and social benefits is perseverance. Music takes time to learn and develop as a skill. Music helps students develop into lifelong learners and appreciate the benefits of hard work with practice and mastery.

The structure of the music program does not currently conform to best practices and current research, especially at the elementary level. To restructure the elementary program in order to align it with best practices and current research, the Full Time Equivalent (# of teacher hours) dedicated to the music program would need to be increased. What is your position on this?

We need to look at the structure of the Visual Arts and Performing Arts standards overall. I believe we lack instruction in a number of VAPA areas. We need to review the standards as a whole and see what makes the most sense from a budget and achievement standard.

Currently, large numbers of middle school and high school students do not have realistic access points into the MBUSD Music Program because

they did not attend elementary school in the District. In addition to serving new enrollees from other districts, introductory level classes would also offer an option for students to switch instruments within the same group (from cello to the bass in orchestra, for example), or switch groups (from choir to band). Do you support increasing FTE in order to create those access points by offering additional introductory level classes at both the middle school and high school levels?

I support hiring additional teachers if enough students request these classes to justify the additional costs. It would be terrific opportunity for students to reignite their passion for music again. We just need to make sure funding is available in the District currently or from outside sources.

Music is not currently being offered in kindergarten, first or second grades. Do you believe robust music education should be offered from Kindergarten through twelfth grade? If so, what would you do to bring music education to our youngest students?

We should absolutely have a robust music education program K-12. Currently, there are grade level leads for cross grade collaboration. Those teachers could partner with music teachers in the upper grades for ideas on how to implement music instruction in K-2. Music teachers in the upper grades could also recommend programming to be brought in as well in K-2 and paid for by PTA. We could also seek grant funding for additional teaching resources from LA County or partner with the Music Center for access to their Arts Integration Partners, who could provide music professional development to our K-2 teachers.

Do you believe that music education, including early childhood music education (k-3) provides benefits to healthy brain development? If so, what are those benefits? Are they specific to music, or do they impact other learning areas?

Music education impacts many areas of development for a student. Students can benefit from movement, play and personal connections to music in their lives and other cultures. Music aids in language development, imagination/creating, performance, responding (analyzing, interpreting and evaluating) and connecting (synthesize and relating). Music students also tend to be happier and smarter students comparatively.

Given the years-long investment the District has already made in the music program, and in light of the fragile state of that program now, as well as the fact that the outstanding music faculty are currently stretched to untenable limits, what do you think is the right thing to do in terms of continued funding for the program?

We need to have a frank discussion as a District about philosophy and goals for music and the arts in our District. To grow the program will require dedicated leadership and investment. We need to evaluate our programs as they are today, decide what is working and what is not, and then smartly invest the funds we have. Importantly, we also need to clearly define what additional resources we need so we can seek outside funding.

How, specifically, can the District strengthen and support music programs?

Restoring the cuts made to the music program last year, defining elementary music curriculum and growing enrollment in the music program in middle and high school. For other ideas I would partner with the current music teachers, parents and students to identify additional ideas for making the program as strong as possible. Together I am confident we can come up with a plan for continuing to strengthen the music program over time.

Do you believe there are “excess” or “extra” parts of the music program that could be cut? If so, what are those specific areas?

I am not aware of any excess or extra parts to be cut at this time. If I was on the Board I would look for music teachers and booster leaders to provide recommendations in this area especially during annual Board Workshop discussions where feedback on recommendations and priorities are wanted by the Board.

Do you believe there are financial benefits uniquely provided by the music classes at the secondary level? If so, what are those financial benefits?

Larger music class sizes are definitely a benefit. Another financial benefit is increased enrollment in our schools because of a high quality music program. Increased enrollment/attendance equals more revenue for MBUSD.

Do you see the music program as a “draw” to the district - an inducement for families to enroll, or a reason they stay in the district? If so, what steps would you recommend to utilize the value that the Music Programs bring to the community as an inducement to increase overall district enrollment. Do you believe that the district should actively be recruiting music students using permitting as a viable tool?

I would definitely use the Music Program as a selling point to new parents considering coming to MBUSD vs. private school (emphasizing it on tours, in marketing materials, etc). I would also use it as a draw to encourage Hermosa and North Redondo students to join us at Costa. Permitting is an option, and I would want to discuss that subject with the rest of the Board.

Do you believe the music program is a particular source of pride for the community? What is your personal experience in witnessing community outreach and pride related to music programs?

MBUSD's Music Program is absolutely a source of pride in our community. I am most proud of our music programs at my annual Neptunian Women's Club holiday meeting. All the choir groups in their formal dress perform a program at our clubhouse in Manhattan Beach, and their voices bring me to tears every time. I always leave that meeting full of pride for our schools and our students.

What is your vision for the Music Program? What do you believe the program should look like in 5 years?

I am a passionate supporter of music and arts education for our K-12 students. I believe music in particular is a source of social, emotional and cognitive development. In five years, my vision is to restore and grow the music program in partnership with the parents and teachers of the Music Coalition. This partnership would enable every grade level access to some form of music education. Teachers would have options and resources on how to best incorporate music into their curriculum. And schools would be provided necessary funding to enrich their music programs. There are unlimited ways to inspire our students musically and given my personal experience on how music and the arts helped me as a young student, I want to give that opportunity to the kids here in MBUSD.