



Mission: *To support and promote K-12 visual arts education in Gallatin Valley schools*

Vision: *All students in Gallatin Valley schools will have access to regularly scheduled visual art classes based on the national, state and local standards, and taught by certified art specialists.*

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March 6, 2022

Dear Bozeman School Board Trustees,

Thank you for your service to the Bozeman School District (BSD) community. As a visual arts educator (MSU School of Art and Monforton Public School Elementary,) a parent of a student at BSD, and as the Interim Chair of Advocates of Visual Arts education (A4ART,) I was dismayed to hear that the position of Director of Fine Arts (DFA) at BSD is being "reassigned." With this letter, A4ART would respectfully ask the trustees to delay any decision on this matter until further information has been gathered and the true impact on fine arts education and the well-being of students is determined.

A4ART believes Superintendent, Casey Bertram, is correct in identifying assistant principals as an important tool to "maximize student success." However, A4ART does not believe this strategy must come at the expense of a historically robust and student-centered fine arts program. Adding the tasks of assistant principal at Whittier (and tasks for partnering with Hawthorn) to the tasks the DFA position will undermine, and set up all three positions, for possible failure. Not to mention the difficulty of finding one candidate who can provide quality leadership in all these roles.

The skills, content, engagement, motivation, and joy taught through the arts have been deeply important to many generations of BSD students. Some of the DFA roles and responsibilities are to: organize and supervise concerts, represent and attend student gallery shows, approve field trips and competitions, serve as a liaison with community partners, develop budgets, organize musical instrument rental programs, and coordinate curriculum in 12 schools. But one of the major roles of the DFA is to support 43 arts-educators teaching classes ranging from 5th Grade Band to AP Highschool Art so they can have time and energy to teach and inspire their students. Arts classes connect students to their teachers, their subject matters, their school life, and to themselves! Arts education is often the only lifeline for many students at risk for failure. It has been proven again and again that arts education helps students academically, and helps with the retention of students.

A4ART knows that a sustained visual arts education teaches focus, perspective, self-directed and engaged learning, innovation, imagination, and critical thinking. It builds a student's confidence and resilience through creative problem-solving. Art education connects students to community, history, and world cultures. A quality arts education such as the one practiced in the BSD IS one of the solutions to solving the "achievement gap." School districts in Montana with the equivalent of a DFA, such as Great Falls and Missoula, have strong programs of which their communities are proud. Concerts, art shows and dance performances by students of all ages, fill their communities with the hope and excitement of learning, something we are in great need of right now. The DFA is a full-time position. The DFA is a treasure. We believe this community is tasked to protect this treasure for future generations of students.

Warm regards,

Marianne Filloux,
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