



**Port Chester High School Band Association
Tamarack Road
Port Chester, New York 10573**

Dear Parents,

Last month at the Band Parents Association meeting, one of the items we discussed was why students were being told that they will no longer be allowed to be in the band and play a fall sport, and that they would be forced to make a choice between band and their chosen sport. They would not be allowed to do both. This was a concern to the band parents for many reasons. We believe that excluding these children, who are talented musicians and have proven their commitment to the band, would hurt the band and make it even more difficult to compete at the high level they have achieved. We also believe that in today's competitive college admissions environment, colleges are seeking only the most well rounded students. Implementing "forced choice" would not only limit the educational and extra-curricular opportunities available to our children, but it would also decrease their chances of being accepted to the college of their choice.

Several of us have composed a letter we would like to send to Mr. Durney, Mr. Kraut, Dr Combs and Superintendent Kliszus. We would like as many parents as possible to co-sign this letter with us to let the administration know how we feel and to remind them that it is in the best interest of the students, the band and the athletic program to work together to continue to allow students the opportunity to do both.

Please read the letter below and if you would like to show your support for our petition, please respond by Tuesday Feb 7th to let us know that we can add your name to the list of parents who are in favor of finding a solution that will continue to include and benefit all students, and will continue to benefit both our band and athletic programs.

Thank you

Bob Vyskocil and Anne Verrastro,

Dear Mr. Kraut, Mr. Durney, Dr. Combs, and Superintendent Kliszus:

Last month at the January PCHS Band Parents Association meeting, several parents expressed concerns that their children are being told by teachers and administration members that they will no longer be allowed to participate in both band and a fall sport next year. Although there has been no formal communication from the district stating that this new policy will be enforced, we are writing to request that this issue be formally addressed and quickly resolved.

We all know how difficult it can be for the students, parents, coaches and department heads to juggle all the things that need to happen for the students to participate in multiple activities and programs. However, we are formally requesting you please not force students to choose between the band program and fall sports.

In a time when colleges are accepting only the most well-rounded and versatile students, we believe that the school district should fully support the efforts of these students to participate in both athletic and music programs, including fall sports and the marching band. Although this new rule only applies to a fall sport with band, we can't expect the students who participate in band and a fall sport like football or cheerleading, to just switch to another sport. In addition, the band is **both** an extracurricular activity and a class, so if they choose their sport instead of band, they would then have to choose another art/music class which, if they play an instrument and want to be in the band, is really quite unfair and disruptive to their academic schedules.

The band program is both an extra-curricular activity and a part of the approved educational curriculum, a legitimate daily course that students take for credit. Why would the school district force these students to choose between athletics and education? We believe that Academics, Athletics and the Arts must exist together and be equally supported, and that our students deserve to be supported in their efforts to be as well-rounded as possible, ultimately helping them to get into college and even earn scholarships. All of our students, including fall athletes, deserve equal access and equal opportunity to participate in all of the athletic, educational, artistic and extra-curricular programs that our district has to offer.

Many of these students have been participating in band and cheering or playing football or volleyball, since they were in 3rd or 4th grade. If they are still participating in both programs at the HS level, they must have a passion for it! Why encourage them to be in the band or play football or cheer if their future requires them to quit one of them? Additionally, these students and their parents have proven that they are committed to and capable of making their participation in both programs work, and it has been working well, with very few issues. Why change this and exclude a whole group of student athletes, when there are other alternatives that would achieve the desired result, and the limited issues can be dealt with as exceptions? Scheduling conflicts are infrequent, and could easily be resolved with some creative thinking and cooperation among coaches, teachers, parents, students and administrators.

These students are teenagers, and as we all know, these years can be some of the most memorable of their lives. If they and their parents are willing to do all the extra work required to participate in both programs, can we please all try to make it happen for them? We need to remember that this is about the kids, and as responsible adults, parents, tax payers and educators, we need to put egos aside, cooperate, compromise and work together openly to create solutions that are in the best interest of the children. Forcing students to choose between band and sports is not in the best interest of the children, and it is not in the best interest of the music or sports programs either. These are children who are motivated and dedicated to the band, children who really want to be there, and many of whom are gifted musicians. Excluding them from participation in the music program will in no way make the band stronger or the music program better. We believe it will have a detrimental effect on both programs, and on the students.

We know the coaches and band directors are hired to make programs as successful as possible, but we feel that it is in the best interests of the students and educators to work together to make this happen. By not allowing the students to participate in both programs, the band will lose students and the sports programs will lose students too. It seems like both programs will suffer. We need to keep our children involved, diversified and well rounded and to keep both our music and sports programs strong and well represented by all students, including athletes who are dedicated to both.

We would be more than willing to meet with you to discuss this at any time.