

5. Regarding my current predicament, I was caught entirely by surprise. Until about two weeks before I heard about these cuts, I was acquiring new music equipment and planning next year's curriculum. Imagine my shock and dismay in learning I would not be returning. It is quite devastating to invest so much of yourself in a school community only to be told the program you have worked so hard to build will no longer be in existence.

6. I know I am not the only teacher to suffer this fate. The excessing of educators is happening across the school system as a result of budget reductions the city and the DOE are making. Shock waves are reverberating throughout school communities as teachers, principals, staff, students and parents find themselves victims of these draconian cuts.

7. It was heartbreaking to watch the pain my students expressed when I told them there wasn't enough budget available to continue our music program, and I would most likely not be returning next school year. I saw many of my students each day during the height of the pandemic, and together we demonstrated resilience and persevered through extremely challenging circumstances. Upon learning about the end of our music program, some children were crying in class, and others were visibly angry. It is difficult to watch my students cry, especially regarding a situation I feel is entirely avoidable. That is, if only our Mayor and Chancellor would reverse course and decide to restore funding to our schools.

8. I have dedicated my life to teaching and am devoted to my students. I began working at P.S. 39 in 2009 and believed I found my "forever" school. Music at P.S. 39 has always played an essential role, whether it's dance festivals, stepping up ceremonies, talent shows, or winter and spring concerts. Some of my students have continued their music education to attend the finest conservatories, and others have formed the loudest of rock bands. All have benefited from a music curriculum that was inclusive and diverse. Our students genuinely enjoyed what they were learning.

9. The discontinuation of our school’s music program is a substantial loss for our entire community, especially considering what we all have endured during the pandemic. Before learning of this budget, it felt like we were returning to some degree of normalcy. It was wonderful for our students to begin this past year in person, and I know many teachers, including myself, felt as though we finally had the resources necessary to provide our students with the socio-emotional support they needed and deserved. Class size matters, and instructing smaller classes allowed educators to better focus on the individual needs of our students.

10. COVID-19 has taken a terrible toll on students, teachers, and staff. Our losses have been substantial and impossible to quantify. What school communities need most is consistency and support. The number of children who experienced meltdowns this past year, as compared to years’ past, was extraordinarily high. That said, we had the resources to help – a guidance counselor, a social worker, and yes, a music program to bring joy and help heal the losses experienced within our community.

11. Despite all the challenges of teaching during the pandemic we persevered, and tried to provide as much consistency as possible, including the restoration of concerts and ceremonies. Our students were provided with the opportunity to blossom.

12. The Mayor and the Chancellor likely are aware that when school budgets are cut, music and arts programs are typically the first to go, as they are often not viewed as essential as the “testing” subjects. This however cannot be further from the truth. So many studies have documented the significance that learning music and art have on children - how profound the benefits are. For many students, music provides the anchor and inspiration for them to come through that door every day.

13. Truly the entire justification that the City and the DOE uses – that they are saving money by cutting teachers in this way - is resoundingly false.

14. The fact is that we teachers will get paid regardless of whether we remain connected to our school or not. Even if an excessed teacher becomes part of the ATR pool, not a single dollar is actually saved. This fact makes cutting programs like mine all the more absurd. Why deprive our children of much needed resources, only to create a pool of substitute teachers?

15. The Chancellor has said that all of the teachers who are cut will be utilized next year in the classroom. We have been told we will all have jobs and that these cuts do not matter. This line of thinking is absurd. While it is true that we will still be employed, what will the cost be from removing us from our schools? Our students' lives and their educational welfare are not toys to play with, and they will suffer irreparable harm from these interruptions to their education. The loss of arts education or beloved classroom teachers in the lives of these children is not something the mayor, the city, or the DOE can restore once they are gone. Children cannot relive their childhood years.

16. When I think upon the fact that removing me and others like me from their teaching positions will not save taxpayers any money whatsoever, I have to wonder: What is the motivation? How do these cuts help the students of this city? In what way do these cuts serve their best interests?

17. The fact of the matter is: they do not. Neither the Mayor nor the Chancellor seem to be concerned with the irreparable harm these cuts may cause our students. If they did, they would provide the funds needed to provide the stability and essential resources our students and schools desperately need.


18. Another fact that makes this situation all the more absurd is that the money is there. I have read the newspapers and heard the speeches from our UFT president and city comptroller. I know \$4.6 billion still remains in unspent pandemic aid and that this money can be used to restore these cuts. Simply put, these cuts are not necessary and cannot be justified against the harm they will cause.

19. I am proud to say that the last moments of the school year at P.S. 39 were filled with music. The fifth-grade class, celebrating their last walk out of our school house doors, marched out singing the school song that I taught them. They serenaded the rest of the classes, the teachers, the principal, and me. It was a touching tribute to the program we offered them. They and I have been enriched by this experience. I can only hope that this will not be the last year I am able to teach our school song, and that I am able to continue to serve the school community I love.

Dated: July 6, 2022
Queens, New York


Paul Trust

Sworn to before me this 6th day
of July 2022


Notary Public

