

BAYLOR

U N I V E R S I T Y

December 16, 2007

Dr. Timothy R. Jenney, Superintendent
Fort Bend Independent School District
16431 Lexington Blvd
Sugar Land, Texas 77479

Dear Dr. Jenney,

Over the weekend, I was privileged to serve as clinician for the Region 13 High School Orchestra at Dulles High School. With the possible exception of two students, I believe every instrumentalist in the ensemble was a Fort Bend student.

I was so impressed by the talent, intelligence, cooperation and work ethic of the students that I felt compelled to write to share my congratulations with you. Frankly, this was not a surprise as the excellence of the Fort Bend orchestra program is recognized throughout the state. As one who has conducted literally hundreds of high school festival orchestras during a thirty two plus year career in higher education, I can attest that the level of the assembled talent on the stage Saturday afternoon was superior to many All State Orchestras I have conducted outside of Texas.

Knowing of the unassailable data proving the exceptional correlation between music participation and academic success, I would be surprised if the orchestra students are not among the finest academicians in your program. I also would suspect they represent a healthy percentage of your student leadership as well.

In candor, orchestra programs across the country, without the athletic connection that band programs enjoy, are under siege by misinformed and short sighted decision makers. Time and again I have seen orchestra teaching loads reduced and experienced string instructors replaced by generalists or non string teachers, with disastrous results. I firmly believe nothing is more important (or more economical) for developing exceptional schools and outstanding future citizens, than building a quality music program, not for the support of athletics, but for the many inherent benefits afforded to students.

Programs of exceptional quality, like yours at Fort Bend, only develop with perceptive and informed administrative support. Thank you for fighting the good fight in the FBISD and for your advocacy on behalf of the students.

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There is no question that your orchestra program is to be celebrated and treasured; it is a model for emulation by many districts in Texas and beyond. Congratulations to you and to your exceptional orchestra faculty. The superb preparation of the students, their focus, understanding, commitment and performance spoke volumes about the teaching and experiences they receive on a daily basis.

Best wishes for your continued success!

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Heyde". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Stephen Heyde
Mary Franks Thompson Professor of Orchestral Studies
Conductor in Residence
Baylor University

Music Director, Conductor
Waco Symphony Orchestra

National President,
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X. C.:
Ms. Cynthia Knox
Dr. Matthew Milner