We are delighted to hear that the Ukiah Unified School District is planning to add music back into the regular curriculum for our local public school students.

We know it will take time (and money) to integrate music back into all our grade levels, but we are glad to hear that the school district wants to do it.

Any educator can tell you that music in the lives of students makes a big difference not only in their grades but also in their attitude.

There's lots of research out there about it and the folks at the Music Empowers Foundation (musicempowersfoundation.com) have a gathered much of it in their effort to fund music in classrooms nationwide. According to the Foundation:

A comprehensive series of skill tests run on 5,154 fifth-graders found that kids who were learning to play an instrument received higher marks than their classmates who were not. (The American Music Conference)

Regardless of socioeconomic background, according to a ten-year study that tracked more than 25,000 students, music-making students get higher marks on standardized tests than those who have no music involvement. (Catterall, 2002)

The College Entrance Examination board found that students in music programs scored 63 points higher on the verbal and 44 points higher on the math sections of the SATs than students with no music participation. ("College Bound Seniors National Report Profile of SAT Program Test Takers," Princeton, NJ: The College Entrance Examination Board, 2001)

U.S. Department of Education data showed that students involved in band or orchestra during their middle and high school years demonstrated significantly higher levels of math proficiency by grade twelve. The results were even more pronounced when comparing students from low-income families. (Catterall, 1999)

And the evidence goes on and on.
Doug Israel, the director of Research and Policy for the Center for Arts Education, in an on-line blog, says that "A two-year study by The Center for Arts Education of over 200 public high schools in New York City found that those schools with the highest graduation rates had more arts teachers on staff, more dedicated arts spaces, more partnerships with cultural institutions, and more opportunities for students to go on a field trip to a museum or attend a performance."

And more: At www.dosomething.org you will find another list of reasons why music is important:

Children who study music tend to have larger vocabularies and more advanced reading skills than their peers who do not participate in music lessons.

Studying music primes the brain to comprehend speech in a noisy background.

Children with learning disabilities or dyslexia who tend to lose focus with more noise could benefit greatly from music lessons.

Children who study a musical instrument are more likely to excel in all of their studies, work better in teams, have enhanced critical thinking skills, stay in school, and pursue further education.

We are confident that once music is reintroduced in our schools, parents, students and the community at large will wonder: How did we go so long without it?