

Superintendent Demetrus Liggins  
Fayette County Public Schools  
450 Park Place  
Lexington, KY 40511

March 28, 2024

Dear Superintendent Liggins,

We are writing to appeal the Cassidy Elementary SBDM Council's "2024-2025 Programming" decision of February 26 to eliminate art classes (Hill's Highlights, April Newsletter). On March 22, I submitted to Principal Jill Hill and SBDM Council a written appeal and request for reconsideration of their Feb. 26 decision to remove art as a special area (see attached letter), and additionally requested to address the Council in public comment. On March 25, 2024, we addressed the Council regarding its decision to cut art classes and to request they reconsider their decision; additionally, we addressed the issue of the Council's lack of communication with students and parents about their proposal to cut art classes. On March 26, Principal Hill notified me that the Council decided to uphold its original decision to cut art classes for 2024-2025. We ask that your office repeal the SBDM Council's "2024-2025 Programming" decision to eliminate art classes and set a date for public comment at a time when Cassidy parents and students can participate.

At issue is the Cassidy SBDM Council's lack of transparency in its communications with the public and noncompliance with Kentucky Open Records and Open Meetings Acts. As of March 19, 2024, the only Council meeting Minutes or Agendas published were July 2023 and August 2023 Minutes (see attached screenshot); for the next five months the Council failed to publish any minutes, violating the Kentucky Open Records Act. The Council did not publish its Agenda before the Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> meeting in which the proposal to cut art classes would be discussed. There was never a chance for the Cassidy community to give its input on the curriculum changes.

In Principal Hill's "April Newsletter" to the Cassidy community she wrote: **"2024-2025 Programming:** During our March SBDM meeting our council was faced with the difficult decision regarding our school programming. Due to our staffing allocation, we regret to inform you that we will be removing art instruction from our curriculum. With our current funding and resources we are only able to support having 5 area classes rather than six." When Principal Hill published this "April Newsletter" on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the SBDM Council meeting of March 25<sup>th</sup> had not yet happened, and so confusion among the community ensued as to when the Council had made its decision to eliminate arts specials, since no meeting in March had yet occurred. Principal Hill's newsletter suggested that the elimination of arts classes was a "done deal" and no public input had been sought or considered about this decision. On March 21, after an uproar from Cassidy parents learning for the first time about the arts cut, the SBDM Council published the missing five months' worth of Council minutes and agendas, from Sept-Nov. 2023, and January 2024.

The February 26<sup>th</sup> SBDM Council Minutes reflect there was no majority consensus in the decision to cut arts specials. The *SBDM Handbook* stipulates that when consensus cannot be reached, the SBDM Council shall get more information about an issue by doing "further investigation of an educational process and report its findings back to council," "determine if what is being proposed has been done in other schools," and "bring the debate to the attention of the faculty and parent groups for their consideration and input" (*SBDM Handbook* 52). None of these measures to get more information were taken, and the SBDM Council made a rushed decision to eliminate the art classes. Additionally, the Council never clarified how their proposed "2024-2025 Programming" aligns with the Fayette County School District's policy to move foreign languages from elementary to middle schools in the World Language grant. Board member Amanda Ferguson was quoted in a Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> *Lexington Herald-Leader* article: "The move would facilitate language acquisition through middle and high school instead of providing somewhat random weekly exposure of foreign language for elementary students." The Feb. 26 Cassidy SBDM Council meeting minutes (sec. D) reflect their discussion

of the district's world language decision while also stating that it is no longer "financially viable" to have six special area teachers. Why did Cassidy SBDM Council not follow the district's decision to move foreign language teachers to middle school?

We maintain that the Cassidy Elementary SBDM Council:

- did not effectively communicate the proposal to eliminate arts classes for the 2024-2025 school year and that public input was never sought from Cassidy parents and students;
- is in violation of the **Kentucky Open Records Act** by not regularly publishing the Council's agenda and meeting minutes for several consecutive months, within a time in which the Cassidy community can reasonably consider the implications of proposed Agenda items and offer our input; crucially, the February 2024 Agenda was not published until *after* the Council's March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, so the public had no prior knowledge that the arts classes were being considered for elimination at the Feb 26<sup>th</sup> meeting; and as of March 19<sup>th</sup> the Council neglected to publish any minutes since August 2023, totaling five months of noncompliance with the Kentucky Open Records Act;
- is in noncompliance with the **Kentucky Open Meetings Act** by not publishing their Council's agenda at least a week in advance, particularly because the meeting in question involved public business "the discussion of the various alternatives to a given issue about which the [agency] has the option to take action" KRS 61.810(1);
- is in violation of the *SBDM Handbook* Article VII "Conduct of Meetings," section F "Decision-Making Process" which directs that "No proposed policy may be approved by the school council at the same meeting at which it was initially proposed for study" (*SBDM Handbook* 108), and that the Cassidy SBDM Council both proposed and approved the decision to cut art special in the same meeting as revealed in Feb. SBDM minutes under heading "School Improvement Planning" sec. I: "Our proposal based on the votes is to remove art as a special area. A motion to approve by Rochelle King, seconded by Becky Wood" (Feb. 2024 SBDM Minutes 2);
- is in noncompliance of the *SBDM Handbook* which stipulates that, when consensus cannot be reached, the Council can get more information about an issue by doing "further investigation of an educational process and report its findings back to council," determine if what is being proposed has been done in other schools," and "bring the debate to the attention of the faculty and parent groups for their consideration and input" (*SBDM Handbook* 52); further, the *SBDM Handbook* states "Always strive for consensus. Only under the most urgent of circumstances, or where required by state statute, should a vote be taken" (*SBDM Handbook* 62);
- is in further noncompliance with the *SBDM Handbook* Article VI Schedule of Meetings which stipulates that the principal "shall provide notification of the school council's meeting time and agenda at least one week in advance of each regular meeting";
- is in noncompliance with Cassidy Elementary's own SBDM Curriculum Policy which states that the Principal will "ensure that copies of the curriculum, standards, and expectations for the school are available for student, family, and community review" (Cassidy School Curriculum Policy 3) by neglecting to make available curriculum expectations for students, family, and the community to review.

We ask for transparency in decisions that involve proposed curriculum changes that impact the education of our children. The lack of effective communication on the part of Principal Hill and SBDM Council in its proposal to eliminate art classes creates distrust among the parents and students that the SBDM Council is acting in our best interests.

Sincerely,  
J. Ansel Elkins, James Revell Carr, Jericho Elkins-Carr  
1227 Scoville Road  
Lexington, KY 40502

Principal Hill and SBDM Council  
Cassidy Elementary  
1125 Tate Creek Road  
Lexington, KY 40502

March 22, 2024

Dear Principal Hill and Cassidy Elementary SBDM Council,

We are writing to appeal the SBDM Council decision of Feb. 2024 to eliminate art classes at Cassidy Elementary for 2024-2025 and ask that the Council reconsider its decision. We request that this issue be reconsidered, and that this appeal be added to the Council's Agenda for the next SBDM Council meeting on Monday, March 25th. Additionally, we ask for public comment at the March 25<sup>th</sup> SBDM Council meeting concerning the decision.

My son Jericho Elkins-Carr (1<sup>st</sup> grade) also requests to make a statement to address this council, and I am writing on his behalf to make that request. Other Cassidy students also wish to add their voices to ask the SBDM Council to reconsider its decision to cut art classes for 2024-2025.

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, in Principal Hill's April newsletter, the parents at Cassidy were informed that the Council had cut art education for our children, with no prior opportunity for input from parents or students about this decision. We request that your Council notifies the parents of this school in writing and that emails effectively communicate the significance of the Council's proposed changes before any decisions are made.

We ask for transparency in decisions that involve proposed curriculum changes that impact the education of our children. The arts classes are vital at Cassidy and we ask that your Council hear our concerns and look for alternatives before cutting the arts.

Sincerely,

J. Ansel Elkins  
1227 Scoville Road  
Lexington, KY 40502  
[elkinsj@berea.edu](mailto:elkinsj@berea.edu)

James Revell Carr  
1227 Scoville Road  
Lexington, KY 40502  
[Revell.Carr@uky.edu](mailto:Revell.Carr@uky.edu)

Jericho Elkins-Carr (Cassidy student)  
1227 Scoville Road  
Lexington, KY 40502

Lauren Stanley  
627 Kastle Rd

## **Liggins, Demetrus**

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**From:** Liggins, Demetrus  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2024 9:20 AM  
**To:** Ansel Elkins; revell.carr@uky.edu  
**Cc:** Marshall, Tiffany; Hill, Jill; Jackson, Andria  
**Subject:** RE: Appealing Cassidy Elementary School SBDM Council "2024-2025 Programming" decision

Thank you for your letter appealing the recent decision made by the Cassidy Elementary SBDM Council regarding the elimination of standalone art classes for the 2024-2025 academic year. I want to express my sincere appreciation for your dedication to advocating for the arts and your recognition of their importance in enhancing students' educational experiences.

I understand and acknowledge your concerns regarding the lack of transparency and communication surrounding the SBDM Council's decision-making process. It is crucial that all stakeholders, including families and students, have the opportunity to provide input on decisions that impact the education of our children. The issues you raised are significant and warrant careful consideration. This is the time of year when schools receive their student projections for the next year, and staffing decisions are made based on that.

I would first like to address the concerns you expressed regarding potential violations of the Open Meetings Act. Relevant to this matter, you state that the February 26, 2024, Council Agenda was not published in advance; thus, by implication, you believe because families were not on notice that the issue of cutting standalone art classes was going to be discussed and voted on at that meeting, they did not attend the meeting when they might otherwise have to make their voices heard.

I understand your concern. Fortunately, as you say in your appeal, the OMA issues surrounding the posting of agendas and minutes have now been remediated. As to the matter at hand, you submitted an appeal and request for reconsideration of the vote to cut standalone art classes to Principal Hill. Reconsideration of that decision was placed on the agenda for the March 25, 2024, meeting. Fourteen members of the public, including you, signed up for comment. After hearing the comments of the fourteen individuals, the Council voted on reconsideration and again voted to cut standalone art classes. Thus, even if the families had notice of the February 26 meeting discussion and attended and participated in public comment, there is no reason to believe that the Council would have voted otherwise. The Council heard the comments on March 25 and reached the same decision.

While I have the authority to overturn the SBDM Council's decision, it is important to me to uphold democratic principles and respect the autonomy granted to council members by the Kentucky legislative body. Also, I've been made aware of an alternative plan to incorporate art into the curriculum in a manner different from having a standalone art class. Consequently, I will uphold the SBDM Council's decision, and your appeal is denied.

Despite the final decision, I firmly believe that providing an arts education class to our students is incredibly beneficial, and the removal of this option is unfortunate, and one I am sure the Council did not take lightly.

Thank you once again for bringing your concerns to my attention, and for your advocacy and partnership in educating your children. Your involvement is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

**Demetrus Liggins, Ph.D.**  
**Superintendent**

859.381.4104 (office) | 859.381.4303 (fax)

**FAYETTE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

John D. Price Administration Building  
450 Park Place | Lexington, KY 40511

**From:** Ansel Elkins <elkinsj@berea.edu>

**Sent:** Friday, March 29, 2024 3:57 PM

**To:** FCPS Superintendent <superintendent@fayette.kyschools.us>; Liggins, Demetrus

<demetrus.liggins@fayette.kyschools.us>; Barber, Houston <houston.barber@fayette.kyschools.us>; Dobbins, Louise

<louise.dobbins@fayette.kyschools.us>; tiffany.marshall@fayette.kyschools.us

**Subject:** Appealing Cassidy Elementary School SBDM Council "2024-2025 Programming" decision

**EXTERNAL MAIL**

Superintendent Demetrus Liggins  
Fayette County Public Schools  
450 Park Place  
Lexington, KY 40511

March 28, 2024

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In Principal Hill's "April Newsletter" to the Cassidy community she wrote: "**2024-2025 Programming:** During our March SBDM meeting our council was faced with the difficult decision regarding our school programming. Due to our staffing allocation, we regret to inform you that we will be removing art instruction from our curriculum. With our current funding and resources we are only able to support having 5 area classes rather than six." When Principal Hill published this "April Newsletter" on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the SBDM Council meeting of March 25<sup>th</sup> had not yet happened, and so confusion among the community ensued as to when the Council had made its decision to eliminate arts specials, since no meeting in March had yet occurred. Principal Hill's newsletter suggested that the elimination of arts classes was a "done deal" and no public input had been sought or considered about this decision. On March 21, after an uproar from Cassidy parents learning for the first time about the arts cut, the SBDM Council published the missing five months' worth of Council minutes and agendas, from Sept-Nov. 2023, and January 2024.

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being proposed has been done in other schools,” and “bring the debate to the attention of the faculty and parent groups for their consideration and input” (*SBDM Handbook* 52). None of these measures to get more information were taken, and the SBDM Council made a rushed decision to eliminate the art classes. Additionally, the Council never clarified how their proposed “2024-2025 Programming” aligns with the Fayette County School District’s policy to move foreign languages from elementary to middle schools in the World Language grant. Board member Amanda Ferguson was quoted in a Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> *Lexington Herald-Leader* article: “The move would facilitate language acquisition through middle and high school instead of providing somewhat random weekly exposure of foreign language for elementary students.” The Feb. 26 Cassidy SBDM Council meeting minutes (sec. D) reflect their discussion of the district’s world language decision while also stating that it is no longer “financially viable” to have six special area teachers. Why did Cassidy SBDM Council not follow the district’s decision to move foreign language teachers to middle school?

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Sincerely,  
J. Ansel Elkins, James Revell Carr, Jericho Elkins-Carr  
1227 Scoville Road  
Lexington, KY 40502

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# Hill's Highlights

April

## LOST ITEMS

### HAVE YOU SEEN MY THINGS?

#### What It Is:

- Unveiling **SLFP** - The Student Lost and Found Platform
- A Digital Revolution for Lost Item Management

#### How It Works:

- Google Slides Integration: Visual Catalog for Quick Identification
- Google Forms: Easy Claiming Process

#### Benefits:

- Streamlined Process: Say Goodbye to Lost Item Chaos
- User-Friendly: Students and Parents Can Easily Navigate
- Frequent Updates: Enhancing Efficiency for All

#### Call to Action:

- Join the Digital Era of Lost and Found
- Click on the Links to Get Started Today!



#### DIGITAL LINKS

**SEARCH: GOOGLE SLIDES**  
**CLAIM: GOOGLE FORM**

[Items to View Link](#)

[Link to Claim Items](#)



## 2024-2025 Programming

During our March SBDM meeting our council was faced with a difficult decision regarding our school programming. Due to our staffing allocation, we regret to inform you that we will be removing art instruction from our curriculum. With our current funding and resources we are only able to support having 5 special

area classes rather than six. For the 24-25 school year, we will offer; music, physical education, STEM, Spanish, and library.

We understand that this news may be disappointing to many of you, as we recognize the value and importance of art education in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and expression among our students.

While we understand the impact this decision may have, we want to assure you that we remain committed to providing the best possible education for your children. Our PTA has added a new position dedicated to implementing art into the curriculum throughout the year, albeit on a more limited basis. We also plan on adding more art opportunities after school for students to continue having access to that creative outlet.

We hope to continue to provide art experiences both in the classroom and through connections with community partners. Additionally, we welcome any suggestions or ideas you may have for how we can continue to promote artistic expression within our school community, despite these challenges.

We recognize that change can be difficult, and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we navigate this situation together. Our priority remains the well-being and academic success of our students, and we are committed to working together with you to ensure they receive the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

# DANCE BLUE!!!

This year Cassidy will be partnering with Morton Middle to participate in Dance Blue!

We will dance on April 12th.

Cassidy students will dance during their specials time that day but are invited to attend the full event at Morton that evening. We will be sharing additional details as we get closer to the event.

This link below will provide more information about Dance Blue, how they support children, and ways for you to donate!



## **Morton MS & Cassidy ES DanceBlue 2024 Mini Marathon**

DanceBlue is a University of Kentucky student-run organization that fundraises year-round and culminates in a 24-hour no sitting, no sleeping dance marathon. All the money that is raised through DanceBlue is donated to the Golden Matrix Fund, esta...

🔗 [danceblue.networkforgood.com](https://danceblue.networkforgood.com)

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## **April Events**

- 1st-8th Spring Break
- 9th - Students Return to Class
- 12th - Dance Blue
- 25th - Evening with the Arts
- 29th - SBDM @ 4:00





# CASSIDY SCHOOL



**REGISTER  
NOW  
FOR  
2024-2025**



## Documents Needed:

- Child's birth certificate
- Two proofs of residence, such as a property deed or current lease agreement in your name, and a secondary document such as a current utility bill or a current tax bill or receipt
- Up-to-date Kentucky immunization certificate
- Proof of child's recent preventative healthcare exam
- Proof of a dental exam
- Proof of an eye exam
- Court documents pertaining to your child, if applicable

## Cassidy Features

National Blue Ribbon School  
After School Clubs  
Highly Qualified Staff  
1-to-1 Technology  
Active PTA  
Great Class Size  
Hands on Learning  
Advanced level classes



Visit [www.fcps.net](http://www.fcps.net) for  
enrollment details.  
For questions or to  
schedule a tour call  
859.381.3018!



## Spring MAP Testing

Students will be taking the final MAP assessment of the year at the end of April. The testing dates are below. Please continue to encourage your child to try their best. Help them have a great testing day by making sure they get a good night's rest and have a healthy breakfast! We look forward to seeing everyone reach their goals!

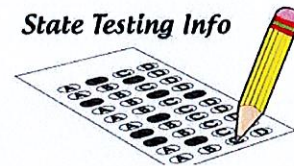




	<b>Math MAP Testing Date</b>	<b>Math MAP Testing Time</b>	<b>Reading MAP Testing Date</b>	<b>Reading MAP Testing Time</b>
Kindergarten	April 24th	9:30-11:00	April 23rd	9:30-11:00
1st Grade	April 24th	8:30 - 10:00 AM	April 23rd	8:30 - 10:00 AM
2nd Grade	April 24th	8:30 - 10:00 AM	April 23rd	8:30 - 10:00 AM
3rd Grade	April 23rd	8:30-9:45	April 22nd	8:30-9:45
4th Grade	April 23rd	8:40 - 10:40 AM	April 22nd	8:40 - 10:40 AM
5th Grade	April 25th	9:30-11:30	April 23rd	9:30-11:30

### Kentucky Summative Assessment 3rd-5th

### State Testing Info



KSA are the annual summative assessments given in grades 3 through 8, 10 and 11 to Kentucky public school students. KSA provides content area assessments, including reading and mathematics at all grades, and science, social studies, writing, and editing and mechanics once per grade band (i.e. elementary, middle, and high).

These assessments are Kentucky's measure of student proficiency and progress on the state content standards. These standards establish goals for what all students should know and be able to do in each grade. KSA are online assessments with only a small percentage of accommodated students taking it on paper. It goes beyond multiple-choice questions to include extended response and technology-enhanced items for students to demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Cassidy students will begin testing on May 8th. See the tentative schedule linked below. Please avoid scheduling appointments for students during testing times. Students that miss portions of the test are unable to join their classmates until they complete the section of the test they miss.

### Performance Level Descriptors

For KSA, students receive a separate scale score and performance level (distinguished, proficient, apprentice, and novice). Writing scores will include editing and mechanics and on-demand writing, along with an overall combined writing score. Scale scores are reported as numbers, while performance levels are descriptive. Performance levels are different by content area. These levels indicate performance on groups of items that measure similar skills. PLDs for each grade and content area are available for review using the links below.

**23-24 KSA Schedule.pdf**

[Download](#)

55.6 KB

### **KSA\_Performance\_Level\_Descriptor-Grade5\_Full\_Descriptor.pdf**

[Download](#)

181.0 KB

### **KSA\_Performance\_Level\_Descriptor-Grade4\_Full\_Descriptor.pdf**

[Download](#)

166.8 KB

### **KSA\_Performance\_Level\_Descriptor-Grade3\_Full\_Descriptor.pdf**

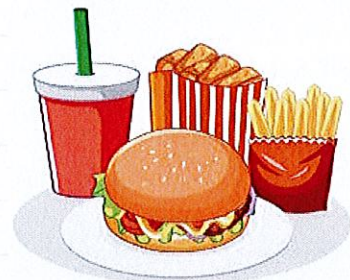
[Download](#)

138.8 KB

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## **Outside Food Reminder**

Just a reminder that outside food is not permitted in the cafeteria for students during lunch. This is part of our school wellness policy and is in place to keep students with allergies safe from food that could be harmful. We appreciate your help!



**Jill Hill**

Jill is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



**SBDM**

**Documents**

**Schedules**

## **Cassidy Elementary School**

### **Bylaws and Policies**

### **Minutes**

[August Minutes SBDM 2023 .docx](#)

[\\_July SBDM 2023 Minutes .docx](#)

### **Agendas**

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of FCPS. Do not click links, or open attachments, unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.