

Dear Mr. Zilke,

I've really had an amazing time these last two years. Coming into Seventh Grade, the Band Program introduced me to so many people and I think the bonds with those people have become incredibly strong, especially those in Jazz Band. It feels like a second family to me, Band. I feel like I can be myself in Band; I always feel more confident surrounded by people who aren't so concerned about an image, but more about doing something they love or having fun. Band is an amazing experience and I truly think you made it so.

You truly care about us, you truly show care for what we play and our growth as musicians in every song you pick, in every practice record and every seating audition. You actually care about the result. I truly believe you want us to succeed, to do the most with what we have. That's what means so much to me. You've inspired me to pursue music, to love it. I really did *want* to become first chair once I came to public school. I wanted to become something special and significant for the Band, for myself and in your eyes.

I feel like I've worked hard these last two years. I felt that when we won first at North Shore, it was a true sign we had all come far. It was amazing proof that you were able to inspire persistence and passion in all of us.

The feel of a second family like this and the individual care you gave all of us is what I'm going to miss the most from all of Sundling. As I enter high school, Mr. Zilke, I'm going to do my best to follow your advice, to understand that I'm a small fish once again. I'm going to try my hardest. I'm going to do whatever it takes to become special to my director, to make a name for myself, to become significant.

I want to thank you so much for everything you've done. Thank you for challenging me, for helping me and for listening to me. You've changed my life, Mr. Zilke

Sincerely,

Justin L., Class of 2009