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Arts, athletics vital to Attleboro students

To the editor: On Sept. 20th I hosted "Arts, Athletics, and Extras," the second in a series of roundtable discussions focusing on issues related to the Attleboro schools. I heard from the former heads of the Attleboro Booster Club and the Attleboro Music Parents Association, as well as various citizens and my fellow Attleboro alumni.

Looking back, I realize I erred in what I labeled our discussion. The implication of the word "extras" was a mistake. Continuing to develop quality programs in athletics and the arts is vital to the development of a quality school system. This is not an easy task, but giving students the chance to expand their horizons through sports and the arts is one of the best ways to develop the critical thinking and teamwork abilities they will need later in life. It is also a way to keep students fully engaged and enthusiastic as they climb through the school system.

There was broad consensus at the roundtable that it is of particular importance to preserve and develop these types of programs at the elementary and middle school levels. It has often been said that at Attleboro High School there is "something for everyone." I think that's true, but by making sure students have opportunities to participate in sports and the arts in the lower grades we increase the chance that they will arrive at AHS ready, willing, and eager to engage in the opportunities for enrichment that are available in that building. To maximize these opportunities, the facilities throughout the school system must be kept in excellent condition, and that means we must find a way to expedite the rebuilding of the Attleboro High School track and football field.

Cultivating opportunities in athletic, artistic, and musical activities is not easy in an era of rigid standards and tight budgets. But they are necessary if we are going to produce productive citizens. Over the next two years it will be important for members of the School Committee to work collaboratively with each other and the administration to think creatively and make sure these opportunities are available to all students. I hope I have the chance to help.

David Murphy, Attleboro THE WRITER is a candidate for Attleboro School Committee. A schedule of his roundtable discussions is available at www.murphy2011.com.