

# Re: Jefferson High School Band Leader, Austin Shoupe

July 13, 2017 at 7:49 PM

From Tamara Rubin

To fromml@rps205.com

Cc Tamara Rubin

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To Whom It May Concern,

Jefferson High School Band Leader Austin Shoupe recently contacted me because he found my post online about unsafe levels of lead found in the mouthpieces of student band instruments.

He has made it clear from his communications with me that he intends to do nothing about this finding (in regards to the instruments used by his students) as he does not find it credible information, even though the testing was done with an XRF Instrument, by an operator trained and certified in using the instrument and this is the very same instrument used by the CPSC to determine if items intended to be used by children are safe to be used by children.

The CPSC level at which lead is considered toxic in an item intended for children is 90 parts per million. These band instrument mouthpieces can have tens of thousands of parts per million lead in them. The silver plating in these student instruments also wears more easily than in finer instruments and this can easily expose a child to the leaded brass underneath.

Please read my post here: <http://tamararubin.com/2017/01/trumpets/>

While I understand Mr. Shoupe would like more information about this, no one has done further study on this issue. I am a pioneer in that regard. The results I have found are not negated, just because no one has bothered to do further studies. There is no-one who will financially benefit from extensive lab studies of these instruments so there is no impetus to do the studies. Instead, parents have to do what they can to protect their children from potential sources of exposure to lead.

While Mr. Shoupe's response on Facebook has been in the realm of inappropriate as he is a teacher of children and has voiced opinions that are incredibly dismissive of the concern, I think an appropriate band-leader response to learning about this issue would be to send a note to parents of children who use horns with mouthpieces so they are aware of the concern and can look into getting a lead-free mouthpiece.

Frankly as the parent of a young trombone player, euphonium player, trumpet player, tuba player, etc... I was never once informed of the potential lead levels in the mouthpieces - I had to discover it on my own, and was only able to do so because I am trained and certified in using an XRF instrument which costs tens of thousands of dollars and most parents don't have access to.

A secondary response from the school district (and/ or the teacher) might be to look into funding to buy lead-free mouth pieces for all of the students, at least for the school owned instruments - and especially those used by younger students. A good lead-free option used by top musicians: <https://www.gwmouthpieces.com> and another (more expensive, but will likely last a lifetime) <https://www.monette.net/mouthpieces>

I think you should sit down and have a chat with Mr. Shoupe regarding potential appropriate proactive responses to this issue.

Luckily my children have had amazing band leaders and teachers who are also aware of toxicity concerns in mouthpieces and Monette and Giddings (above) are recommended non-toxic choices.

Of course this is a much bigger issue and I will be following up with the CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission as well.)

Sincerely

Tamara Rubin  
Environmental Activist  
"Unexpected Lead Expert"