

**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION  
Wilmette Public Schools**

---

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**Date:** March 19, 2018

**To:** Members, Board of Education

**From:** Building Principals  
Grade Level Administrators  
Assistant Principals

**Gail Buscemi, Business Manager**

**Romy DeCristofaro, Ph.D., Assistant Director of Student & Special Services**

**Tony DeMonte, Director of Technology & Media Services**

**Heather Glowacki, Ed.D., Administrator for Human Resources**

**Katie Lee, Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction**

**Denise Thrasher, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent**

**Subject:** Instrumental Music

**INTRODUCTION**

On October 23, 2017, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2017-2018 District 39 Strategic Plan. The yearly planning cycle includes Strategic Plan updates. This executive summary report will provide an update of the New Strategic Initiative: Instrumental Music.

**BACKGROUND**

District 39 offers an Instrumental Music Program for students in grades 5-8. The program is currently shared between District 39 and Avoca District 37, with grades 7 and 8 orchestra students participating at Marie Murphy School in District 37. The overall intent is to honor the integrity of the well-established District 39 program, while looking to make improvements and consider new options for students.

Parents have requested a self-sufficient D39 Instrumental Music Program where both orchestra and band are housed in District 39. Historically, parents expressed dissatisfaction with students being pulled out of a core content class for small group, instrument-specific lessons (called sectionals). They have also expressed concern about early morning school rehearsal times. District 39 has also been asked to consider alternative options to the existing Instrumental Music program often referred to as "Instrumental Music light".

The 2017-2018 Strategic Plan - Year 1 Instrumental Music goals include:

- review and define the District's philosophy of an instrumental music program,
- gather input from all District 39 parents and students regarding the instrumental music program,
- plan for the transition to a self-sufficient band and orchestra program in District 39,
- investigate alternative options for offering an instrumental music program.

### **DISTRICT 39 PHILOSOPHY**

To better define the District 39 position/philosophy of the Instrumental Music program, administration had to differentiate whether the program is an enrichment option, or a part of the related arts program. More specifically, District 39 needed to clarify whether Instrumental Music falls under the definition of curricular, extra-curricular, or co-curricular.

Two steps have been taken to better define the program:

1. Evaluated survey feedback on the proposed option of delivering the program as a related art course during the school day.
2. Reviewed current Board Policy (6:190).

When given the choice *between* band/orchestra instruction delivered outside of the school day *or* within the school day as a related arts course, many parents and students indicated that they preferred to keep the program outside of the school day. Through survey feedback, current parents and students expressed that they did not want to forfeit the related arts courses offered to grades 5-8 students.

According to Board Policy 6:190 (recently revised and slated to be approved following the third and final read at the Board meeting on 3/19/17), the Instrumental Music Program can be defined as co-curricular.

*Co-curricular activities are purposeful and complement academic programming, occurring beyond the traditional classroom. These activities are led by a state licensed staff member and funded through a shared cost between the District and student activity fees. Co-curricular activities are directly linked to a District curriculum map, and in some cases, may have a dedicated curriculum map specific to the activity. Examples may include science fair, student government, Model United Nations, band, orchestra, and choir.*

The Instrumental Music program has a curricular philosophy statement that guides instructional and curricular decision-making:

*Music is a unique form of human expression that is universal and essential. As an ineffable aural art form, music communicates ideas and emotions. Music education is an independent and integral part of the development of the whole child. Through music education, District 39 students will become literate in the elements of music while developing performance skills and a lifelong appreciation of music.*

*The fundamental music processes in which students engage are performing, creating, listening, analyzing, evaluating and discovering meaning. Although the*

*music curriculum map presents each process separately, District 39 believes that these processes are meaningfully integrated to achieve a balanced and comprehensive experience of study in music.*

The instructional best practices for instrumental music include:

- Full ensemble rehearsals
- Instrument-specific lessons (sectionals)
- Assessment of progress - formative and summative
- Student choice in instrument selection
- Open to all students - inclusive programming

Administration is recommending that the Instrumental Music Program in District 39 be defined as co-curricular activity. Work will continue to better delineate how this definition will impact current practices with respect to assessment, student choice, and alternatives to the existing Instrumental Music Program.

### **SURVEY INPUT AND POTENTIAL RECOMMENDED CHANGES**

To gather input about potential changes to current practices in the Instrumental Music Program, an initial (first steps) survey was administered to all parents and students in grades 5-8. The primary goal of the survey was for District 39 to better understand the preferences of students and parents relative to current instrumental music programming, so recommendations for changes could be made.

The objectives of the initial survey were three-fold:

- Gain a better understanding of the barriers to students participating in the band and orchestra program currently offered through District 39.
- Measure the level of preference for band and orchestra rehearsals taking place as a related arts option during the school day.
- Understand the necessity of sectionals and frequency desired/required.

910 parents and 670 students participated in the survey. The majority of participants in both groups were formerly or never enrolled in band or orchestra. Of the parents who participated in the survey, 313 (35%) have a student currently enrolled in band or orchestra, and of the student respondents, 262 (38%) are currently enrolled in band or orchestra.

To examine the main barriers to participation, all parents and students were asked questions about morning full band rehearsals and overall structure of the program. Parents and students who formerly or never participated in band/orchestra were asked additional questions about barriers to participation. These parents and students cited the following:

- getting up early for rehearsals,
- having a lot of other activities already going on,
- missing other classes for sectionals

In addition, students cited that they do not want to play an instrument.

As shared earlier, feedback from current band/orchestra students and parents indicated that they would not prefer band/orchestra instruction delivered within the school day in lieu of a related

arts course. Additionally, only a small portion of “former and never participated” band and orchestra students indicated that they would more likely participate *if* the program moved within the school day. In fact, some current band/orchestra students expressed that they would be at risk of discontinuing with band or orchestra in order to take advantage of other related arts courses. Additionally, this year’s new school schedule allowed for a later start at Wilmette Junior High School which may have helped address the concerns expressed regarding early morning rehearsals.

With respect to sectionals, current band and orchestra students all agree that instrument-specific lessons have a positive impact on skill development, student growth and overall quality of the program. Although the majority of current parents and students indicate that weekly sectionals are preferred, open ended comments express concern about the frequency of missed core content classes. This feedback is valued and the concerns will be addressed.

As a result of survey feedback, administration recommends that band and orchestra rehearsals remain in the morning before school and sectionals continue to take place during the school day.

***Instrumental Music Sectionals Options***

District 39 has reviewed scheduling of instrumental sectionals with the goal to reduce the frequency at which students are pulled from core-content classes (math, reading, writing, science, social studies).

Three options that address this concern have been developed:

- Scheduling sectionals only during Related Arts (RA), World Language (WL), and Physical Education (PE) class periods
- Scheduling sectionals only during Related Arts (RA) and PE class periods
- Increasing the number of class periods where sectionals can be offered

***OPTION A: Sectionals on a rotation through RA/WL/PE (non-core) classes only***

STAFFING	6.65 FTE
MISSED CLASSES	10 classes each RA/WL/PE
<b>INCREASE IN FTE: 2.05 FTE = \$151,792.25</b>	

***OPTION B: Sectionals on a rotation through PE/RA classes only***

STAFFING	6.65 FTE
MISSED CLASSES	15 classes each PE/RA
<b>INCREASE IN FTE: 2.05 FTE = \$151,792.25 *</b>	
*Scheduling difficulties could result in further increases to staffing	

***OPTION C: 8-day rotation through all classes***

STAFFING	5.66 FTE
MISSED CLASSES	3-4 classes across all content areas
<b>INCREASE IN FTE: 1.06 FTE = \$74,487.70</b>	

Administration recommends Option C as a “first step” toward responding to the concerns expressed about the scheduling of sectionals. This improvement can be made next school year. District 39 would gather parent and student feedback on the effectiveness of this change.

**DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF-SUFFICIENT ORCHESTRA PROGRAM**

In preparation of the orchestra program being delivered by District 39 for the 2018-2019 school year, a space study has been conducted and a room for orchestra sectionals and morning rehearsals has been identified. Staffing and hiring decisions will be made in the coming months. An inventory of instruments, music literature, and storage space is being conducted. Plans will be finalized by the end of the current school year for fall 2018 implementation.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR AN INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM**

Once District 39 Band *and* Orchestra Program’s staffing and sectional improvements have been established, attention will turn to exploring options for alternative offerings for Instrumental Music. These alternative offerings may include related arts options focusing on specific instruments, or a less-intensive band experience. To take this next step, input will be gathered from students and parents across the District to determine interest and feasibility of adding alternative options to the existing Instrumental Music Program.

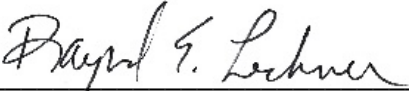
**NEXT STEPS**

Based on recommendations made in this report, next steps include finalizing the plan to transition orchestra back to WJHS and adjust practices to align with the District 39 philosophy of Instrumental Music. Also, we will identify specific strategies and related resources to improve the sectionals pull-out experience. Final recommendations will be presented.

**CONCLUSION**

District 39 Administrators and staff continue to address the goals and/or outcomes of the 2017-2018 Strategic Plan. The work will continue and the Board may expect a full Strategic Plan review in June.

**Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,**

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D., Superintendent**