



Middle School Instrumental Music

TO: Jeannine Durkin, Acting Superintendent of Schools

FROM: Robin Desmond, Assistant Superintendent Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment *Robin Desmond*

DATE: May 13, 2019

RE: *Middle School Instrumental Music Programming*

This memo is provided in response to the Lowell School Committee's request to provide an alternative to the Instrumental Music Program in the case that the middle school Instrumental Music Teacher positions are eliminated from the FY20 budget. It is the hope that the following information will explain the plan to continue to support students in this area. To clarify, all middle school students are provided music instruction during the school year. The Instrumental Music Program is in addition to the standard music programming provided at all middle schools, and not all middle school students participate.

Over the years, there have been discussions with principals and administration, to include the Coordinator of Fine Arts, with regard to the effectiveness of the Instrumental Music Program at the middle school level. The idea of moving the instruction into an after school program has been raised on some occasions to provide consistency with programming.

There are issues that impact the program in its current state. At present, students are missing instructional time during the school day to attend one weekly 30-minute lesson. This year, the 3.2 Instrumental Music Teachers were split between 11 schools throughout the city. Due to the required level of expertise, when Instrumental Music Teachers are out of school for a day, substitutes cannot be provided, resulting in students missing the once weekly 30-minute instructional session. The lessons are further impacted by state mandated testing schedules during the months of April and May. Currently, there are a host of other middle school enrichment activities that successfully occur during after school programming to include chorus, theater, STEM Club, and intermural sports.

Lowell is fortunate to receive 21st Century Community Learning Center grants at the Stoklosa, Robinson, Bartlett and Sullivan and is current applying for a new 21st Century program at both the STEM and the Butler. At each school, we operate afterschool programming Monday-Thursday and in many cases there is a bus provided to bring students home after the program is over. Students are also provided a snack and dinner before returning home. Carolyn Rocheleau, the Coordinator of Special Programs who oversees the 21st Century grants, has assured us that

instrumental music programming can be easily be accommodated into this existing program. Over the summer, Carolyn will work with the Curriculum Office and the newly hired Coordinator of Fine Arts to develop an Instrumental Music Program in the 21st program located at the middle school sites.

For those middle schools that do not currently have access to the 21st Century programs (Wang, Pyne Arts, Daley) John Descoteaux, Transportation Coordinator, has agreed to transport students to a nearby school (within zone) for after school lessons. Carolyn has also agreed to provide time for combined rehearsals as students become more proficient with the instruments.

In regard to instrumental music instruction, we have had some initial conversations with local business and have made inquiries with UMASS Lowell to investigate potential partnerships. We could also post and hire internal music staff to teach band and pay a stipend similar to the other after school enrichment activities. Carolyn has been in conversation with LZ Nunn from Project Learn regarding corporate partnerships and grant opportunities for additional funding. The instruments we currently provided for the middle school instrumental music programming will continue to be utilized.

I would like to thank Carolyn Rocheleau for collaborating and contributing to this report.