

## **Elementary Band and Orchestra Program Review Update Spring 2024**

In the Lake Washington School District (LWSD), we regularly assess our programs to ensure that all students have access to high-quality learning opportunities based on effective, research-supported instructional practices and to ensure their alignment to our policies. During the 2022-23 school year, we conducted a review of our elementary band and orchestra program. The review committee included teachers, administrators, specialists and community members, who engaged in learning about effective music instruction and programs and analysis of data to evaluate the program and its alignment to our district goals and policies.

While the program demonstrated positive impacts, several significant challenges emerged, including:

1. **Transportation:** Frequent bus route cancellations, due to staffing and equipment shortages, have strained our transportation resources. Providing transportation for the band and orchestra program adds to this burden, affecting essential transportation for students. Additionally, fluctuating student attendance in the program often results in overcrowded buses.
2. **Supervision and Space:** Supervising large groups of students and securing appropriate teaching spaces has become increasingly difficult. Many schools offer before-school care, limiting available space for band and orchestra. Furthermore, some students experience significant wait times—up to 50 minutes—between the program’s end and the start of school, requiring supervision by classified staff or transportation to their home school. This is not an ideal situation for students.
3. **Staffing:** Finding teachers and staff to support the program has become increasingly challenging. While we have dedicated and talented staff, we currently face several staffing shortages that impact the program’s delivery.
4. **Equitable Access:** Participation requires families to drop students off at designated sites, which are often not their home school. This limits access for families unable to provide transportation, excluding many students from participating.
5. **Cost:** As a before-school enrichment program, it is resource-intensive, requiring substantial staffing and transportation resources.

### **Advisory Review and Next Steps:**

We have continued to offer the before school enrichment model of the band and orchestra program, although the challenges continue to grow. In response to the program review, we have taken action to ensure that all students can benefit from enriched learning in music. In the 2023-24 school year, a workgroup of teachers convened to draft a plan, guided by key questions, including:

- What structures and supports are needed to ensure equitable access to high-quality music instruction for all students?
- What barriers prevent students from engaging in music experiences?
- How can we design a program that reflects the needs and values of our entire district?
- What changes can we make to align our program with best practices in music education and strengthen our secondary music programs?

The workgroup met multiple times throughout the year, and their efforts resulted in a multi-pronged plan that includes:

- An enriched scope and sequence for elementary music that aligns with LWSD's core values and high-quality instructional practices.
- Additional units and resources for schools and professional learning for teachers to implement the scope and sequence
- Access to fundamental skills and knowledge that support band, orchestra, and choir for all elementary students during the school day.
- Alignment with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in secondary music classes.
- Experiences that support the development of strong secondary music programs.

These new music units are being piloted throughout the 2024-25 school year, with plans to expand them into all elementary music classrooms next year.

Additionally, we will continue to evaluate the viability of the current before-school program.

### **Outcomes and Future Steps:**

Our goal is to create a coherent, standards-based music program that offers every student the opportunity to learn, create, and experience music, regardless of background or circumstance. By addressing current barriers, we are committed to developing a program that provides equitable access and guaranteed learning outcomes for all students.

Thank you for your continued support as we work to ensure our music programs reflect our commitment to high-quality, inclusive education for all.