LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience ***in a Public School Setting***

Special Board of Education Meeting
April 10, 2025

Board Present: Jason Kemp, Chair; Anna James, Vice Chair (via Zoom); Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge; Alexander Lowry

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Sean Kennedy, Assistant Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

Staff Present: Music Department Staff: Sarah Evans; Kristine Pekar; Melissa Rostkoski; Laura Ventres; Jacob Wilson; 15 community members from Lyme-Old Lyme

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Music Department staffing. Background on subject: the Board of Education requested a meeting with this department to hear their responses to the following questions:

1. How would the Music Department's plan differ from the Superintendent's proposal (cutting 1.0 FTE teacher) if they were to have five full-time staff members?
2. If the current staffing of six remains, how will the Music Department strengthen and grow its programming at all levels while ensuring all six teachers have equitable and sufficient instructional time/classes (1.0 FTE = 25 classes / 1,125 instructional minutes per week) to justify their full-time status.

Kristine Pekar, Laura Ventres and Sarah Evans reviewed a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Restructuring the RSD #18 Music Department." It included department comparisons with surrounding

school districts; current and proposed music offerings for the PK-5 program; making music available to all students at the middle school; ensembles and beyond offerings at the high school; and 2025-2026 staffing comparison data. The presentation is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Some highlights of the department's presentation:

The following are strategies to increase enrollment in courses offered:

Course Name	Number of Courses	Strategy
Music Theory	3	Classify as STEM credit.
Music Appreciation	2(3)	Promote at high school "electives fair."
Music Production	1	Offer Music Production 2: Sound Reinforcement and Advanced Audio Design.
Music Exploration	1	Break into separate classes: piano, guitar/ukulele, voice OR recast as student-defined study of an instrument or voice.
Musical Performance	1	Rebrand as "American Musical Theatre" with options to take as a performance opportunity or as music appreciation.
Unified Voices	1	Instrumental and Vocal music combining middle and high school students with disabilities and peer mentors.
The most effective way to increase enrollment in non-ensemble music electives would be to provide younger students with music experiences beyond band and chorus.		

The following is the Music Department's proposal if the current staffing of six remains and how they will strengthen and grow its programming at all levels:

Level	Proposal	Considerations
Elementary	0.8 Lyme/0.2 PK 1.2 Mile Creek (.2 to be covered by MS/HS staff)	• Implement instrumental lessons beginning in Grade 4. • Implement choral music at Mile Creek School and expand choral music at Lyme School to allow for a weekly 30-minute chorus class for Grades 3, 4 and 5. (HS/MS choral instructors could potentially help provide this instruction and/or be a support.) • Smaller lesson sizes and earlier start to full band rehearsals for Mile Creek. (MS instrumental instructor could potentially help provide instruction and/or be a support.

Middle School	0.975 Vocal Instruction 0.975 Instrumental Instruction 0.3 General Music/IMPACT	• Implement 6th Grade General Music and music courses within 7th and 8th grade IMPACT. (HS Instructor(s) could help provide this programming. • Available block can be used to schedule one-on-one instruction for students with disabilities (varies year to year based on need).
High School	0.6 Vocal Instruction 0.4 Instrumental Instruction 0.6 Electives	• Adjust programming as proposed to promote non-ensemble music electives. • Create "Electives Fair" for high school students in February. (HS instructor could investigate the event at Waterford High School and work with administration and instructional leaders to facilitate event. • HS instructor could take on additional duty until course requests increase.

Following the Music Department's presentation requesting no staffing cuts for the 2025–2026 school year, the Board of Education engaged in a follow-up discussion. Questions and comments raised by board members included: clarification on the claim of insufficient district support; barriers to implementing proposed programs; benefits of pull-out music instruction; the department's limited role in budget development; lack of clarity on how the department's plan for five full-time staff would differ from the Superintendent's proposal to cut 1.0 FTE; administrative awareness of the department's proposals; potential programs that could be introduced in 2025–2026; the status of previously dissolved programs such as ScatCats and show choir; the overall value of music education in students' lives; a request for more information about offering music as part of a STEM/STEAM track at the high school; the absence of a contingency plan if staffing is reduced to five positions; the importance of building the music program starting at the elementary level; and concerns voiced by some community members and staff who believe the department is currently overstaffed.

MOTION; Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lodge, to include six full-time music teachers in the 2025-2026 budget.

Mr. Staab, as a caveat to his motion, recommended that the Board hold further discussion at the May meeting on the feasibility of what can and cannot be done on the proposed expansion of the music program and the need for continued collaboration between the music department and administration to ensure the success of the proposed initiatives.
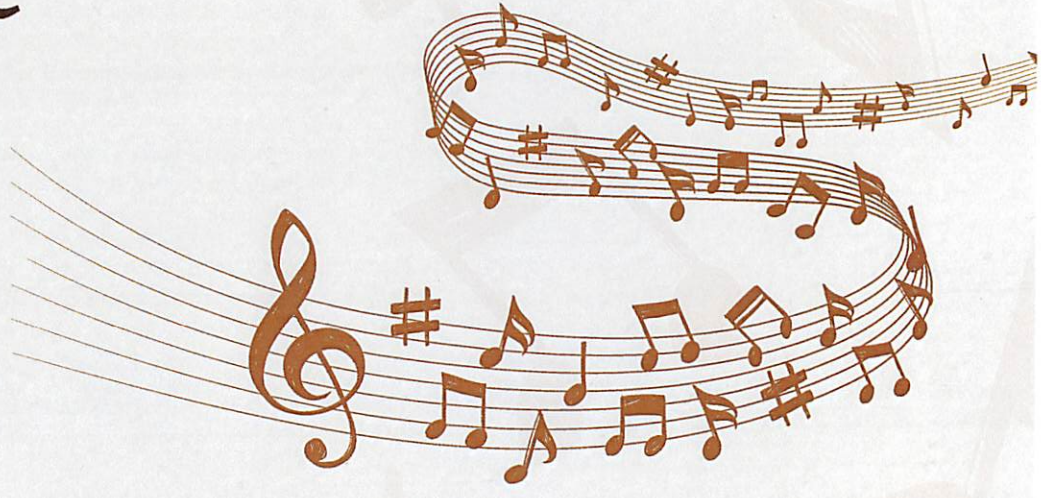
VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m. upon a motion by Mr. Staab and a second by Mrs. Shoemaker.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary

Restructuring the RSD#18 Music Department



Presented at the Special Meeting of the Board of Education,
Thursday, April 10, 2025 at 7:30pm

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Regional School District #18 Music Department

Kristine Pekar, Department Chair, LOLHS Choral Music
Jacob W. Wilson III, LOLHS Instrumental Music
Laura Ventres, LOLMS Choral Music
Sarah Evans, LOLMS Instrumental Music
Melissa Rostkoski, Elementary General & Instrumental Music
Matthew Guevara, Elementary General & Instrumental Music



01

Department Comparison

Elementary School Comparison

	Band	Lesson/# students	Band Ensemble	Chorus	Chorus Ensemble
RSD #18	5	Weekly MC: 5-12 students LC: 5-7	MC: 1x/week beg. March LC: 1x/week beg. November	LC:3-5 MC:0	LC: biweekly
RSD #4	4	Weekly/6 or less	1x/week each grade	3-6	Weekly
Westbrook	4	1x/6 days	1x/week beg. March	0	None
Waterford	3	1X 4-day rotation; max 9 students	1x 4-day rotation	4	Weekly

Middle School Comparison

	Chorus	Lesson	Band	Lesson	General Music
RSD #18	6,7,8 alt. day	1x/8-day rotation, scheduled 2-8 students per lesson	6,7,8 alt. day	1x/8-day rotation, scheduled 2-8 students max by instrument & level	None
Old Saybrook	6,7,8	General Music	6,7,8	1x/6-day rotation, 5-6 students instrument & level	6,7,8, 1x/6-day rotation
RSD #4	7,8	None	7,8	1x/every 2 weeks	7,8
Westbrook	7,8	None	6,7,8	1x/6-day rotation, grouped by “winds” & “brass”	Piano class
East Lyme	6,7,8		6,7,8	1x/6-day rotation	6-8 alt ensemble

High School Comparison

			Type and Number of Non-Ensemble Music Classes							
	HS Enrollment	Ensemble Enrollment	Theory	Apprec.	Tech	Piano	Guitar	Voice	Musical Theater	Exploration/ Lab
RSD #18	368	121	3	3	1				1	1
Old Saybrook	341	83	2	1	2					1
RSD #4	431	85	2	1		1		1	1	
Westbrook	160	62	1	2		1	2	1		
East Lyme	890	104	2	2	1	1	1			

	Music Teachers	Student Population	Teacher/Student Ratio
Westbrook	4.2	586	1:140
RSD #4	7.8	1264	1:162
Old Saybrook	6	1042	1:174
RSD #18	6	1278	1:213
Clinton	6	1423	1:237
Waterford	8.5	2253	1:237
RSD 17	7	1707	1:244
Guilford	12	3077	1:256
East Lyme	9	2495	1:277
Madison	8	2428	1:303

02

PreK-5 Program

Current and Proposed Music Offerings



PreK-5 Program Goals



General Music

Maintain programming



Instrumental Music

Increase programming



Choral Music

Align and increase programming



Elementary Instrumental Music Proposal

- Expand programming to grade 4
- Per grade level, provide a weekly 30-minute lesson for each instrument, in groups not to exceed 6 students
- Per grade level, provide a weekly 30-minute band ensemble class
- Grade 4 band performs at their home elementary school at the end of the school year
- Grade 5 students perform twice per year, once at their home elementary school and once in combination with all Grade 5 band students in the District.



Elementary Choral Music Proposal

- Provide chorus at both district elementary schools for grades 3, 4, and 5
- Provide a weekly 30-minute chorus class for each grade level of chorus, separate from general music class
- Grade 3 and Grade 4 chorus perform at their home elementary school at the end of the school year
- Grade 5 students perform twice per year, once at District Choral Festival and at the Grade 5 Band & Chorus Concert performed in the spring with all of the students in the district.
- A piano accompanist is provided by the district for all chorus rehearsals and concerts, providing piano accompaniment and allowing the music teacher to conduct the chorus

Impact on Elementary Staffing

	Classrooms (45 mins)	Grade 4 Band (30 mins)	Grade 5 Band (30 mins)	Grade 3, 4, & 5 Chorus (30 mins)	Teaching Minutes	FTE
Mile Creek	19	6	6	3	1305	1.2 FTE
Lyme Consolidated	12	5	5	3	930	0.8 FTE
Center School	7*				210	0.2 FTE

** PreK classes 30 minutes each.*

Elementary Programs Suggested Since 2016



4th Grade Band



String Program



Select Chorus



Music Will

Formerly "Little Kids Rock"

03

Middle School Program

Opportunity to educate every student

6-8 Program Goals



General Music

Expand programming to provide all students with a music education



Instrumental Music

Maintain quality of instruction



Choral Music

Maintain quality of instruction

6-8 Ensemble Instruction

6th Grade

- B/C every other day
- Lesson 1x a cycle
  - 2-6 students
  - Chorus - homogeneous
  - Band - instrument/level
- Annual Performances
  - Fall Concert
  - Spring Concert
  - Memorial Day Parade (Band)

7th Grade

- B/C every other day
- Lesson 1x a cycle
  - 2-6 students
  - Chorus - voice part
  - Band - instrument/level
- Annual Performances
  - Fall Concert
  - District Choral Festival
  - Festival of Bands
  - Spring Concert
  - Memorial Day Parade (Band)
  - Music In The Parks
  - 8th Grade Promotion (Band)

8th Grade

- B/C every other day
- Lesson 1x a cycle
  - 2-8 students
  - Chorus - voice part
  - Band - instrument/level
- Annual Performances
  - Veteran's Day (Band)
  - Meet the Choirs
  - Fall Concert
  - District Choral Festival
  - Festival of Bands
  - Memorial Day Parade (Band)
  - Spring Concert
  - Music In The Parks
  - 8th Grade Promotion (Chorus)

DS Lesson Rationale

DS Lessons are small groups of 2-8 students based on instrument/voice part/level. These lessons provide attention to individual musicianship needs, while band and chorus rehearsals focus on ensemble skills.

Example:

2025 7th Grade	Trumpet A - 3	Trumpet B - 3	Trumpet C - 3
Performance level	Advanced	At Level	Below Level
Gen Ed Comparison	Algebra 1	Pre-Algebra	Math Lab

25-26 Projected Middle School Programming

	Grade 6*	Grade 7	Grade 8
Band	45	28	30
Chorus	55	24	32
Impact	N/A	30	28

** Based on 100 students currently in grade 5. Band/Chorus split is an estimate based on current choice and past trends.*

Total students receiving no music education past 6th Grade: 58

Proposed 6-8 General Music

How It Could Fit In The Current Schedule

- 6th Grade - Within the current B/C block
- 7th & 8th - Within the IMPACT wheel

"Impact is a year-long course designed to connect classroom learning to the world of work. Through hands-on activities, projects, and class assignments, students explore service, community, and career fields based on their interests and talents. Co-taught by FaCS, Tech Ed, and IT Teachers, the curriculum evolves each year for a unique experience."

Excerpted from LOLMS Elective Course Descriptions

What It Could Look Like

- A year long general music course for 6th grade, building on the current 5th grade curriculum.
- In 7th and 8th grades, coursework designed to showcase career paths in music outside of performance ensembles
  - Music in Film/Foley Artistry
  - Sound Engineering and Broadcasting
  - Music Production: Remixing and Remastering

Impact on Middle School Staffing

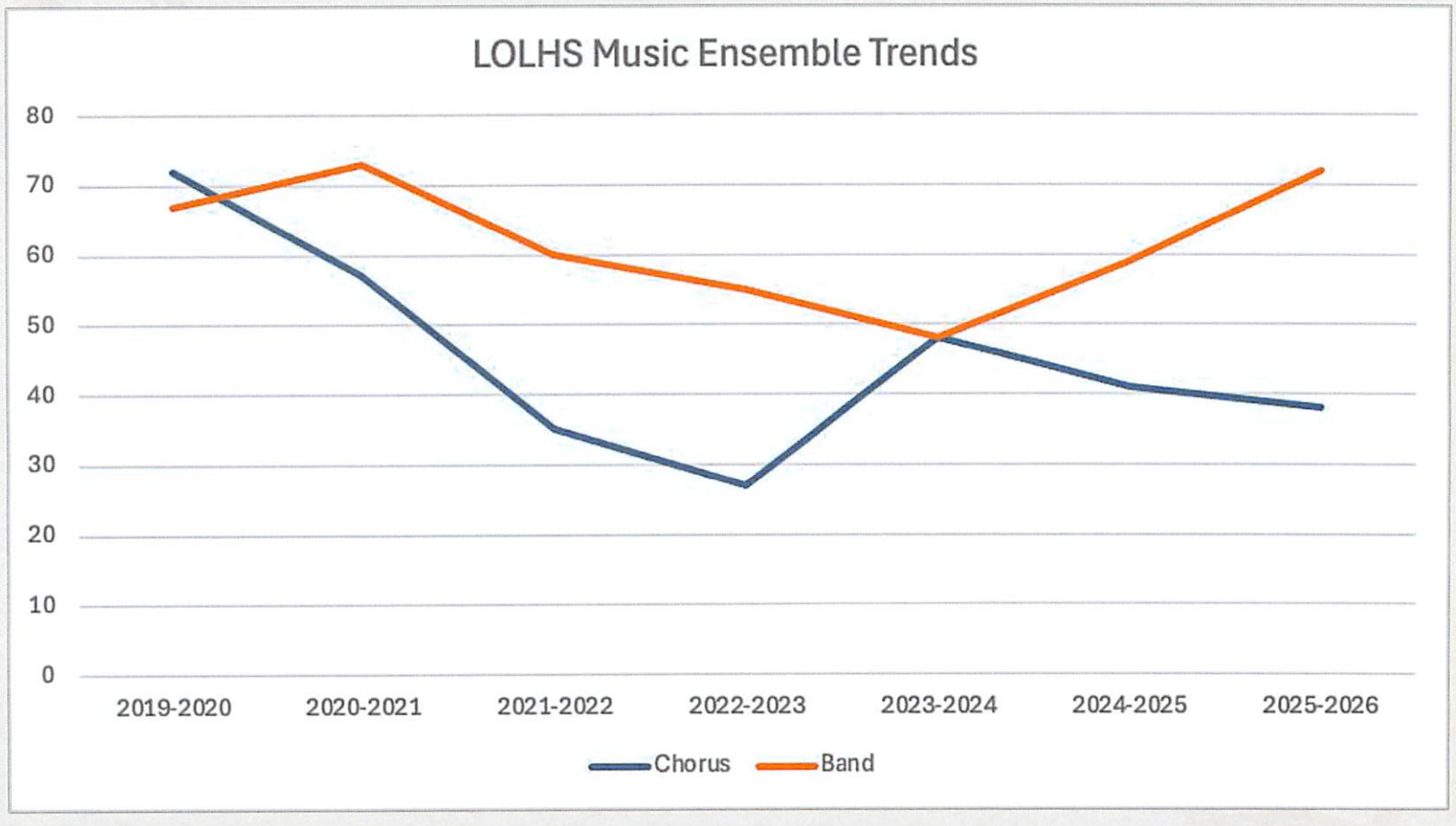
Teacher 1	**Teacher 2**	**Teacher 3**
Choral Ensembles Choral DS Lessons (12 ensemble, 27 DS) .975 FTE	Instrumental Ensembles Instrumental DS Lessons (12 ensemble, 27 DS) .975 FTE	6th Grade General 7th Grade IMPACT 8th Grade IMPACT (12 classes per 8 day cycle) .3 FTE

04

High School Music Program

Ensembles and Beyond




LOLHS Music Ensemble Trends
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
2019-2020
2020-2021
2021-2022
2022-2023
2023-2024
2024-2025
2025-2026
Chorus
Band

Non-Ensemble Courses Currently Offered

AP Music Theory
ECE: Fundamentals of Music
Music Theory 1
ECE: Music Appreciation
ECE: Popular Music & Diversity in American Society
Intro to Music Appreciation
Music Production
Music Exploration
Musical Theatre/Performance

Recommendation: Music Theory as STEM

Mathematics Concepts	Music Theory
Fractions: Representing parts of a whole	Using rhythmic notation to capture the timing of notes in a music composition, following the parameters of meter and subdivision of the beat
Geometry: • Understanding shapes, sizes, and spatial relationships • Graph points to solve real-world problems	• Identifying form and repetition in music • Encoding sound into music notation (x=pitch, y=time)
Measurement: Using units to quantify length, weight, volume, etc.	Aurally and visually identifying and labeling melodies and harmonies according to their intervallic relationships and modal qualities
Data Analysis: Interpreting and representing data	Analyzing an unknown musical work and predicting its sound qualities based on music notation
Problem-Solving: Applying mathematical knowledge to solve real-world problems	• Harmonizing a given melody using the physics of acoustics to support and amplify the sound • Hearing a piece of music and writing it in music notation so others can perform it • Transposing music for another instrument or voice

High Schools Offering Music as STEM/STEAM

Weston High School

- AP Music Theory - VPA, HUM, STEM
- Music Production - VPA, HUM, STEM

Greenwich High School:

- Electronic Music, Songwriting - HUM, STEM
- Ensembles taken for three years can fulfill 1 STEM ELECTIVE credit.

Staples High School (Westport PS)

- Ensembles - STEAM (1 credit), Humanities (1 credit)
- AP Music Theory - STEAM
- Music Production - STEAM
- ECE Popular Music in American Society - STEAM

Farmington High School

STEM Music Courses:

- AP Music Theory
- Honors-Level Ensemble
- Guitar courses (2)
- Senior Capstone in Music

New Course: Unified Voices

Unified Voices will be open to students 6-12 and will include students with disabilities and peer mentors. It would be scheduled to include two music instructors and could meet at either secondary building.

Music faculty would consult with special education teachers, including speech and occupational therapy, to tailor the class to the needs of the individual students.

Students enrolled in Unified Voices will create, perform, respond, and connect through music. Instruction will include singing, playing instruments, listening and responding to music, composing, and improvising. The course may include performances in our school concerts or other events, but it will not be a requirement.

Strategies to Increase Enrollment in Courses Offered

	Number of Courses	Strategy
Music Theory	3	Classify as STEM credit
Music Appreciation	2(3)	Promote at high school "electives fair"
Music Production	1	Offer Music Production 2: Sound Reinforcement and Advanced Audio Design
Music Exploration	1	Break into separate classes: piano, guitar/ukelele, voice - OR - Recast as student-defined study of an instrument or voice
Musical Performance	1	Rebrand as "American Musical Theatre," with options to take as a performance opportunity or as music appreciation
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The most effective way to increase enrollment in non-ensemle music electives would be to provide younger students with music experiences beyond band and chorus.

05

25-26 Staffing Comparison

Impacts of Proposed Models

Proposed 6 FTE

Level	Proposal	Considerations

Elementary	0.8 LC/0.2 PreK
	1.2 MC
	
	(.2 to be covered by MS/HS staff)
		• Implement instrumental lessons beginning in Grade 4
		• Implement choral music at Mile Creek School, and expand choral music at Lyme Consolidated School, to allow for a weekly 30-minute chorus class for Grades 3, 4, and 5
		  ○ HS/MS choral instructors could potentially help provide this instruction and/or be a support
		• Smaller lessons sizes and earlier start to full band rehearsals for Mile Creek.
		  ○ MS instrumental instructor could potentially help provide instruction and/or be a support

Middle School	0.975 Vocal Instruction 0.975 Instrumental Instruction 0.3 General Music/Impact	• Implement 6th Grade General Music, and music courses within 7th and 8th grade IMPACT ○ HS instructor(s) could help provide this programming • Available block can be used to schedule one-on-one instruction for students with disabilities (varies year to year based on need)
High School	0.6 Vocal Instruction 0.4 Instrumental Instruction 0.6 Electives	• Adjust programming as proposed to promote non-ensemble music electives • Create "Electives Fair" for high school students in February ○ HS instructor could investigate the event at Waterford High School and work with administration and Instructional Leaders to facilitate event • HS instructor could take on additional duty until course requests increase

Reduction to 5 FTE

Level	Proposal
Elementary	1.0 LC/Instrumental Music 1.0 MC/PreK
Middle School	0.6 Choral Instruction 1.0 Instrumental Instruction
High School	0.4 Choral Instruction 1.0 Instrumental/Electives

Thank you!

Do you have any questions?

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