

**Weymouth, MA Public Schools**  
**K-12 Music Program Review Report**

**January 9, 10, 13, 2014**

**Review and Report by**

**Sandra Nicolucci EdD**

Music Education Faculty      Boston University  
Music Education Consultant

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The following Guiding Questions were generated by the music faculty to help focus the January 2014 review of the Weymouth Music Program.

# GUIDING QUESTIONS

## Weymouth Public Schools K-12 Music Program Review

1. How can we **create a lasting curriculum**?
2. How can we **maximize time on learning** in music?
3. How can **scheduling** help to provide smaller classes?
4. How can we increase and insure **consistency and equity in core music programs and enrichments** at the primary, middle, and high school levels?
5. How can **Common Assessments** be used to communicate what students already know about music at different developmental levels?
6. What provisions are being made to ensure that all students are receiving **consistent music resources**?
7. How can we increase **availability of private lessons** after school?
8. How can we **create leadership** for our department?
9. What do we need to **improve in CORD\*** in order to do a better job of **accomplishing our Mission Statement**?

\* Curriculum • Organization • Recruitment/Retention • District Support

# SCHEDULE FOR MUSIC PROGRAM REVIEW

## **DAY ONE**                      **Thursday**    **January 9, 2014**

### SEACH PRIMARY SCHOOL VISIT

- meeting with L. Balan (principal) and E. Isaac (music teacher)
- opening meeting with G. Pelletier (assistant superintendent)
- observation of E. Isaac in Chorus 4

### NASH PRIMARY SCHOOL VISIT

- observation of J. Gilbert in General Music K
- meeting with R. Kelly (principal) and J. Gilbert

### ACADEMY AVENUE ELEMENTARY VISIT

- observation of S. Soracco in General Music 3
- meeting with Dr. J. Whipple (principal)

### WEYMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

- meeting with WHS band and chorus students (16)

## **DAY TWO**                      **Friday**            **January 10, 2014**

### ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL VISIT

- observation of S. MacDonald in General Music 5
- meeting with L. Saracino (music teacher)
- observation of L. Saracino in General Music 5
- meeting with S. MacDonald (music teacher)
- meeting with D. Birolini (principal)

### CHAPMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL VISIT

- meeting with P. Duprey (principal)
- observation of D. Ficco in instrumental sectional
- meeting with D. Ficco and D. Loud (music teachers)
- meeting with Weymouth Band Parent Association members (6)

## **DAY THREE**                      **Monday**            **January 13, 2014**

### WEYMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

- meeting with J. Duff, WHS music faculty
- observation of J. Duff in Percussion Basics
- observations of S. Shirosky in Band and Chorus periods
- meeting with D. Powers and K. Carter, WHS guidance counselors
- meeting with K-12 WPS music faculty
- meeting with elementary and middle school music parents
- meeting with K. Curran and G. Sheehan, WPS school committee members
- meeting with S. Shirosky, WHS music faculty
- exit interview with Dr. Salim and Mr. Pelletier

# MUSIC PROGRAM REVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Kenneth Salim	Superintendent
Mr. Garry Pelletier	Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Laura Balan	Seach Principal
Ms. Rebecca Kelly	Nash Principal
Dr. Jennifer Whipple	Academy Avenue Principal
Mr. Dan Birolini	Adams MS Principal
Mr. Paul Duprey	Chapman MS Principal
Mr. David Powers	Lead WHS Guidance Counselor
Mr. Kevin Carter	WHS Guidance Counselor
Dr. Sandra Nicolucci	Music Program Reviewer
Ms. Emily Isaac	Music Program Review Scheduler

## WPS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ms. Kathleen Curran  
Ms. Gail Sheehan

## K-12 MUSIC EDUCATION FACULTY

Mr. John Duff	WHS
Ms. Donna Ficco	Adams, Chapman
Ms. Jean Gilbert	Hamilton, Nash, Pingree
Ms. Emily Isaac	Seach, Wessagusset
Mr. Darrell Loud	Chapman
Mr. Stephen MacDonald	Adams
Mrs. Lauren Saracino	Adams
Mr. Steven Shirosky	WHS
Ms. Sandra Soracco	Academy Ave, Murphy, Talbot

## WHS MUSIC STUDENTS

Alex Berrigan  
Terence Condon  
Paul Curran  
Brandon Duva  
Erin Garrity  
Brianna Hogan  
Brittany Johnston  
Alicia Kenneally  
Janet Leeper  
Jan MacLean  
Cairo Marques-Neto  
Peter Newman  
Isaac Walker  
Brandon White  
Caroline Wilbur

## WEYMOUTH BAND PARENTS ASSOCIATION (WBPA) MEMBERS

Ms. Ann Brennan  
Ms. Tina Conte  
Ms. Kathleen Curran  
Mr. Henry Goldman  
Mr. Paul Santini  
Ms. Lisa Walker

## WPS MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

Ms. Deb Davis	Adams, Chapman, Talbot
Mr. Peter Delaro	Chapman, WHS
Ms. Jill Donovan	Adams, Talbot
Mr. Brian Kowalski	Adams, Academy Avenue
Ms. Mollie Ritz	Chapman, Talbot

## WPS ELEMENTARY PARENTS

Ms. Ann Davison	Wessegusset
Ms. Susan Doran	Academy Avenue, WHS
Ms. Holly Gallagher	Academy Avenue
Ms. Jane Hackett	Murphy
Ms. Becky Haugh	Wessagusset
Ms. Karen Hisenberg	Nash
Ms. Katherine Nee	Pingree
Mr. Philip Pacino	Talbot
Ms. Lisa Walker	Murphy, WHS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer sincerely thanks Dr. Salim and Mr. Pelletier for their invitation to serve as the K-12 Music Program Reviewer and for their investment in supporting, enhancing, and improving music experiences for all Weymouth students.

The members of the K-12 music faculty are acknowledged for their enthusiastic and forthright participation during the program review process. Music teachers welcomed observations of their rehearsals and classes and provided much insight into the workings and needs of their programs. The music faculty is committed to preserving strong aspects of the current program while also considering components that need to be added, updated, upgraded, revamped, or replaced in order to move the program forward. Faculty members care deeply about music education and its value to their students. They take pride in their students' achievements. They are eager to engage in collegial collaboration around development of curriculum and assessments to unify the program across grades and schools. They seek opportunities to develop a spiraled K-12 music curriculum. A special note of appreciation is extended to Emily Isaac, elementary music specialist, who graciously and generously gave of her time to create and oversee the implementation of the schedule for the three-day review period.

Principals and guidance counselors in schools visited were very generous with their time, providing information about, impressions of, and hopes for the music programs in their buildings. Their collective administrative support of the music program is impressive and encouraging.

The K-12 parents and School Committee members who attended meetings to discuss the history of the Weymouth music program, its current offerings, areas of strength, and their hopes for improvements, enrichments, and continued evolution of the program showed passion and commitment to high standards and to a rich music education curriculum for their children.

The WHS students who eagerly gave their after-school time to meet with this reviewer showed mature insight and deep dedication to their musical studies and ensembles. They were articulate, thoughtful, and perceptive – a real credit to Weymouth.

Weymouth is clearly a community that values music education and has hopes for improvement of its program. It has been an honor and a pleasure to be immersed in the community for these days, and I am pleased to offer my findings, commendations, and recommendations for consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sandra Nicolucci*



# WEYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## ART & MUSIC MISSION STATEMENT

(from the Weymouth Public Schools website)

*The Weymouth Public Schools believe that an effective arts program provides all students with meaningful experiences encompassing the creative process. Students should be able to relate their own experiences to art and music. Students will engage in the processes of creative thinking, self-expression and performance through the vehicle of the arts program.*

*The arts curriculum is sequential, as acquired skills build upon one another. Lessons are designed to include deliberation and decision-making. The multi-faceted arts program not only provides opportunities for curriculum-based, hands-on experiences, but also includes rich reference points in art and music history.*

*The Weymouth Public Schools believe that art education can provide rewarding growth experiences available through no other discipline. The joys of the aesthetic experience are made available to all through a vital and involving arts curriculum. Education in the arts forms a platform from which the individual moves out of the self into the world.*

### RELEVANT GUIDING QUESTION

9. What do we need to **improve in CORD\*** in order to do a better job of **accomplishing our Mission Statement**?

\* Curriculum • Organization • Recruitment/Retention • District Support

### KEY IDEAS from the MISSION STATEMENT that should inform curriculum:

- *meaningful experiences encompassing the creative process*
- *relate their own experiences to art and music*
- *creative thinking, self-expression and performance*
- *curriculum is sequential*
- *deliberation and decision-making*
- *provides opportunities for curriculum-based, hands-on experiences*
- *rich reference points in . . . music history*
- *growth experiences available through no other discipline*
- *platform from which the individual moves out of the self into the world*

## Commendations

- Key ideas in the *Mission Statement* reflect a deliberate intention to emphasize the vital and unique importance of the arts in the formation of future adults. These ideals are shared by teachers, administrators, and parents who wish to see Weymouth children develop into adults who:
  - have powerful aesthetic sensibilities developed through sustained music study
  - realize how music permeates and affects their own personal life experiences
  - understand and value the positive power of music and other arts to transform individuals and culture

## Recommendations

- The *Mission Statement* cites the following ideas that could be actualized to a greater degree within the Music Department through its planning and pedagogical practices:
  - deliberate, unified, collegial planning and implementation of an explicitly **sequenced music curriculum** for K-12 students
  - increased **emphasis on the creative process** in classes and ensembles so that there is thoughtful balance between *creative* and *re-creative* music making
  - promotion of **higher order and deliberative thinking, discussion, and decision-making** in *all* music learning situations with greater emphasis on the most sophisticated levels of thinking -- *applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating*.

## **C.O.R.D. PRIORITY ACTION STEPS**

### CURRICULUM

Music faculty members were interviewed both individually and together in a 90-minute meeting during the review period. In addition, faculty members filled out a *Music Teacher Questionnaire* designed to ascertain their opinions, needs, hopes, and priorities. The following recommendations are based on majority faculty responses:

- **Sequenced grade-level units** need to be taught in common by all general music teachers to provide a firm foundation for the K-12 music program. This work needs to be enabled by the school system through provision of **professional development time** dedicated to collaborative planning.

- All music teachers **need to employ formative and summative assessments** that produce data useful for modifying and differentiating curriculum planning. Assessment is currently implemented in diverse ways across the department. Music teachers requested **professional development in designing music assessments**.
- The K-12 department must begin collaborative work on developing state-mandated **District-Determined Measures (DDMs)** for music. Information on developing DDMs can be found on the website of the DESE, and sample music DDMs can be found on the websites of the music departments in New Bedford, Chelmsford, and Westwood.
- There needs to be consistent **music instruction by licensed music educators** provided for children at the **Early Childhood Center** and **in all Kindergarten classes**. Decades of significant research in Music Learning Theory emphasize the urgency of providing music education in early childhood *before* musical aptitude stabilizes at around age 9. (see research of Dr. Edwin Gordon, *Music Learning Theory*, GIA Publications)
- There needs to be a **consistent method of teaching music reading** (solfege) implemented K-12. This must be determined by faculty consensus and supported with professional development.
- There should be a **common repertoire of high quality folk and patriotic songs** learned by all Weymouth children in order to build a common musical heritage repertoire. These songs would be selected by the music faculty.

## ORGANIZATION

- A majority of the music faculty members supported the institution of a **K-12 Weymouth Music Parents Association (WMPA)**. It is proposed that the current Weymouth Band Parents Association (WBPA) becomes a part of this larger overarching support organization. The proposal includes the following suggestions:
  - every Weymouth music teacher would be represented on the WMPA Board by one parent designee *from each school* serviced by the teacher
  - the WMPA would work in direct collaboration with the music department faculty, serving as a support system for all components of the music program
  - the mission of the WMPA would be to **support “evenness of excellence”** across *all* components of the K-12 program

- at least one member of the music faculty would attend all WMPA meetings to represent the department and provide updates on departmental initiatives and needs
  - WMPA members would form volunteer *ad hoc* task forces to provide focused, manageable, **short-term** support at the request of the music teachers within their designated schools, e.g., field trips, concert supervision, enrichment assemblies, ushering, cast parties, writing articles for newspaper, photography, set construction, concessions at events, chaperoning, soliciting ads for program book for musicals, maintenance of uniforms, end-of-year WHS music department banquet, awards, transportation, et al.
  - targeted fund-raising initiatives would be designed by the WMPA Board in direct collaboration with the music department. These should supplement the school budget for music, not replace it.
  - music teachers would apply for grants from the WMPA to support specific projects and programs and/or to purchase durable goods needed in their schools
  - WMPA funds could subsidize student awards
  - the WMPA would maintain a website to disseminate information pertinent to its projects and services
- It is urgently recommended that the steep **decline in enrollment numbers in instrumental and choral music from grades 4/5 through high school** be analyzed to identify underlying causes and to provide organizational support needed to reverse this trend.
  - It is strongly recommended that **instrumental lessons begin in fourth grade rather than fifth grade** as is current practice in Weymouth. Beginning instrumental study in elementary school is traditional practice in the field. One likely cause for the alarming drop in numbers, though there are several additional possibilities, is that fifth graders in middle school must take a semester of beginning lessons before they can play in a band. The “squeaking and squawking” that is normal at the start of lessons could be too embarrassing for pre-teens who want to feel “cool” in middle school -- this would be highly un motivating. If 5<sup>th</sup> graders could enter middle school with a full year of lessons under their belts, they could be in a band right away which could be highly motivating for them.
  - Reorganizing the **middle school schedules to include a seventh period each day** would allow for **dedicated grade-level instrumental and choral rehearsal blocks** rather than the current system of pull outs from ASB.

## RECRUITMENT/RETENTION (of music teachers)

- The Music Program is in **urgent need of an experienced Supervisor/Coordinator** to stabilize the department in areas of need cited throughout this report and to recruit, hire, supervise, and develop the music faculty.
- Distribution of the current Weymouth music teachers' years of service:  
(source: *Music Teacher Questionnaire* distributed during the program review)

<u>YEARS</u>	<u>AS A MUSIC EDUCATOR</u>	<u>TEACHING IN WEYMOUTH</u>
1-5	three teachers	three teachers
6-10	--	one teacher
11-15	--	one teacher
16-20	three teachers	three teachers
21-25	two teachers	--
25-30	one teacher	one teacher

Music teachers in Weymouth are clearly at different stages of their careers. Teachers in their early years, especially those newly hired and those not yet promoted to Professional Teacher Status, require a different type/style of supervision/evaluation than those in later stages. Teachers who experience changes in their teaching assignments need supervision that helps them through the transition. Teachers who require remediation and action plans in targeted areas require specialized, focused, tenacious supervision. **In order to accomplish such differentiated supervision and evaluation of faculty, a viable supervisor candidate for Weymouth must have *proven* expertise in guiding music teacher development.**

To properly implement the mandates of the new *Teacher Evaluation Model* from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), a future supervisor of Weymouth music teachers needs to have (1) deep understanding of the subject matter of music, (2) expertise in development and implementation of music curriculum and assessment, and (3) refined and nuanced skills in and experience with interpersonal relations, supervision, evaluation, and conflict resolution.

- On the Music Program Review *Music Teacher Questionnaire*, teachers **cited the need for professional development** in the following areas: K-12 sequential curriculum development, music technology, and music assessment.
- **Instrumental extension teachers** who offer private lessons after school have been hired/provided by *both* the WBPA and the day-school music faculty. Tuition is paid for lessons. **It is recommended that *all* after-school instrumental extension teachers be hired by a designated teacher in the Music Department who interviews, auditions,**

**vets, and *supervises* each teacher to assure quality control and instruction that is consistent with music department goals. This service could be supported by a stipend.**

- All instrumental extension teachers **must have CORI clearance.**
- In addition, **extension teachers must be apprised of the music reading system** taught through the day-school music curriculum and **use the same approach** in their teaching. Selection of **instrumental methods books** used by extension teachers is the purview of the music department. Extension teachers should be expected to tutor students on the repertoire being rehearsed in school-based ensembles.
- **If day-school music teachers also provide after-school instrumental lessons for a fee, the school department should determine whether this practice represents a conflict of interest.** An official determination on this matter would protect the interests of both teachers and parents.
- The school department may wish to **set the amount of tuition that is charged** for after-school instrumental lessons as well as **the manner by which tuition is collected and disbursed.** Information on instrumental extension lesson program tuition fees is available from Elizabeth Perry (Wellesley PS Performing Arts Director) and Heather Cote (Westwood PS Music Director).
- WPS parents and music faculty support the **eventual reinstatement of instruction on string instruments and a return of an orchestra program** to the schools. In the past, Weymouth had an orchestra program. Comprehensive public school music programs provide *both* band and orchestra instrumental strands. Reinstatement of the orchestra program would involve **recruitment of an accomplished string specialist teacher who would establish a start-up program, perhaps a Suzuki violin program in the earliest grades (Pre-K, K, 1, 2).**

## DISTRICT SUPPORT

- **As stated above, adding a seventh period to each day in both middle schools** would increase the number of periods from 36 to 42 over a six-day cycle, enabling greater scheduling flexibility.
- There should be ***dedicated* music ensemble periods for chorus and band** in the middle schools rather than ASB “pull outs” for these experiences. Band and chorus rehearsals should be **scheduled simultaneously** so students can be in both by alternating attendance if desired.

- **Dedicated spaces/rooms for music instruction are needed in elementary schools.** Elementary music programs are largely delivered via a mobile cart. This vastly curtails the use of equipment needed to implement a comprehensive music curriculum as defined by the *Opportunity to Learn Standards* of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and the Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA).
- Use of **elementary school stages as general music teaching spaces** should be considered in buildings that have stages. In the schools where the only access to the stage is via stairs, **lift devices** such as that in the Academy Avenue “stage left” wing could be installed. For ideas on how use of the stage in a cafetorium is scheduled for the music teacher, contact Erica Yennior, Sheehan School, Westwood, MA.
- Auditoriums at Adams and Chapman are used daily for music instruction requiring a great deal of electricity and causing wear-and-tear. **At Adams it is strongly recommended that general music instruction be moved into the band room and that all instrumental instruction be moved into the auditorium** for the most efficient use of available instructional space. Band instruments could still be stored in the music room cubbies under these circumstances.
- Currently, most music teachers have **very limited access to technology** hardware and software applications. Many are **using their own personal laptops**.

It is strongly recommended that:

1. **all K-12 music teachers be issued Mac laptop computers** with the *iSuite* that contains applications highly desirable for creative music instruction, e.g., *GarageBand*.
  2. all dedicated music classrooms at all levels have **SmartBoards** installed to enable technology-enhanced music instruction and web access.
  3. music teachers **develop digital files of musical listening excerpts** for all units taught, saving these on school-issued laptops. **High quality (Bose) portable computer extension speakers should be provided** for implementation of music listening lessons at all grade levels.
  4. **class sets (15-20) of iPads** be purchased for all teachers of general music and nonperformance classes.
- Music teachers at all levels regret that they have sparse school budget allocations to purchase instructional materials and equipment for their programs. Several report spending their own money for such things. One teacher reported spending \$500 of her

own money for instructional materials. It is recommended that the district **allot annual budget funding to each music teacher to accommodate the needs of their programs.** This topic is addressed in more detail later in this report.

- It is recommended that the secondary level music teachers jointly **prepare a five-year acquisition plan for purchase of school-owned musical instruments. Part of this plan should include class sets of 15-20 guitars for Adams and WHS.** Chapman is currently purchasing 15 new guitars.

## **I. GENERAL MUSIC and NON-PERFORMANCE COURSES**

### **RELEVANT GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

1. How can we **create a lasting curriculum?**
2. How can we **maximize time on learning** in music?
3. How can **scheduling** help to provide smaller classes?
5. How can **Common Assessments** be used to communicate what students all ready know about music at different developmental levels?
6. What provisions are being made to ensure that all students are receiving **consistent music resources?**

### **FINDINGS**

- On the WPS website, there are outdated descriptions of the following courses. This gives the inaccurate impression that all of these courses are currently being offered:

General Music (Grades Pre-K, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)  
Band 9-12  
Honors Band  
Instrumental Techniques  
Jazz Band  
Chamber Ensemble  
Concert Choir  
Jazz Choir  
Music Appreciation I  
Music Appreciation II  
Music History I  
Music History II  
Music Fundamentals  
Music Theory I  
Music Theory II  
Music Theory III



- This “old” course inventory indicates that *required* General Music at one time extended from Grades Pre-K and K through Grades 7 and 8 in Weymouth.
- The “old” website course descriptions do not accurately portray the non-performance courses and ensembles that are *currently* being offered at WHS. There have clearly been cuts to the music program since this course array was being implemented.
- These “old” website course descriptions are based on the ten standards for music education published in the 1999 *Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework*:
  1. Singing
  2. Reading and notation
  3. Playing instruments
  4. Improvisation and composition
  5. Critical response to music
  6. Purposes and meanings in the arts
  7. Roles of artists in communities
  8. Style, stylistic influence, stylistic change
  9. Inventions, technologies, and the arts
  10. Interdisciplinary connections

- For each of the music courses described, bullet points indicate specifically how the 1999 Massachusetts music standards were being addressed within the particular course at that time.
- It is of interest that, within the “old” descriptions of some of the department’s courses, SINGING is labeled as “D/N/A” (does not apply). This is surprising since singing is the most fundamental musical response that should be included in *all* courses offered by a music program.

## COMMENDATIONS

- Elementary and Adams MS general music teachers are commended for their efforts to teach their curricula under less than ideal conditions, i.e., either “on a cart” or in the auditorium. They are not able to utilize specialized equipment for general music typically found in a dedicated music room, e.g., Orff instruments, keyboards, computers, guitars, maps, Smart Boards, et al., yet they make the most of the circumstances and maintain their energy and commitment.
- The ***Abigail Idol singing competition at Adams MS*** motivates students to sing solos with expressiveness and stage presence. Observation of auditions of “finalists” demonstrated that the students had been taught to **listen and look for specific musical attributes** in these performances rather than focusing their attention on the popularity of the “contestants.” It was

apparent that **proper stage deportment** and **audience decorum** had been explicitly taught and that **students were applying what they had learned.**

- Principals Balan, Kelly, Whipple, Birolini, and Duprey were interviewed during the review. **They are all appreciative of the impact that music has on the social and emotional growth of children, are interested in strong cross-disciplinary connections between music and academics, and are desirous of having a well planned, sequential music curriculum taught in their schools.** One principal described music as “the gateway to learning.” It was so interesting to hear about the musical involvements of these principals and/or their support of their own children’s musical engagement.
- **Momentum is growing at Chapman toward providing 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders with expanded hands-on experiences in music.** A **new piano keyboard lab** (30 stations) will become available for elective student use in the upcoming Term 3. **Fifteen new guitars** have been ordered as well. The rich new vision for rejuvenation of classroom music offerings at Chapman is commendable.
- **Elective piano classes at WHS have enrollment numbers that are either at or near maximum.** The Unified Arts WHS graduation requirement may be motivating students who would not normally play an instrument or sing in choir to take a HS entry level keyboard course.
- **WHS music teachers have access to a Mac Lab** shared with Visual Art. Mac computers have iSuite applications, particularly *GarageBand*, that empower musical creativity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A commitment needs to be made** by the K-12 music teachers **to a single melodic and rhythmic solfege system that will be used consistently across the music program.** Once this collegial decision is made, *all* music teachers must use this system. Professional development may be needed to get all teachers up-to-speed on the selected methodology.
- **All instrumental extension teachers must make a commitment to using the same solfege system in their private lessons.** They too many need professional development.
- There should be a **common repertoire of timeless folk and patriotic songs** memorized by all children in Weymouth. This common repertoire of songs should be chosen by the music faculty with input from the larger community and from national resources. Songs chosen to be memorized should be able to stand the “test of time.”
- **When children sing songs in music classes or choruses using handouts duplicated by the teacher, the sheets should always include the musical notation of the melody in addition to the song lyrics.** During singing lessons, attention should be paid to music notation. Use of

sheets containing *only* printed lyrics should be discontinued or kept at a very minimal level in classroom and choral singing lessons. **Children need to learn to read notated melodies.**

- **Children should always be taught about the meaning of song lyrics**, especially when difficult or unfamiliar words are included. Song lyrics in other languages should always be accurately translated and pronounced.

- **Historical and cultural contexts of music performed or consumed through singing and listening lessons should always be provided.** World and US maps help children understand the geographical origins of music they study.

- **The use of pre-recorded CD accompaniments for elementary singing in class lessons and choruses should be cut back significantly.** In general music classes, most singing should be *a cappella* as children's vocal control develops. Music teachers need to listen carefully and continuously to the singing of the children that can become easily obscured by a dense recorded accompaniment. Vocal modeling by teachers needs to be heard by the children. In addition, pre-recorded accompaniments in choirs do not allow any flexibility for the conductor. Though the popular style of many pre-recorded accompaniments can be motivating and energizing for children, it can also distract them as they sing. Continuous use of recorded accompaniments causes children to expect that accompaniment for singing should *always* be this way. *A cappella* singing and sparse/delicate piano or guitar accompaniments should largely replace these pre-recorded accompaniments as the norm.

- If the pre-recorded accompaniments that must be used contain **vocal tracks**, these **should be muted** during rehearsals and performances.

- **School songs** have been composed for several schools. These are commonly written by music teachers. They also could be created by the students providing a real sense of relevance and ownership. Children at Adams MS were observed enthusiastically singing their school song at the start of their music classes. During the visit by this reviewer, the Adams school song was sung by two students during morning announcements. It is recommended (if this is not already being done) that **all schools have their own unique hallmark songs to build a sense of pride, identity, and community. ROAR core values can be included in the lyrics.** Additionally, rhythmic **ROAR raps** can be developed, ideally by students, to instill core values in a memorable, exciting way.

- **School assemblies should routinely begin and end with whole-school singing of songs that are appropriate to the theme of the assembly and that everyone knows by memory.** This tradition promotes community cohesiveness.

- There should be a **common repertoire of music listening pieces that all Weymouth children learn through “deep listening” lessons.** These pieces should be chosen collegially

by the music specialists. They should include a wide and balanced variety of styles, composers, and genres, e.g., classical, jazz, world music, instrumental, vocal, et al.

- **Non-performance music courses at WHS with low enrollments are:** (2013-14 numbers)

*Guitar I*                      three sections with 9, 11, and 7 students  
*Music Theory II*      (meets at same time as Theory I)      4 students  
*Careers in Music*      one section with 6 students

**The music department should decide whether fewer sections of *Guitar I* should be offered and whether *Careers in Music* should be maintained. Students in Theory I should be encouraged to continue on with Theory II.**

- HS students enrolled in *Guitar Class* are **expected to supply their own guitars**. While there are a few guitars available from the department, there are not enough to accommodate all students. **This becomes an equity issue. It may also deter students from enrolling. It is recommended that 15 guitars be purchased for HS student use.**

- Administering a **Student Interest Survey** at WHS could help the department determine what courses and ensembles would be of most interest to students as the program of studies is revised.

- **“Every child in Weymouth should have the experience of performing on stage every year.”** This vision is shared by school administrators and parents who were interviewed during the review. This can be achieved at the elementary level through **designing concerts and assemblies that feature singing by whole grades**. Theatrical plays, closed circuit TV productions, on- and off-campus concerts, variety/talent shows, speech contests, musicals, poetry slams, debates, “battle of the bands,” pep rallies, et al. provide opportunities for students in MS and HS to be “on the stage”. Such opportunities should be planned annually to help every student in every school gain skill, focus, self-control, and confidence.

- Every general music teacher needs **an annual budget allotment based on a *per capita* formula to purchase curricular equipment and materials.**

## CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

- The **“old” K-12 course descriptions** (cited above) that are **posted on the WPS website need to be updated** to reflect the department’s *current* offerings in classroom/general music so that the public has accurate information.

- The music faculty urgently needs to work on development of a **sequential music curriculum that strongly positions General Music as the foundation** of the entire K-12 music feeder system. There has already been some preliminary work on redefining the music skill sequence.

Written **evidence of this early-stage curriculum development work** was provided to the reviewer. It appears that music teachers have met, though infrequently, to sketch out month-by-month curriculum maps and lists of core skills for grade levels. **Next steps involve embedding core skills into a spiraled series of UNITS.** There is a draft of a Grade 4 month-by-month curriculum map that was developed in 2011-2012. This map contains some specific unit titles such as *Music of America's Regions, Theme and Variations, Recorder, and Keyboard.* **Core musical skills, once mastered, must be transferred to future units, projects, and courses. A curriculum development initiative must take into account the new PreK-12 National Core Arts Standards (NCAS)** that will become available from the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) later in 2014. Plans must be included for secondary-level non-performance courses that “spiral” directly out of the general music sequence. Care should be taken to assure that core skills are mastered and practiced in increasingly sophisticated ways across the grades.

- Provide **professional training in unit development** that employs the *Understanding By Design* backward planning paradigm.
- To provide sufficient time for collegial curriculum writing, consider instituting **elementary school “¾ Wednesdays”\*** (or any weekday). Early release by two hours could occur monthly, bi-weekly, or even weekly (if the other days of the week were each extended by a half hour). Such regular release time would allow for (1) **sustained discipline-specific curriculum development work**, (2) more PLC planning time in buildings, and (3) opportunity for **inclusion of music, art, and PE specialists in PLCs.** Closely-spaced early-release days currently occur in Newton, Wellesley, and \*Bedford.
- **Observations at WHS indicated that the music teachers sometimes needed to review or re-teach some very basic music concepts that should have been mastered much earlier in elementary school:** names of lines and spaces on the treble staff, construction of a simple chord, high-low directionality of barred percussion instruments, melodic steps and skips, basic note names and durations. **There must be clear agreement among K-12 music teachers about which core music skills will be taught to the point of mastery before students reach high school to avoid time being wasted on review and re-teaching of basics.**
- **Assessment rubrics should be developed for all core skills taught in the K-12 music program.** Rubrics should be shared with students so they understand the criteria that are used to evaluate their learning. **Rubrics for high stakes performance assessments and projects should be revealed and explained to students very early** so they understand expectations and standards. Regular use of rubrics for diagnosis and remediation reduces student anxiety surrounding assessment.
- Use of **formative and summative assessments** for measurement of student achievement in all music classes should be expected. Music faculty should **use data from these assessments** to improve instruction. Such use of test data to plan curriculum modification was being explained to students in a WHS choral class that was observed by this reviewer.

- Professional **development on constructing rubrics and using assessment data** to improve teaching and learning should be provided for music teachers. Best practices should be shared among colleagues.

- The K-12 Music Faculty needs to begin developing **District-Determined Measures (DDMs)**. These assessments should come out of curriculum that is being taught day-to-day. Several school systems that have done significant work on music DDMs are New Bedford, Chelmsford, and Westwood (see school websites).

Of interest for DDM planning are the *Connecticut Common Music Assessments*. See website:  
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=322250>

Reference should also be made to the following guide on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website:

*Technical Guide B: Measuring Student Growth and Piloting District-Determined Measures*

## TEACHING MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- K-8 general/classroom music teachers each need to have an **annual budget allocation based on a *per capita* formula** to acquire, maintain, and upgrade their teaching materials and equipment.

- **The school budget needs to support acquisition of basic equipment that general music teachers use.** Weymouth elementary music teachers compiled the following “wish list” of basic instructional equipment:

- Orff instruments (xylophones, metallophones, glockenspiels)
- drums (African djembes and hand drums)
- boomwhackers (C scale sets)
- maracas, cymbals, vibraslap, ratchet, shekere
- We Sing* (DVD collection)
- posters: instrument families
- scarves and bean bags for movement

- **Age-appropriate picture books, chapter books, and informational texts that have *explicit connections to music units* should be regularly used in general music lessons.** This forges a connection between music and ELA standards and honors the goal of reading across the curriculum. Elementary and middle school general music teachers should have collections of **musical story/picture books** as well as age-appropriate **informational music texts** available to them in the school library and/or in music rooms. They should recommend music books to be purchased by the school librarian.

- **General music teachers K-8 need much greater access to technology** to bring their lessons into the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Smart Boards (in dedicated music spaces), class sets of iPads, and iPods with sound docks or laptops with *high quality* extension speakers for music listening (elementary music teachers currently use *their own* personal CD players).
- **Elementary music teachers currently use their own personal laptops in their teaching.** Use of the computers stationed in the many different classrooms they service is not practical. Every music teacher should have a **school-issued Mac laptop** loaded with music applications.
- **Access to a Mac Lab** (either a portable laptop lab or one in a dedicated space) is highly desirable for general music students. The Mac iSuite (with *GarageBand*, *iPhoto*, and *iMovie*) as well as notation and drill-and-practice applications like *Sibelius* and *Music Ace* provide enrichment for a music curriculum that empowers musical creativity. **Since the new national music standards being readied for release in 2014 will emphasize the creative process, technology tools must be readily accessible to all music faculty and students for this purpose.**
- The **brand new keyboard lab** (30 stations) **recently purchased for Chapman MS** is housed in the Band Room. It will start being used on an elective basis in term 3 this year by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who will have access during one period every 6-day cycle. This substantial resource enables the principal's vision for expanded hands-on musical experiences for students.
- **Chapman students should have supervised access to this new piano lab after school to practice and to work on composing projects.**

## ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTION ON RECORDERS

- **Recorders should continue to be purchased in bulk** and supplied to all third graders by the school budget and/or by the music parent support group. **Parents should have the option of purchasing a second recorder for home use if desired** since some children may want a recorder that stays in school and one that they can keep at home for private use/practice.
- **Music parents** interviewed during this review **expressed unanimous support for playing recorder and learning music notation through recorder playing starting in the third grade**. Several felt that recorders had been underused in some schools.
- A substantial **third grade unit on playing the recorder needs be taught consistently by all general music teachers in all elementary schools as preparation for beginning instrument lessons** as well as a means of teaching basic music reading skills. This unit needs to involve a series of lessons on teaching transferable instrumental skills that are employed in playing band instruments: breath support, breath budgeting when blowing through an instrument, fingering, tonguing, embouchure, production of characteristic tone quality, et al.

- **Basic *melodic and rhythmic reading skills* should be taught in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through application on the recorder.**
- Once introduced in third grade, **recorder playing should continue in all ensuing grades of general music including 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> with children’s recorders accompanying their owners from grade to grade.** Recorder is a “real” instrument that has an inexhaustible repertoire of music that can be played through adulthood. Children can gain substantial expertise on recorder if they play it throughout all the years of general music classes.
- **Highly motivated/advanced students may enjoy belonging to an after-school Recorder Club where they play ensemble music.**

## GREATER INCLUSION OF MUSIC TEACHERS

- Elementary general music teachers develop long-term relationships with children and families that span 4-5 years before the students move on to Adams MS. **It is strongly recommended that elementary music teachers be consulted and/or included in Special Education CORE evaluations** since they bring *long-term insights* that few others may have about aptitudes, abilities, social skills, achievement, attentional difficulties, learning modalities, et al.
- It is recommended that **music teachers be included in PLCs.** They could propose creative entry points into thematic units for children. Their artistic expertise and perspectives gained through long-term relationships with children should be solicited and honored.
- In a discussion with Principal Rebecca Kelly and music specialist Jean Gilbert, the idea of **including music and art specialists on instructional rounds with classroom teachers** was discussed. This is a wonderful, inclusive idea that should be explored and hopefully implemented.

## **PRIORITY ACTION STEPS**

### MUSIC CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

- **Regularly scheduled General Music instruction** by a licensed music educator with expertise in early childhood should be **provided for the children at the Johnson Early Childhood Center** (perhaps supported by parent tuition) **and in the Kindergartens of *all* elementary schools.** Currently Kindergarten general music is only offered in Hamilton, Talbot, and Nash.



This recommendation for early childhood is grounded in more than 40 years of research in Music Learning Theory by Dr. Edwin Gordon (see numerous books and music aptitude tests, GIA publications). Findings indicate that *musical aptitude can be increased through sustained musical exposures from birth through age 9 after which aptitude stabilizes for life.*

Gordon's findings clearly demonstrate the **critical need for regular music education during the earliest years of brain plasticity.** In addition, music study contributes to early reading (print) acquisition through developing focused attention to rhyming (song lyrics, poems), fine and gross motor coordination (expressive and rhythmic movement), and phonemic awareness (rhymes).

## ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHING SPACES

- The three elementary general music teachers **traverse their schools using push carts.** Their lessons plans are *significantly limited by the amount of music equipment and materials they can fit on their carts.* Teachers are disheartened by the severe limitations on what they can carry to their students' homerooms. For example, keyboards purchased through a grant and parent council funding for Seach and Wessagusset are impractical to transport, set up, and break down when the music teacher continuously must move from space to space. Spontaneity in adapting lessons to meet student needs "in the moment" or to differentiate instruction is limited by what can be provisioned on the cart before a teacher begins her daily rounds.
- **Every effort should be made to provide dedicated teaching spaces for elementary general music teachers as much as possible.** Music lessons delivered on a push-cart can never deliver the deep curriculum that could be taught in a music room fully equipped with Orff instruments, Smart Board, sound system, piano, maps, library of music books, curriculum specific display materials, word walls, technology, et al. An "al la carte" music program is reduced to the most basic level when there is limited access to the array of tools and technology that music teachers require to deliver a rich and varied 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum.
- **Use "cafetorium" stages as teaching areas for general music** in elementary schools before and after lunch period. Build ramps or install elevating devices (like the one in the "stage left" wing of Academy Avenue School) for handicapped access to stages that currently have only stairs. Upgrade the overhead lighting. Enabled by the teacher self-deployment suggestion immediately below, stage use would allow music teachers to have a dedicated teaching space for at least a portion of each day during the week. For information about the practicality of teaching music classes on a stage, contact Erica Yennior, music specialist, Sheehan School Westwood PS.

Suggestions for *partial relief* of the elementary music teaching space issue:

- **Allow the three music-art-physical education *teacher teams*** who each service a cluster of schools to ***deploy/schedule themselves among their shared buildings*** in a way that **enables each teacher to have use of a teaching space** sometime during the week.

**Self-deployment by a specialist team can be accomplished through *collaborative planning*** after the principals within a school cluster supply their specialist team with (1) the **days of the week** they each require specialist coverage in their buildings and (2) the **number of classes** that need specialist coverage on each of those days.

Armed with that information from their principals, specialist teams can then work together (using school schedules and multi-colored post-its) to schedule their own deployment among the buildings. This planning should **enable each specialist teacher to have a teaching space in each of the schools** (cafetorium stages, multi-purpose rooms) **as much as possible** while their teammates are elsewhere. This self-deployment strategy has worked in the music department of the Wellesley schools. Contact Sandra Nicolucci ([drnic@bu.edu](mailto:drnic@bu.edu)) for more information.

### IF ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHERS *MUST* USE CARTS

- Elementary music teachers who must teach “**on a cart**” would **appreciate having classes at the same grade level scheduled back-to-back**. This would remove the pressure of having to continually readjust vocabulary, materials, pedagogy, and mind set when switching back and forth from a lower grade to a higher grade and back again class after class with little time in between. Such constant adjustment takes a toll on the physical energy and mental focus of itinerant teachers.
- Elementary music teachers teaching from carts need to have a **few minutes scheduled between classes** to allow for less hurried transits between classrooms. After three periods, a longer break (8-10 minutes) should be provided for a brief rest. These short respites are necessary for teachers who teach in eight or nine different classrooms per day.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM CONCERNS

- **Restore formal General Music classes for all students in Grades 7 and 8**. Adolescents who can think abstractly should have the opportunity to **apply higher order thinking to advanced studies within sequenced general music curriculum**. Their ability to comprehend the power of music relative to issues like social justice, power, equality compels curriculum developers to design units that foster deep cross-disciplinary connections. General music units for 13 and 14-year-old students should promote hands-on engagement through playing instruments (drums, keyboards, guitars), composing and arranging original music, forming small combos of singers and instrumentalists, and working creatively with music technology applications, e.g., *GarageBand*. Ending required general music instruction at age 11 (Grade 6) deprives Weymouth’s older adolescents of chances to gain self-confidence.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHING SPACES

- Currently **general music classes at Adams number 50+ students. These large classes are taught by a single music teacher while the second music teacher is scheduled for a planning period.** Classes observed were, of necessity, largely sedentary, though all of the students sang enthusiastically, especially the Adams School Song. Such a large class size drastically impedes potential for cooperative group work, movement, playing of classroom instruments, and other creative activities that require students to move about.

The band room adjacent to the auditorium goes unused for part of the week, seemingly being reserved exclusively for instrumental classes even when the instrumental teacher is at Chapman.

Suggestions for *relief* of the Adams music teaching space issue:

- **It is recommended that the current band room become the full time general music room to be used for team teaching of the large classes of 50+ by the two full time general music teachers.** This large space would now get daily maximized use by the very large numbers of general music students and the two full-time music teachers.

- **The option of using the auditorium as a general music overflow space** whenever the instrumental program not on site is feasible. This arrangement would offer opportunities for **differentiation of instruction** that are not currently possible.

- This plan would also permit **more efficient storage of and accessibility to materials and equipment used for general music. Greater use of technology would be enabled** in a dedicated classroom. The practice room could be used by small cooperative learning groups.

- Another benefit would be **lowering wear and tear on the auditorium** as well as **savings on electrical costs** to keep the auditorium fully lit every day.

- **The part time instrumental program should be totally relocated to the auditorium. Instrumentalists would still be able to store their instruments in the band room cabinets.** Rolling racks of music stands and chairs should be provisioned on the stage for lessons and band rehearsals.

## II. CHORAL MUSIC

### RELEVANT GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. How can we **create a lasting curriculum**?
4. How can we increase and insure **consistency and equity in core music programs and enrichments** at the primary, middle, and high school levels?
6. What provisions are being made to ensure that all students are receiving **consistent music resources**?

### FINDINGS

- There is an extra curricular opportunity offered for Weymouth elementary children to sing with the Weymouth City Singers, an affiliate of the Boston City Singers, on a tuition basis.
- There are no dedicated choral rehearsal periods during the school day at the elementary level.
- Chorus at the middle schools is an after school activity though there appear to be some pull outs from ASB blocks during the week at Chapman.
- Adams students have a chance to participate in a musical production after school.
- Chorus at WHS is a day-school course.

### COMMENDATIONS

#### ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

- Having **all fourth graders required to participate in chorus fosters inclusion, motivation, and confidence-building**. This experience provides a chance for students to become confident singing in large-groups before moving on to MS. It is wise to require choral participation by all fourth graders for one year to show them how enjoyable large group singing is before they move on to the after-school, elective choral program at Adams.
- Advanced opportunity for highly motivated singers in Grades 2-5 is provided after school through the **Weymouth City Singers**, a division of the Boston City Singers. This choir provides an added opportunity for children to sing vocal music from many genres. Tuition is \$100 for ten weeks. Scholarships are available, subsidized by funds from a private estate and local businesses.
- There are **185 students at Adams MS who choose to come after school to sing in chorus**.

- There are **117 students at Chapman MS who elect to sing in chorus, 25 of whom are boys.**
- The **production of a musical at Adams MS, *Seussical* this year, motivates students** to sing, audition for roles, and act on stage at an early age. This highly popular activity provides a strong feeder for Chapman.
- **The *Abigail Idol* singing competition at Adams motivates many students to take the risk of singing solo on stage in front of their peers.** This causes many students to discover new-found confidence when they are typically at an awkward social age. During auditions, classmates vote for the top singers **according to singing criteria set forth by the teachers.** Students are cautioned not to vote according to popularity but rather on musical skill and delivery. Students who listen in the audience are **taught proper audience decorum that is attentive and respectful.** Proper stage deportment and audience decorum as well as attentive listening are lifelong skills.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### CHORAL CURRICULUM

- Just as has been recommended for general music, a **curriculum development initiative for the elementary through high school choral music program** is warranted. All teachers of choirs need to share a common vision for ensemble singing in Weymouth. Collegial discussions of vocal development at all ages, vocal production, and age-appropriate choral repertoire should take place often. Long-range planning of performances that expose students to a wide variety of styles, genres, composers, arrangers, historical periods, world music, etc. should take place.

### CHORUS CONFIGURATIONS

- **Chapman choirs could be configured differently, e.g., 7<sup>th</sup> grade mixed chorus, 8<sup>th</sup> grade *single gender* choirs,** this to keep boys in the program as they undergo the voice change. **Choral selections in single gender choirs should be geared toward student interests in order to retain them in MS choir and motivate membership in HS choirs.**
- **An array of choirs should be developed at WHS** potentially to include a general concert choir, jazz choir, *a cappella* choir, single gender choirs, and select small choirs to interest students with varying degrees of motivation and ability.

### EXTENTIONED CHORAL OPPORTUNITIES

- **Chapman 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders as well as WHS 9<sup>th</sup> graders** who show high singing ability and motivation **should be actively recruited to audition for Southeast Junior District every**

**year.** Music teachers need to notify students well in advance of the time frame for this event and allow sufficient time to teach the students the audition music. Teachers need to support those who are *accepted* to Junior District as they learn the concert music as well.

- **MS and HS choral teachers should consider participating in state-level choral festivals** sponsored by MICCA (Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conductors Association) and ACDA (American Choral Directors Association) to motivate students and obtain professional adjudication and clinics.

- **WHS 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders** who show advanced ability in singing **should be urged to audition annually for Southeast Senior District.** Student who are accepted to Senior District need tutoring as they learn the folder of music for the festival.

- **High school singers who have been invited to audition for the All State ensembles** as a result of their Senior Festival auditions, **need encouragement and support from the HS music faculty.**

## **PRIORITY ACTION STEPS**

### SCHEDULING

- **Extend the length of weekly fourth grade general music periods to 45-50 minutes** to enable music teachers to use half of the period for the general music curriculum and **half as a choral “sectional” rehearsal.**

- Permit elementary music teachers to have **two “courtesy” full rehearsals** involving *all* fourth graders in the two weeks preceding a public conference.

- **Add a seventh period to the daily schedules of both Middle Schools.** Changing from a 6 x 6 to a 6 x 7 scheduling model increases opportunities for providing **dedicated blocks** for enrichment activities such as **grade level choruses** hopefully **eliminating the need to pull students out of ASB and/or to rely on after-school rehearsals.** The 6 x 7 scheduling model is implemented in Wellesley Middle School where there are 3 *dedicated* grade level blocks in which band/chorus/orchestra for each grade level **rehearse every other day in the cycle.** Contact Mark Ito, Wellesley Middle School principal.

## CHORAL ACCOMPANIMENT

- Identify ways (volunteers, grant finding, stipends, high school students) to **provide choral accompanists** at least for the combined “courtesy” rehearsals and for concert performances of **elementary choruses**.
- **Use of CDs of orchestrated accompaniments** for singing in general music classes and chorus seems to be commonplace. **Concern about over-use of these recordings at the expense of simpler piano or guitar accompaniments or a cappella singing was expressed by parents and administrators.** The use of densely-textured recorded accompaniments supplied by publishers, often arranged in a pop style, may be initially motivating for children; but these can easily overpower the delicate, developing voices of children, masking singing errors and preventing music teachers from hearing and assessing each child’s singing development.

Though it is difficult to move pianos, even electric keyboards, from room to room in elementary schools, **it is strongly recommended that elementary teachers substantially cut back on the amount of recorded accompaniments used during singing activities**, fostering much more a *cappella* singing, choosing folk songs that can be beautifully, delicately, and simply accompanied by classroom rhythm and melodic instruments. **Much greater focus on traditional folk songs, rounds, and partner songs is highly recommended.** Too much use of songs written recently by contemporary, highly marketable commercial composers promoted by publishers quickly skews young children’s “taste” too far in one direction.

- **Provide accompanists for middle school and high school choirs** if accompanying cannot be handled by the music faculty or student pianists.

## CHORAL BUDGET

- Provide budget funding according to a *per capita formula* to **enable purchase of sufficient copies of choral scores** at all levels. Mass xeroxing of choral scores must be strongly discouraged.

## CHORAL FEEDER SYSTEM

- **In a high school with a student population of 2000, it is surprising to have so few students enrolled in choir.** The attrition rate in choral enrollments between middle school and high school is a cause for concern:

Grade 4 choruses	all fourth graders in eight elementary schools
Grade 5-6	approx. 185* students in after school chorus plus a musical
Grade 7-8	approx. 117* students in after school chorus (25 boys)
Grades 9-12	83 in chorus (4% of HS population)

\*source: Music Update Memo, 10-24-2013

- There urgently needs to be a **departmental analysis of the choral feeder system enrollments, literature sung, types/configurations of MS and HS choirs, scheduling of rehearsals, and strategies for motivating older adolescents to continue singing.** Pressing questions to ask:

*How do we recruit and retain male choral singers in elective choirs?*

*What can be done to motivate HS students to continue singing in chorus?*

- In order to **encourage choral students to continue their participation** in the *next* school they will attend as they move up from 4 to 5, 6 to 7, and 8 to 9, **transitional strategies need to be applied.** Some suggestions:

a. The **chorus teacher in the receiving school should conduct the chorus(es) in the sending school(s)** at several times before the students must decide whether or not to join chorus at the next level. This builds relationships, familiarity, and confidence in advance.

b. A city-wide **Sing-O-Rama Festival** should occur annually in the WHS gym (audience sits on bleachers). In this concert, **all school choirs from elementary** (one combined choir of all Weymouth fourth graders singing common repertoire) **through HS perform**, each singing a brief set of its own repertoire followed by **one or two simple pieces which all choirs sing together as the grand finale.** One song might even include the audience in the singing.

c. Spring **Step Up Spring Concerts** invite chorus members who will be entering a new school in the next Fall to sing in their new school's concert with the receiving choir as a type of "musical graduation." For example, 4<sup>th</sup> graders would sing with the Adams 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade choir, 6<sup>th</sup> graders would sing with the Chapman 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade choir, 8<sup>th</sup> graders would sing with the WHS choir. Step Up Concerts make rising students feel welcomed and motivated. They also provide previews for parents of the next step in their children's vocal development.



# III. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

## RELEVANT GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. How can we **create a lasting curriculum**?
4. How can we increase and insure **consistency and equity in core music programs and enrichments** at the primary, middle, and high school levels?
7. How can we increase **availability of private lessons** after school?

## FINDINGS

- Instrumental lessons are first offered in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Deliberately planned, curriculum-based preparation of elementary students for the start-up of instrumental lessons is inconsistent across the elementary schools.
- Instruction on playing the recorder varies in length and depth among the elementary schools. Parents expressed concerns about these inconsistencies.
  - Instrumental lessons are provided by day-school music teachers and outside teachers hired by members of the music department and the WBPA. There does not appear to be a consistent system for vetting, hiring, and supervising these extension teachers.
- Some parents interviewed indicated that their children take instrument lessons at South Shore Conservatory.
- Parents indicated an interest in reviving a string program in Weymouth.
- Parents are supportive of music enrichment assemblies that feature instruments played by professional musicians, especially in the year preceding the start of instrument lessons.
- Parents expressed interest in having instrumental lessons begin in 4<sup>th</sup> grade rather than in 5<sup>th</sup> grade as is the current practice.
- Parents suggested that HS instrumental students could run “instrument petting zoos” for young children, demonstrate instruments for youngsters before they sign up for lessons, and provide lessons for beginners. These activities could count toward HS students’ community service requirement.

## COMMENDATIONS

- **Instrumental courses already are or will be soon available** as electives at the Chapman and WHS on **piano, guitar, and percussion**.

- **Interviews with high school students indicated their enthusiasm for the concert band and jazz band.**
- During a HS band visitation by the reviewer, students showed **motivation for raising funds for a band trip to Disney a year from now.**
- **Instrumental teachers at the middle school and high school levels are aware of the attrition in student enrollment across grade levels and express eagerness to identify the causes and determine remedial solutions.**
- **Opportunities for students to take private lessons with after school instrumental teachers is provided.** The Weymouth Band Parents Association (WBPA) as well as day-school music teachers have **identified teachers for beginning instrumental lessons.**
- The fee of \$18 per half hour for private lessons charged by instrumental extension teachers seems reasonable. However, there must be a **plan developed by the music department and parent supporters to help subsidize tuition for those families who cannot afford the \$18 lesson fee.**

### WEYMOUTH BAND PARENTS ASSOCIATION (WBPA)

- In 2004, the **WBPA sponsored a highly successful “black tie concert”** – *Weymouth Night at the Pops* -- that featured the HS Concert Band and a gifted WHS student concert pianist. Works by Bernstein, Leroy Anderson, Stravinsky, and Gershwin were performed including *Rhapsody in Blue*. **This was a significant event for both music students and the community.**
- The **WBPA has worked tirelessly for years to raise funds by hosting a NEW ENGLAND SCHOLASTIC BAND ASSOCIATION (NESBA) competitive marching band festival** in Weymouth.
- Funds were accrued by running the NESBA Festival concession stand, soliciting donations from local businesses, and by organizing bottle and can redemption efforts. All of these efforts have required great expenditures of time and energy by parents and music students.
- The **WBPA has provided funding** for: fall marching, winter color guard, bus transportation, instrument repair, a summer music enrichment week for school children, and late August marching band camp.
- The 2013 **summer music enrichment program funded by the WBPA** was cleverly themed -- *Space 2013*. The program was staffed by three adults including Mr. Duff from the WHS music department and 6 student mentors. Learning experiences throughout the week had “space” themes (Long Tone Planets, Rhythmic Runes, Cosmic Hearing, et al.) The curriculum included music theory, 5/6 Band, 7/8 Band, Percussion, Mac Lab, Basic Guitar. **This program**

**provided a week-long music day camp experience for children who wanted a sustained music experience close to home.**

- **The enduring passion of WBPA parents is evident.** Some current members of the WBPA continue to participate even though their children have graduated from WHS.
- Current WBPA members have witnessed the decline in interest in the competitive marching program at WHS that they have ardently supported for years. In light of this reality, they **expressed willingness to explore a redefined mission for the music parent association and will consider ways to engage K-12 music parents in a broader array of supportive endeavors.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **INSTRUMENTAL RECRUITMENT and LESSONS**

- The music faculty might **consider use of two standardized music tests** as part of recruiting efforts for the instrumental program. These measures would help to (1) ascertain students' rhythmic and tonal aptitudes (*Primary Measures of Music Audition*) and (2) determine the instrumental tone color/timbre preferred by students who will be selecting an instrument to learn (*Instrumental Timbre Preference Test*). Both of **these measures provide explicit data that can be useful to parents, children, and music teachers.** Both tests have been authored and field-tested by Dr. Edwin Gordon. Both measures are norm-referenced. (available through GIA publications)
- **Recruitment assemblies** should take place for **third and fourth graders** in each of the elementary schools after MCAS testing has been completed in the Spring. Parents should be invited to attend. Since research indicates that the greatest motivator for sticking with instrumental lessons is **loving the sound of the instrument, recruiting assemblies should focus on this.** Very fine players, either HS students or adult musicians (perhaps instrumental lesson teachers can be asked to do this for a small stipend) should play music that is interesting to children on each instrument that is taught in schools. There should be many chances to hear instruments play alone, with others in their instrumental family, and all together as a large ensemble. Children should be focused on the SOUND rather than the LOOK of the instruments, perhaps even closing their eyes from time to time to focus listening. At the end of the school day, children should receive handouts on the instrumental program to take home.
- An **instrumental rental event** should be hosted by the music department so that parents and children can come to one venue to rent their instruments. At this event, **all teachers who provide private lessons can be available for sign up.**
- **A music department website should contain all information about lesson sites, schedules, teacher info, et al. The Music Department may facilitate online lesson registration** if parents could not attend the rental night.

- **All teachers in the instrumental lesson program, whether WHS student volunteers or hired outside professionals, must be auditioned, interviewed, and vetted by a member of the music department.** They must also be CORI checked.
- **Coordination and supervision of *all* instrumental lesson teachers is essential to maintain quality and consistency.** An appointed music faculty member could receive a stipend for this supervisory responsibility.
- **The music faculty member who oversees the instrumental extension teachers must monitor their schedules and assign teaching sites.**

## CURRICULUM

- Just as has been recommended for general and choral music, a **curriculum development initiative for the elementary through high school instrumental music program** is also warranted. All teachers of instrumental lessons and ensembles need to share a common vision for ensemble playing in Weymouth. Collegial discussion of the development and motivation of the student instrumentalist at all ages is needed. Issues central to the development of an instrumental curriculum include: tone production; age-appropriate instrumental repertoire; long-range planning of styles, genres, composers, arrangers, historical periods, masterworks, music of world cultures, etc.
- **Reconsideration of the efficiency of instrumental “sectionals” scheduled at the two middle schools** is suggested. It appears that these sectionals service students who come out of ASB periods. The number of students can vary from double digits to 2-3 students depending on the grade level. The questions to consider are:

*Is there sufficient student enrollment in the many “sectionals” scheduled to justify the amount of FTE deployed to cover these?*

*Could this FTE be better allocated to serve larger numbers of students perhaps in different ways like piano classes and general music?*

- Periodic “**masterwork concerts**” could be mounted cyclically at the HS to include all choral and instrumental students *together* performing a significant piece of music. Sample works include: Schubert *Mass in G*, Bernstein *Chichester Psalms*, Vivaldi *Gloria*, Rutter *Magnificat*, et al. A Masterwork Concert could occur every two to three years so that students would have at least one opportunity during high school to experience this. To make these performances “transcend the mundane,” they could include adult musicians from the community and/or collaborations with local/regional choruses, bands, or orchestras for a multi-generational experience. These concerts should be “landmark” events that unite all music performers at WHS in the performance of a singular musical masterpiece. Contact Kevin McDonald, Wellesley High School choral director, for further logistical and repertoire suggestions.

- Parents supporters may volunteer to **write grant applications** to the MA Cultural Council and other grantors for funding to **provide quality in-school assemblies** by professional musicians and off campus **field trips** to hear professionals, e.g., the Boston Symphony Orchestra Youth Concerts. High quality school assemblies are available from *Young Audiences* and the Handel and Haydn Society.

## SCHOOL INSTRUMENT PURCHASE AND MAINTENANCE

- **Acoustic pianos in schools require regularly scheduled tuning and maintenance.** Pianos should never be allowed to remain untuned for inordinate lengths of time. Funding for piano maintenance needs to be allocated in the WPS budget.
- **Funding for school-owned instrument repairs needs to be provided through the WPS budget.** Instrument repairs should not be dependent on parent fund raising efforts. An inventory of school-owned instruments needs to be consistently maintained including information on the maintenance history and condition of each instrument.
- **A multi-year rationale, plan, and projected budget for instrument replacement and acquisition** should be drawn up by instrumental teachers and presented to the administration.

## **PRIORITY ACTION STEPS**

### HIGH SCHOOL

- **Attrition in the numbers of students enrolled in the vertical instrumental program that feeds the high school is dramatic:**

Grade 5      121 beginning students

Grade 6      31 in band

Grades 7-8    41 in band

Grades 9-12   34 in band (plus 11 additional unenrolled students who play with the band)

**The music department needs to determine why the student drop off starting in Grade 6 is so drastic and identify ways to retain students in the instrumental program.**

- In light of the sustained **low enrollments in the WHS Marching Band** of late (e.g., approximately 15 students this year, 5 of whom were Chapman MS students), waning student interest in competitions, and the large amount of effort and funding it takes to maintain this activity, **it is recommended that the Marching Band be suspended as a curricular component of the HS music program** until focused fact-finding determines whether Marching Band and Color Guard enrollment projections will increase significantly to justify continuance.

- A **Pep Band extending from the HS Concert Band** should support athletic events until a final determination is made about continuation of the Marching Band program.
- The long-standing hosting relationship between the **WBPA and the NESBA Marching Band Festival** would not be permitted to continue once WHS no longer fields a marching band at the festival. The resultant loss of revenue for the WBPA would require a **new strategy for fund raising and a new understanding of what the parent support group can realistically fund.**
- The HS instrumental program should strive to **provide a pit band composed largely of student musicians for the annual WHS musical.**
- **Interviews with HS music students revealed their concerns about the “image” of music students at WHS.** Students remarked about the primacy of athletics in the HS student culture and noted that music engagement is not considered to be “cool” and is even ridiculed by some in the general student population. These music students are determined to overcome or ignore the social stigma. They asserted, “If you like it enough, you’ll stay with it.” This issue of **negative peer perceptions of the music program** is not uncommon during adolescence. However, **there should be a discussion of this perception between students and their music teachers.** This issue should not be ignored since it affects morale, and there could be a connection to bullying behaviors.
- Interviewed students mentioned interest in having **opportunities to perform in small student-run combos like funk and rock bands** with support from the music department. These small instrumental combos would be analogous to student-directed *a cappella* singing groups commonly found in high schools.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### **Break Down of Grade Level Instrumental Enrollments for Fall 2013**

(source: Music Update Memo, 10-24-2013, Garry Pelletier)

<u>GRADES</u>	<u>5th</u>	<u>6th</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>
Clarinets	13	5	6	1
Flutes	32	3	6	2
Percussion	15	6	3	6
Saxophone	20	8	3	4
Trombone	5	1	1	2
Trumpet	36	8	5	2
	121	31	24	17

- **Reasons for this drastic drop off in numbers in MS which directly impacts the HS Band size must be identified and remedied as a top priority. Pressing questions:**

*How does the practice of pulling students out of ASB blocks affect the declining band enrollments at the MS level?*

*What is causing the decline in student motivation in MS?*

- **Consider adding a seventh period onto the daily schedules of the Middle Schools.** Changing from a 6 x 6 to a 6 x 7 scheduling model increases opportunities for providing dedicated blocks for enrichment activities such as **grade level performing ensembles** (chorus, band) eliminating the need to pull students out of ASB. This 6 x 7 model is implemented in Wellesley Middle School where there are 3 dedicated grade level blocks (6,7,8) in which band/chorus/orchestra for each grade level rehearse every other day in the cycle. Contact Mark Ito, Wellesley Middle School principal.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- **Beginning instrumental lessons should be started in Grade 4, *not* Grade 5** as occurs in analogous school systems. This would permit Gr. 5 instrumentalists at Adams MS to have sufficient ability to **enter a grade level band** rather than a beginning lesson program which is more motivating.
- **All elementary general music teachers should teach substantial units on instruments and playing the recorder in Gr. 3** as a precursor to Gr. 4 beginning lessons.

## MOTIVATING INSTRUMENTAL PARTICIPATION

- In order to maintain high motivation for instrumental students across the grades, the following suggestions are proposed:
  - **General music enrichments** in Gr. 3 and 4 should focus on instruments of the traditional band/orchestra as well as instruments of world cultures. These units should be enriched through (1) school assembly **programs** that feature all types and families of instruments, (2) field trips to local instrumental concerts including **the Youth Concert Series by the Boston Symphony Orchestra**. The BSO Youth Concerts are offered on weekdays and Saturdays. Subscribing to the Saturday series permits parents to attend with their children.

- **Develop a motivational check list of skills for beginning instrumentalists** that is used by all day-school and extension instrumental teachers to assure that children have mastered the rudimentary skills necessary in playing and reading notation necessary for band. Use completion of this **check list as a “ticket of entry”** into a grade-level band
  
- Launch a **Wild Cat All City Band** (grades TBD) that rehearses at the high school every month to build motivation, camaraderie, pride and a sense of belonging. Use WHS instrumental students as band/section assistants, perhaps as part of their Community Service hours
  
- In order to **encourage instrumental students to continue their participation** in the *next* school they will attend as they move from 4 to 5, 6 to 7, and 8 to 9, **attention to these transitional points** in the program needs to be increased. Some suggestions:
  - a. The **band teacher in the *receiving school* should conduct the band in the *sending school*** at least THREE TIMES before the students sign up for band at the next level – this to build relationships and familiarity in advance.
  
  - b. A **Band-O-Rama Concert** could occur annually in the WHS gym (audience sits on bleachers). In this concert, all school bands from elementary through HS are set up on the floor, each playing a brief set of its own repertoire followed by one or two simple pieces with *all* musicians playing together as the *finale*.
  
  - c. Spring **Step Up Concerts** invite instrumentalists who will be entering the receiving school in the Fall to play in that school’s spring concert with the receiving band as a type of “musical graduation.” For example, 4<sup>th</sup> graders would play with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade band, 6<sup>th</sup> graders would play with the 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade band, 8<sup>th</sup> graders would play with the HS band. Step Up Concerts make rising students feel welcomed and motivated. They also preview for parents the next step in their children’s musical development. They help assure smooth transitions between school programs.



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSICALLY ADVANCED STUDENTS

The following are enrichment opportunities for advanced and highly motivated music students:

- Participation in the **WEYMOUTH CITY SINGERS**, a local adjunct of the Boston City Singers for children in grades 2-5, is available in town.  
Info: Dr. Jennifer Whipple, Academy Avenue, 781-335-4717  
<http://weymouth.patch.com/groups/arts-and-entertainment/p/weymouth-city-singers-holds-auditions>
- Participate in the **Boston Symphony Orchestra's DAYS IN THE ARTS (DARTS) Program**. This summer program invites highly motivated elementary and/or middle school musicians to spend a week in the Berkshires attending concerts at Tanglewood and becoming immersed in the surrounding cultural venues, e.g., Jacob's Pillow, Chesterwood, Norman Rockwell Museum, Shakespeare & Company, et al. Each week equal numbers of children from urban and suburban communities come together to forge friendships through shared experiences in multi-arts. Contact: Education Department at Boston Symphony Hall, 617-266-1492  
[http://www.bso.org/brands/bso/education-community/children-families/days-in-the-arts-\(darts\).aspx](http://www.bso.org/brands/bso/education-community/children-families/days-in-the-arts-(darts).aspx)
- Recommend **highly motivated elementary school singers** to the **VOCAL VACATION** summer program offered by the Boston Area Kodaly Educators (BAKE).  
<http://www.bostonareakodaly.org/calendar.html>
- Investigate **advanced choral singing opportunities for students of all ages** provided by the **VOCAL APPRENTICE PROGRAM (VAP)** of the Handel and Haydn Society.  
<http://www.handelandhaydn.org/education/vap>
- **Chapman 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders as well as WHS 9<sup>th</sup> graders** who show high ability and motivation on instruments **should be urged to audition for Southeast Junior District every year**. Information about auditions should be provided in a timely fashion. Music teachers need to notify students well in advance of the time line for this event providing sufficient time to prepare the students to audition. Teachers need to support those accepted to Junior District as they learn the concert music as well. <http://www.semmea.org/jr-audition-pieces.html>
- **WHS 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders** who show advanced ability on instruments **should be urged to audition annually for Southeast Senior District**. Information about auditions should be provided to students in a timely fashion. Student who are accepted to Senior District need tutoring as they learn the folder of music for the festival. **Those who have been invited to audition for the All State ensembles** as a result of their Senior Festival auditions **need additional encouragement and support from the HS music faculty**.  
<http://www.semmea.org/sr-audition-pieces.html>

- **High level musical achievements by Weymouth students should be celebrated on the school system's website and in the local paper.**
- High performing choral and instrumental students at WHS can be **designated as section leaders who are trained to independently conduct sectional rehearsals**. In addition, senior musicians who are heading for a college music major or minor can serve as **student conductors** of their ensembles. Student-directed *a cappella* choirs required skilled student leaders.
- Very highly advanced HS instrumentalists could be featured as **soloists in a performance of a movement from a concerto**. This honor should be reserved for seniors.
- **Student composers** who write original vocal and instrumental music should have their works performed.
- **Mount periodic (every two years) "black tie" concerts that cause WHS musicians to collaborate with a community orchestra, choir, or band**. These experiences would serve as "Step Up Concerts" for HS students who are provided with a preview of adult-level playing as they collaboratively learn significant musical works. These concerts should feature musical masterworks that truly stretch the student musicians.
- Once instrumental attrition rates has been decreased, the HS band numbers should increase. **When that occurs, various types of band courses could gradually be introduced including auditioned bands for advanced students**, e.g., auditioned jazz big band, auditioned 11-12 wind ensemble (with seating auditions).
- **Reinstitute a vocal and instrumental chamber music program** at WHS. Chamber groups can be traditional classical ensembles or contemporary small vocal and instrumental combos designed by students.
- The HS Jazz Band already participates in the High School Berklee Jazz Festival <http://festival.berkleejazz.org/>. **Additional festivals that provide opportunities for school musicians to hear similar performing groups from other high schools and to have clinics with festival judges** are:
  - Norwood (MA) Jazz Festival      <http://www.norwoodpma.org/jazz.html>
  - Ensemble festivals run by the MA Instrumental and Choral Conductors Association (MICCA)      <http://www.miccamusic.org/>
- Establish a **formal connection with the South Shore Conservatory** to provide vocal and instrumental lessons by Conservatory faculty for advanced high school students. [http://www.sscmusic.org/classes\\_age\\_10-18.html](http://www.sscmusic.org/classes_age_10-18.html)

- **Establish a chapter of the Tri-M International Music Honor Society at the secondary level.** <http://musiced.nafme.org/tri-m-music-honor-society/Education>

A program of the National Association for Music Education:

*The **Tri-M Music Honor Society** is the international music honor society for middle/junior high and high school students. It is designed to recognize students for their academic and musical achievements, reward them for their accomplishments and service activities, and to inspire other students to excel at music and leadership.*

(source: Tri-M website)

## **IV. PreK-12 MUSIC PROGRAM**

### **RELEVANT GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

4. How can we increase and insure **consistency and equity in core music programs and enrichments** at the primary, middle, and high school levels?
5. How can **Common Assessments** be used to communicate what students all ready know about music at different developmental levels?
6. What provisions are being made to ensure that all students are receiving **consistent music resources**?
8. How can we **create leadership** for our department?
9. What do we need to **improve in CORD\*** in order to do a better job of **accomplishing our Mission Statement**?

\* Curriculum • Organization • Recruitment/Retention • District Support

## FINDINGS

- The long term “institutional memory” of a few interviewees during this review indicated that the last time there was a K-12 Director of Music in Weymouth was in the late 1980s.
- The Music Director’s position was eliminated back then because of school program budget cuts resulting from the impact of Proposition 2½ which still limits the amount by which property taxes can be increased.
- Several interviewees who have a long history in Weymouth deeply regret what has been characterized as a “precipitous decline in the Weymouth music program” due to budget cuts and the lack of a department supervisor.
- Currently Eric Bunker (WHS art specialist) represents all HS Unified Arts teachers on the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). There is no analogous arts leader for elementary and middle school music teachers.
- There is a 1.5 credit graduation requirement in UNIFIED ARTS at WHS. Unified Arts courses include:
  - music
  - visual art
  - business
  - technology (web design, marketing)
  - auto shop
  - culinary arts
  - a second language (if a student is taking *two* world languages simultaneously)
- The size of the HS music faculty is small for such a large student population (2.0 FTE). This minimizes the “voice” of the music department in HS decision-making.
- All elementary and middle school principals (WHS principal was not available during the site visit) interviewed expressed philosophical commitment to music education. Many are musical themselves or have encouraged their own children in music. All understand the powerful impact on the social, emotional, and aesthetic sensitivities of children.

- The same philosophical commitment to and support of music education was expressed in discussions with elementary, middle school, and high school parents (past and present), as well as school committee members.
- There is no music instruction provided by licensed music educators for children enrolled in the Johnson Early Childhood Center.
- Music instruction for Kindergarten children is only offered in three elementary schools.
- High school students interviewed want to be held to high musical standards within a departmental culture based on mutual respect, optimism, and encouragement.
- All adult and student interviewees expressed desire for more opportunities for students with high motivation and/or musical aptitude.
- There are limited after school *drama* experiences at the elementary and middle school levels. Adams and WHS mount an annual musical. In the spring, WHS sends a straight play entry to the competitive festival sponsored by the MA Drama Guild. Parents expressed interest in having more drama opportunities for children.
- There are no dance *classes* offered at any level. There is a Dance Team at WHS that performs at athletic events.
- Students enrolled in the HS CTE (Career and Technical Ed) Program have very limited opportunity to take music courses since they spend half the day in their shop courses and half in academics.
- Several interviewees noted that there has been frequent turnover of high level school administrators over the past 10 years.
- There have been several staff transfers in the music department at the high school and between middle and high school levels over the past few years.

## **PRIORITY ACTION STEPS**

### **MUSIC DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR**

- **Recruit and appoint a PreK-12 Music Department Director** to provide vision, direction, supervision, and management for the program. It is recommended that this administrator have proven successful experience in music leadership. The successful candidate should be a visionary with substantial management, organizational, interpersonal, and advocacy skills.

### **K-12 MUSIC CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

- **Develop a PreK-12 General Music, Choral, and Instrumental Curriculum** based on the 2014 national standards for music education soon to be released. The curriculum should be structured according to the principles of *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins and McTighe) and incorporate appropriate interdisciplinary connections with selected academic units, Common Core standards, and *Reading Street* themes.

### **ASSESSMENT**

- **Develop standards-based Common Assessments and District Determined Measures** for music that are embedded in the Weymouth music curriculum.

### **BUDGET SUPPORT**

- Provide a **reasonable annual budget allocation for each music teacher.**

Suggested:

Elementary	<i>per capita</i> formula or \$700 per school
Middle School	<i>per capita</i> formula or \$900 per teacher
High School	\$1500 per teacher

- All music teachers need **consistent, sufficient budget funds to purchase sheet music for ensembles.** Without such funding, teachers may desperately resort to **duplicating copyrighted materials** which provides a bad example for students and puts the system in jeopardy.

- **The school budget** should cover these additional **normal expenses:** uniforms, instrumental acquisition and repair, instrumental accessories, bus transportation, festival fees.
- **Student/parent fundraising** can support **expenses connected to long-distance domestic and foreign trips.**

## TECHNOLOGY

- **Provide updated technology for all music teachers** ranging from portable devices like laptop computers, class sets of iPads, and iPod sound systems to installations of Smart Boards in dedicated music rooms.

## PARENT SUPPORT

- **Configure a newly-conceived PreK-12 WEYMOUTH MUSIC PARENT ASSOCIATION** that would absorb the current WBPA and expand its support and advocacy to cover *all* music teachers and initiatives in the department. It is urgent that the **music faculty and parents work together as collaborative partners** across all grade levels to **accomplish the stated mission** of the department and to **enable the entire scope of curricular programs that service all Weymouth children.**

# **V. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

## PreK-12 MUSIC PROGRAM RESTRUCTURING

The following is a suggested organizational plan for consideration when restructuring the Weymouth vertical music program. This PreK-12 feeder paradigm is based on national standards, research, and configurations of music programs in analogous school systems:

## **ECC**

- two (2) 30-minute general music classes weekly by an early childhood music specialist

## **Kindergarten**

- two (2) 30-minute general music classes weekly

## **Grades 1-3**

- one (1) 40-minute general music class weekly **including recorder** in Gr. 3
- **recruiting experiences** in Gr. 3 for the instrumental lesson program that starts in Gr. 4
- after-school music, theater, and dance enrichments including Weymouth City Singers

## **Grade 4**

- one (1) 45-50 minute combined general music/choral class weekly
- beginning instrumental lessons under the supervision of music department
- after-school music, theater, and dance enrichments including Weymouth City Singers

## **Grades 5-8**

- two or three (2-3) general music classes per 6-day cycle for one semester
- dedicated ensemble periods for *each* grade level during which band and chorus occur simultaneously – two or three (2-3) rehearsals per cycle/full year
- after-school music, theater, and dance enrichments



## Grades 9-12

- performing ensembles that meet *simultaneously*, two or three (2-3) rehearsals per cycle/full year
  - **entry level** chorus and **entry level** concert band (in same period)
  - **advanced level** chorus and **advanced level** band (in same period)
- student-directed *a cappella* choirs
- jazz band (big band instrumentation)
- jazz choir
- athletic pep band (substitute for marching band)
- small ensembles
  - classical chamber ensembles
  - contemporary combos (pop, jazz, rock, world music)
- non-performance courses (semester length)
  - music technology and music production
  - music theory including AP theory (if there is interest)
  - guitar class
  - keyboard (piano) class
  - **OTHER ELECTIVES BASED ON A STUDENT-INTEREST SURVEY**
- community service options:
  - assist in recruitment of younger students for instrument lesson program (assemblies, instrument petting zoos)
  - after vetting by music department, provide weekly instrumental lessons for elementary students (supervised by music faculty)

## FUTURE PROGRAM EXPANSION

Once the current music department has achieved curriculum and enrollment stability, the following program extensions and enrichments could be considered:

- **Reintroduce a string/orchestra program**, perhaps beginning with Suzuki violin instruction in Grades K-2. String instruments can be miniaturized for the youngest students.
- Provide opportunities for a *variety* of **music department trips on a cyclical basis, perhaps alternating years with masterworks concerts**, that include the popular trips to Disney but also include trips to other sites of great musical interest e.g., New Orleans, Nashville.
- Once the HS performing ensembles increase in numbers, consider reinstating **performance trips abroad to major European cities** during April vacation week every two years, perhaps alternating with domestic trips mentioned above.
- Reconfigure the present Music Department into a **Performing Arts Department with both day-school and extra curricular offerings**.
- **Performing arts program offerings for Grade 7-12 students** could include:
  - formal day-school courses in **theater** (acting, playwriting, stage craft/technical theater)
  - formal day-school courses in **dance** perhaps offered in conjunction with the Physical Education Department

## **AFTERWORD**

It is sincerely hoped that this report helps all stakeholders in the Weymouth Music Program maintain their deep commitment to music education for all children. Determined implementation of program improvements will assure “evenness of excellence” across the grades. Though this report is full of details about budget, scheduling, enrollments, equipment, teaching spaces, technology, fundraising, parent involvement, curriculum, and assessment, the true bottom line is this . . .

*it's all about the kids!* Thank you.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Weymouth Public Schools Music Program Review

On January 9, 10, and 13, 2014, a review of the K-12 Weymouth Music Program was conducted by Sandra Nicolucci, Music Education Faculty, Boston University, for the purpose of providing feedback about and recommendations for the program. The three days on campus were spent visiting Seach, Nash, Academy Avenue, Adams, Chapman, and Weymouth High School to observe music classes and rehearsals, examine music teaching facilities and resources, and talk with music teachers, principals, guidance counselors, parents, and students about their experiences in and impressions of the music program. Additional data were collected via a *Music Teacher Questionnaire* completed by all music teachers.

Observations and interviews were focused by the following guiding questions authored by the music department:

1. How can we **create a lasting curriculum**?
2. How can we **maximize time on learning** in music?
3. How can **scheduling** help to provide smaller classes?
4. How can we increase and insure **consistency and equity in core music programs and enrichments** at the primary, middle, and high school levels?
5. How can **Common Assessments** be used to communicate what students all ready know about music at different developmental levels?
6. What provisions are being made to ensure that all students are receiving **consistent music resources**?
7. How can we increase **availability of private lessons** after school?
8. How can we **create leadership** for our department?
9. What do we need to **improve in CORD\*** in order to do a better job of **accomplishing our Mission Statement**?

\* Curriculum • Organization • Recruitment/Retention • District Support

Selected Findings, Commendations, and Recommendations were identified for Dr. Salim and Mr. Pelletier in an Exit Interview on Monday January 13.

The written *K-12 Music Program Review Report* presents Findings, Commendations, Recommendations, and Priority Action Steps in these categories:

- I. GENERAL MUSIC and NON-PERFORMANCE COURSES
- II. CHORAL MUSIC
- III. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
- IV. K-12 MUSIC PROGRAM
- V. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

A presentation about the Program Review was scheduled for the Weymouth School Committee Meeting on Thursday February 27, 2014.

## OVERARCHING COMMENDATIONS

- **All constituencies interviewed during the review period expressed enthusiasm for music education.** Teachers, principals, school committee members, parents, administrators, and students all candidly voiced commendations and recommendations for the evolution of the music program to meet the needs and interests of students of all ages.
- **Music teachers are eager to move forward with a major curriculum development initiative** that would provide a clear K-12 learning pathway for all music students. Curriculum development would require a commitment of several years to professional development, identification of essential music skills and knowledge, study of the new national standards for music due for release in 2014, construction of a vertical sequence of units, and development of Common Assessments and DDMs.
- **Openness to configuring a newly-conceived K-12 WEYMOUTH MUSIC PARENT ASSOCIATION that would absorb the current WBPA while expanding its support and advocacy to cover all music teachers and initiatives in the department has been expressed during this review.** It is urgent that the music faculty and parents work together as collaborative partners across all grade levels to accomplish the goal of the music department to serve all students equitably.

## PRIORITY ACTION STEPS

- **Recruit and appoint a K-12 Music Department Director** to provide vision, direction, supervision, and management for the program. It is recommended that this administrator have proven successful experience in music leadership. The successful candidate should be a visionary with substantial management, organizational, interpersonal, and advocacy skills.
- **Launch the development a K-12 General Music, Choral, and Instrumental Curriculum.** The curriculum should be structured according to the principles of “backward design” described in *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins and McTighe) and incorporate appropriate interdisciplinary connections with selected academic units, Common Core Standards, and *Reading Street* themes.
- **Provide updated technology for all music teachers** ranging from portable devices like laptop computers, class sets of iPads, and iPod sound systems to installations of Smart Boards in dedicated music rooms.



