



Continuing Excellence in Band and Orchestra After Reconfiguration

December 5, 2024



Today's Presentation

- Our commitment to excellence
- Reconfiguration committee's question: Could we keep 5th grade instrumental music?
- Solutions:
 - Elective band and orchestra beginning in 6th grade
 - Robust 5th grade music program serving ALL students
- Ongoing work to support the band and orchestra program
- Continuous collaboration with band and orchestra teachers



Strategic Plan

- **Priority 1:** Increase Academic Access
- **Priority 2:** Provide a culture of Safety, Wellness and Belonging
- **Priority 4:** Ensure Effective and Efficient Operations



Our Values



Charlottesville City Schools views the arts as essential for the complete education of every child. In Charlottesville, the arts have never been viewed as “frills” but as an indispensable part of our culture and history, a heritage to be shared by all. This philosophy is embraced by the school board, the administration, and the community at large.

The division has made intentional choices to follow best practices for beginning instrumental music. Because of this, CCS has become the model for the region and has set the standard for other divisions.



Excellence in Action

Charlottesville High School has earned the VMEA's blue ribbon 13 times

Our ensembles regularly earn top ratings at domestic musical festivals and have traveled internationally: Florence, Besancon, Paris, Austria, London, Rome, and more



Community Concerns

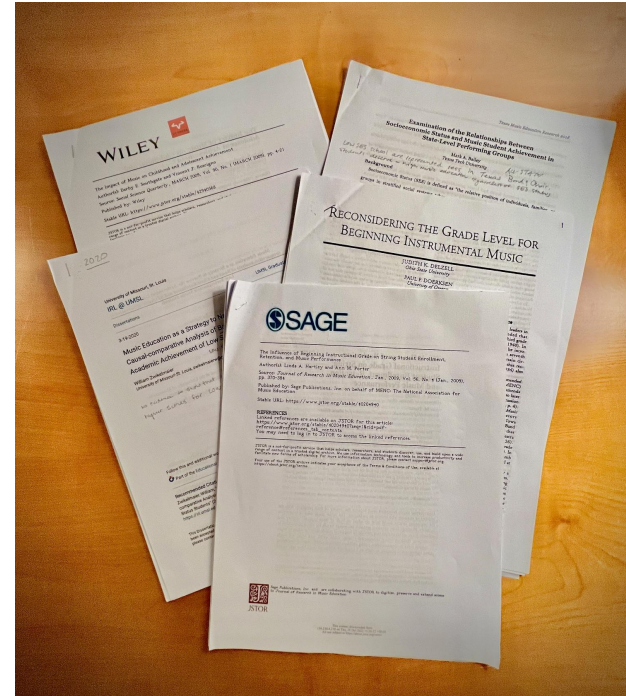
- Loss of a year of instrumental music instruction
- Ensemble participation provides a safe space for students to belong. Band and orchestra create a family, helps forge lifelong friendships, appreciation and joy of making music
- Ensembles provide a place for students to learn how to listen to each other and work together, and experience the rewards of disciplined practice
- CCS provided 5th grade instrument instruction in the past and should be able to continue into the future
- 5th-grade band and orchestra participation hooks students before they are adolescents dealing with hormones and social challenges
- Music instruction supports other academic learning



Working Groups for Reconfiguration

In the fall of 2023 band and orchestra directors met to begin discussions about moving 5th-graders back to the elementary schools.

We identified and listed best practices for beginning instrumental programs. We used research studies looking at the influence of beginning instructional grade on enrollment, retention and music performance to inform our process.



Best Practices for Learning Instruments



Best Practices

Begin instruction early

Classes meet frequently - every day / at least 3 times a week

Classes meet for a full year as opposed to one semester

Smaller class size or staffing for small specialized instruction

Grouping instruction according to similar instruments

Dedicated time during the school day to play as a whole group ensemble

Dedicated classroom where instructional materials are easily accessible

Retention is best when a student has 2 or more years of instruction at one location before transition to another building by way of grade promotion



Could we keep 5th grade instrumental ed?

Initial 4th & 5th Grade Plan for Instrumental Education

- 4th grade 30 minutes of general music and 30 minutes of music choice (band or orchestra) once a week
- 5th grade students choose either band, orchestra or choir/general music 60 minutes once a week
- Limited instrumentation: (Band: flute, clarinet, trumpet, or baritone; Strings: violin or cello)
- Weekly ensemble rehearsals held after school at CMS for 5th grade performances held at CMS
- End of year ensemble rehearsals/performance held after school at CMS for 4th grade
- Dedicated space at the elementary schools for classes and instrument storage

Best Practices

- ★ Begin instruction early
- ✘ Classes meet frequently - every day / at least 3 times a week
- ★ Classes meet for a full year as opposed to one semester
- ✘ Smaller class size or staffing for small specialized instruction
- ✘ Grouping instruction according to similar instruments
- ✘ Dedicated time during the school day to play as a whole group ensemble
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Could We Keep 5th-Grade Instrumental Ed?

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CONCERNS

- Requires increasing school day by 30 minutes daily!
- Requires removing Library from the "specials" rotation; this time would need to be made up in other ways
- Requires hiring 4 additional FTE's over current staffing
- Inadequate space for classes and instrument storage where louder activities do not distract other classes
- Instrumental education "drives" the master schedule

Best Practices

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Exploring Other Options

Since the original plan couldn't work, we considered other options:

- After school programming raised concerns about equity and accessibility, plus staff availability
- Reviewed how other divisions introduce elementary instruments
 - sometimes rely on a pull-out model
 - do not serve all students
 - acknowledge the logistical challenges that place strain on school schedules

Conviction of CCS Music Teachers:

- If we can not recreate the excellence of our current program under the elementary model, then it is essential that our focus should be on high quality programming at the 6th grade level



Recommended: Strong 6th Grade Start

- Reconfiguration is essential to serving our tween and teens well across the curriculum. But it means that we have to say goodbye to what has been in place at Walker.
- In its place, we will make Charlottesville Middle School the launch point for specialized instrumental music education.
- **NO CUTS TO FUNDING OR STAFFING:** Current Walker music staff will join Buford staff at CMS for robust support for beginner instrumentalists.



Following As Many Best Practices As Possible

6th Grade Start

- Students meet regularly 3 times a week for a full year (not by semester)
- Retain current band and orchestra staffing at middle school level to provide small group instruction for beginners in like instrumentation
- Ensure dedicated time during school day for students to play as a whole ensemble
- Ensure dedicated time for after school rehearsals with after school transportation provided for those who qualify
- Provide 2 elective options for 6th grade so as not to detract from band and orchestra enrollment.

Best Practices

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Enhanced 5th Grade General Music Serving ALL!

- Develop elementary General Music curriculum in collaboration with band and orchestra directors
- Refining use of recorder, ukulele, and Orff instruments
- Field trips featuring professional instrumental music
- Arrange special in-school visits by instrumentalists with community partners
- Schedule face-to-face sessions with rising 6th graders during elective selection process
- Schedule CMS and CHS ensembles to perform for both 4th and 5th grade students
- **This EXTENDS music education to ALL 5th graders (even those who will not go on to take a music elective).**



Final Thoughts



- Under new model, all 5th grade students will be exposed to instrumental music through the general music class
- There are no funding or staff cuts in this model
- We can learn from divisions that maintain excellence while starting band/orchestra in 6th grade
- We continue to refine this new model – we are committed to continuous collaboration with band and orchestra teachers
- We all love and want the best for this program





Questions

