

Good evening, Chairman Painter, Members of the Board of Trustees, Deputy Superintendent Whitten, Senior Administration, and all district stakeholders present this evening.

I am speaking in favour of working towards equitable music education. I am going to present examples of how stakeholders working together in the past were able to make things a little better than before by keeping their focus NOT on what we should cut, but on HOW can we make good things happen.

Example 1: Establishing Island Ukuleles as a course for one high school music credit.

This followed the wishes of parents and students who wanted Island Ukuleles to be granted credit status for high school music. To receive credit for a provincial exam in that subject, Island Ukuleles had to be offered as a credit course taught by a secondary school music teacher. When the course outline was approved by the Provincial Government, one block was added to Mrs. Horwood's teaching assignment at Oak Bay, meeting in the evening to serve students from all catchment areas.

Example 2: The switch to the middle school configuration.

The switch to the middle schools enabled the district to fund a per school minimum of one class per grade for band, and 2 levels each per school for choral and for strings music. Schools with larger populations or enrolments in music, were able to receive additional blocks. Secondary music programs then benefitted from the larger number of students registering in their programs.

Music education graduates from Canadian and American universities are qualified as "music teachers" and may teach in all

3 of these performance areas, allowing music teachers to work with their administrators at each middle school to move their specific teaching assignments around a bit in response to changing enrolment numbers and the individual preferences expressed by the current student population.

This requires time and **WILL** on the part of administrators and teachers to make this happen, but the result is more options for students and administration. Some music teachers have qualifications in teaching another subject which they may be willing to use to expand their FTE at their current school which would also increase their contact with colleagues and students.

Exploratories are not part of district music staffing but are included in block funding and might include an Indigenous Drumming and Dance Exploratory at middle schools, providing opportunities for collaboration with the Indigenous Education Department and include essential important local context. Students with this additional skill could become regular contributors to events within the school.

Example 3: Working with provincial legislation related to prep time and to class size.

Each of these have provided unique challenges to district budgets. Prep time has increased the equitability of music education at the elementary level by allowing music to be offered as prep. There are still some challenges with the number of minutes allocated for kindergarten prep, but each year creative solutions are being worked out in schools.

Regarding class size, the initial limits set were too small to adequately support the needs of a concert band which has a

diverse instrumentation or a large concert choir singing in 8 parts. Administrators, teachers, and the BCTF worked together to solve the problem. At that time, teachers wishing to teach larger classes signed a release to the district agreeing to an increase in class size up to a specified limit.

Example 4: Creating the Cooper Smith Music Library Collection

Larger music classes require more supplies and not all schools have adequate funds or storage space to support this. Music teachers realize the stress this can cause for the budget, therefore the CSMLC allows schools to share orchestral strings or choral music they purchase without having to track the location of the music, and without using school square footage to store the music until wishing to use it again. This increases equitability as each school in the district has an account for borrowing privileges and pays only for lost or damaged copies. All music new to the library is donated. Minimal annual support from District funds is required to operate the CSMLC as both donated funds (in support of extra clerical hours) and music teacher volunteers (assisting with inventories and rental) are part of the regular operation.

The CSMLC also has a rental pool of donated orchestral strings instruments which may be rented at a nominal fee. Funds from this rental are kept in an account to pay for repairs to the district pool of strings instruments. Because the District owns these donated instruments, they may also be “rented” at no charge to the student’s family. These families are not identified in any way assuring that all district students may participate in strings music classes regardless of the financial status of the family. This contributes to the delivery of an equitable strings music program.

Example 5: Members of the Greater Victoria community support equitable school music education.

In closing, I would like to thank community members for the anonymous donation of \$20,000 last August via The Victoria Foundation. These funds are held by the CSMLC and are being used as requested for supplies in support of district music programs at all levels. Donations in previous years have purchased class sets of ukuleles or guitars.

I hope these examples demonstrate that budget challenges in the past were overcome by the **Will** to work collaboratively with all stakeholders. It is **entirely** possible to continue to work together to provide a sustainable, equitable music program for students in Greater Victoria School District 61 in the coming year.

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