



**Budget Advisory Committee
MINUTES
Thursday, March 2, 2023
Via ZOOM**

In Attendance:

Board of Education:

Trustees Derek Gagnon (Committee Chair), Nicole Duncan, Karin Kwan, Natalie Baillaut, Emily Mahbobi, Rob Paynter

Staff:

Deb Whitten, Superintendent

Harold Caldwell, Deputy Superintendent

Tom Aerts, Associate Superintendent

Katrina Stride, Secretary-Treasurer

Julie Lutner, Associate Secretary-Treasurer

Marni Vistisen-Harwood, Director of Facilities Services

Andy Canty, Director of Information Technology for Learning

Hervinder Parmar, Director of Finance, Budgets and Financial Reporting

Jim Vair, Director of Human Resource Services

Dr. Jeff Davis, Director of International Education

Dr. Shelly Niemi, Director of Indigenous Education

Connor McCoy, Past President, Greater Victoria Principals Vice-Principals Association

Gautam Khosla, Executive Member, Greater Victoria Principals Vice-Principals Association

Stakeholders:

Paula Marchese, VCPAC

Rachel McLellan, VCPAC

Ilda Turcotte, GVTA

Cindy Romphf, GVTA

Tailly Wills, CUPE 947

Trina Legge, CUPE 382

Darren Reed, CUPE 382

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Acknowledgement

Committee Chair Gagnon recognized and acknowledged the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations on whose traditional territories we live, we learn, and we do our work.

Approval of Minutes

By consensus, the Committee approved the minutes from the February 23, 2023 meeting.

The three questions submitted by a committee member following the February 23, 2023 meeting were answered:

Question 1

I see that the information about the March 7 open budget meeting has gone out. Can you speak on Thursday about what the BAC's role is at this meeting? Will we be at tables as moderators or participants? Do we need to RSVP to Caroline?

The BAC's role will be to participate in the meeting and interact with the public at tables. We are working on having District Staff facilitate and take notes at the tables, if possible. Please RSVP to Caroline if you plan to attend in any capacity.

Question 2

I would like to propose that the terms of reference or guiding principles be amended to possibly include something along these lines: "That when considering recommendations for cuts (or savings), the Budget Advisory Committee members receive detailed information about the expected impacts that such reductions would have on students, staff, and infrastructure at SD61 schools."

Given that all of the changes to the BAC terms of reference or guiding principles need to go to the Board for approval and we are nearing our last meeting, it is recommended that we do our best to incorporate this request for any proposed savings for the current budget. In addition, it is recommended that this item be brought up at the debrief meeting to be held on May 4, so that it can be noted and incorporated into the discussion of the terms of reference and guiding principles at the start of the next budget year.

Question 3

Can the budget committee receive information about the \$600,000 that was cut from the EA on call budget that may not get added back to this year's budget? (It is my understanding that this is in addition to the \$1.2 million from EA and school assistant positions that have not been filled this year -- please correct me if this info is not accurate.) We've heard from VCPAC members that they would like to see a substantial amount of this money reinvested in EA recruitment and retention. It is a big concern of ours that without being able to staff our schools adequately with qualified EAs, we are not meeting the needs of disabled students in our district and are therefore violating their human rights. VCPAC is hearing from parents that their number one issue about the budget issue this year is student support, especially in the areas of EAs and counselling.

In the preliminary (annual) 2022/23 budget, a reduction of \$0.60 million was built into Educational Assistant salary and replacement budgets to account for historical savings due to hiring lags and shortage of EAs to fill replacements when EAs are on short term leaves (e.g. sick). A portion of these funds were used to balance the 2022/23 preliminary budget and \$274k was used to increase 20% of EAs to 30 hours a week.

In the final (amended annual) 2022/23 budget, a further reduction of \$0.60 million was built into the "Educational Assistant Salaries" object within the Amended Annual Budget statements to account for additional hiring lags and staffing shortages to fill replacements when CUPE 947 employees are on short-term leaves. The Educational Assistants category within the budget statements includes EAs, ECEs, School Assistants, School Meal Assistants, Supervision etc. so not all of the \$0.60 million was due to EA shortages as some was due to ECEs and Supervision shortages. These funds are being used to help cover the \$2.60 million deficit within Teacher replacement costs.

However, efforts have been put forth this year to try to recruit additional EAs. The district is holding an EA bridging program this year, and has been spending funds on EA recruitment advertising.

Music Options

Associate Secretary-Treasurer Lutner presented the Committee with an overview of the budget options for Elementary Strings and Middle School Music for the 2023-2024 Budget.

The set of options for Elementary Strings included:

- 28 Elementary Schools with Strings; \$258,485 addition
- Hub Model – 5 Sites; \$91,675 addition
- Hub Model – 10 Sites; \$183,350 addition
- Strings Prep \$0

The set of options for Middle School Music included:

- Maintain Current FTE 8.822; \$0
- Reduce FTE by 20% to 7.058 FTE; \$226,450 savings
- School Population: Base FTE 7.000; \$233,843 savings
- Base FTE + Participation Rate FTE: 10.000 FTE; \$151,189 addition
- Band as an Exploratory/Elective: \$859,939 savings

Questions and comments following the presentation included:

- Elementary Strings Prep \$0; wondering if we could consider as trial run? Saw increase when opened up to all schools, but participation declined when outside of school day
 - Would present challenges; some schools not set up for within schedule; might not have enough instruments; hard to make this fit across all schools
- Saw decrease in numbers at keen schools; used to be in timetable; might also have to do with space; how would it work with extra prep in contract, if already have music prep teacher?
- 4/5 splits, logistical problem; need empty classroom; could be creative solutions, but not sure of them at the moment
- When Elementary strings outside school day, makes program not as accessible; if continues as is, need more discussion to bring into timetable; challenging to move this into 25 schools; what about trying in some schools to see if they can overcome challenges? Elementary strings program important to parents
 - Haven't asked schools if they would want to go in this direction; could go there if committee willing
- Have we done hub model or strings in prep before? Have we done the Middle School options before? Do a trial in first year; pros and cons; not a large FTE; sensitive that these are music teachers
 - Some schools do music as prep/exploratory now; do Ukulele as a hub model now
- Hub at Elementary is at Middle; would it be in evening? Is it taught by one teacher? A class of 50 students and one teacher is a lot.
 - Would look at class size and location of students
 - Each middle school would have program, but for Elementary students
- Music room is being used before school, lunch, and after school already; don't understand the Base FTE model
 - FTE would not drop below a certain minimum
- How would base FTE + participation rate work?
 - Minimum FTE plus allocation based on participation

- Is it 2 blocks per week?
 - Depends on participation
- How many blocks per week? Con is disruption to learning, but not that disruptive because consistent
- Challenging when only looking at 2 options; out of context; prefer to have complete picture of all departments; why is number of instruments an issue now? Wasn't a factor previously, e.g. rentals vs CSMLC; could include entire 4/5 class instead of just 5s; liked some of the creative options in M. Harris report; plan based on number of participants, not hard thresholds; better appreciation of how much prep time will be added; feedback from Ps what they had planned inside schedule if considering enforcing strings; maybe 1 in prep and 1 not, so 50% reduction
- School population – how many schools < 300 and how many > 600?
 - School population read out and linked in chat
- More class time with 3.0 participation?
 - More FTE in school
- Band exploratory elective; \$272K is the cost of choir and strings
- If limited in exploratory, limits breadth of options

BAC Budget Priorities and Savings

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following questions regarding BAC Budget Priorities and Savings:

- Identify three budget items that are of the highest prior to the Committee
- Are there any areas of savings that should be explored in more detail for the next meeting? Be specific.

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

Highest priority items:

- Counselling
- Mental health (can go beyond counselling)
- Custodial services
- EA retention
- Music
- EA retention
- Custodians
- Teachers – smaller class sizes
- Increase EA wages and hours
- Computer purchases – student devices and teacher laptops
- Network infrastructure
- Programs that keep kids connected to schools
- Student programming - no cuts to students

Areas of savings:

- District administration as efficient and tight as possible?
- Consider 10% reduction across the board
- 5% reduction across all departments; not a big hit to one area
- Spending freeze; discretionary – defined, e.g. travel is obvious; last quarter of year
- Service charge for access to Wi-Fi
- Cost for programs of choice, such as music; pay if able to pay and access through hardship policy if not able to pay
- Why not explore other areas of savings; same areas getting cuts

- Are there other options to consider?
- Consider emotional impact of budget on students; post-COVID is challenging
- Discretionary spending review

Building Consensus

a. Operating Surplus and Operating Reserve

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following questions regarding operating surplus and operating reserve:

- The current operating reserve is \$1.1M, which is .5% of the prior year operating revenue. District Policy states that the operating reserve should be at 2-4%. Would you increase the reserve for 2023-2024? Or would you plan to use some, or all, of this reserve to offset the 2023-2024 budget deficit? Provide rationale.
- If there was an operating surplus projected for 2022-2023, would you use that surplus to help offset the 2023-2024 budget deficit? Provide rationale.

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

Would you increase the reserve for 2023-2024?

- Not comfortable to build up
- Add surplus at end of year, if surplus available to do that
- Need advocacy, not funded in a way to build reserves
- Advocate for per pupil funding increase
- When have big contingency Province looks to us to contribute to capital projects (drawback)
- Should build reserve when we have a balanced budget
- In deficit position, due to COVID; build reserve slowly without impacting students; how are other school districts handling COVID impacts?
- Not interested in increasing reserve; put money into students now and when we are in happier years, add to the reserve then
- Increase reserve in good years

Would you plan to use some, or all, of this reserve to offset the 2023-2024 budget deficit?

- Not comfortable taking from the reserve
- What is the purpose of the reserve; unforeseen events? If keeping reserve means cuts to services, maybe that is when to use it
- Risk management; old infrastructure
- We are in rainy day situation now; would use reserve funds to offset deficit
- Not advisable to use funds in reserve

Would you use an operating surplus from 2022-2023 to help offset the 2023-2024 budget deficit?

- Yes to using surplus to offset shortfall
- Would use surplus to balance
- Yes, if don't have to make cuts to do so

b. Operating Capital Reserves

The Committee broke into small groups to discuss the following questions regarding operating capital reserves:

- Outdated staff and student devices need to be replaced to support learning outcomes for students. Technology costs have increased significantly. There isn't enough budget to

maintain student ratios or refresh devices in a timely manner. What should we add to the operating budget in 2023-2024 to address this issue?

- The District has invested \$900K in the first two years of a 5-year network infrastructure plan. Year 3 of the plan costs \$618K. If we do not proceed, we will lose Wi-Fi access in areas of schools. Should year 3 of this plan be added to the operating budget?

Groups reported back highlighting the following:

What should we add to the operating budget in 2023-2024 to address the issue of replacing staff and student devices?

- In general, we haven't contributed and now we have to catch up; funding at 100% may not be realistic; budget model going forward should be consistent amount each year
- Coming up with a specific amount is challenging
- If funded at 30-40%, what would priorities be?
- Teacher laptops are critical; tech packages
- Families buying technology which will work in schools; offer discount to families?
- Can you prioritize schools?
- Can you do 1/3 staff laptops every year to spread out cost?
- Significant risk not investing in technology
- Possibly have a conversation around ratio? Work toward 2:1 over time?
- Start with worst need and cycle through schools instead of all at once
- How could devices be shared across school?
- Could students use their phones? Some are using them like Chromebooks
- Consider what is healthy for students; wait till 8 – no cell phone until grade 8
- Huge lump sum is difficult; could you spend the 1 year amount?
- Could the student devices be stretched out over another year?
- K and Elementary – don't introduce too early
- Could have technology a required supply at high school?
- Less laptops for staff – can they share?
- Is there more need for staff laptops at secondary compared to elementary?
- Consider priority for student learning
- Updated technology for staff is important; Andy to help navigate
- Are there grants available?
- Consider the inequity of technology for some families; poverty; access to technology is a privilege; what are reasonable expectations for technology?
- Tie to strategic plan

Should year 3 of the network infrastructure plan be added to the operating budget?

- If not tackled, open to threats – can't sit on this
- Definitely something we need to just do
- Not having Wi-Fi in schools is an issue
- Wi-Fi high priority
- High priority to maintain Wi-Fi
- Wi-Fi is bad
- Students are complaining about Wi-Fi; more important than computers
- What is the purpose and intent? Keep Wi-Fi safe or extending service?

Andy Canty, Director of Facilities Services, was able to respond to some of the questions following the group share out.

- Spreading of costs was part of initial plan, but unable to sustain; was not funded appropriately and technology usage has increased
- Planning; using volume leverage to reduce cost by purchasing up front; then put away annual requirement to refresh in several years
- Staff laptops; hard to do shared scenario
- Don't have funds to do both PCs and laptops for teachers; extending laptops to all teachers; far lower cost than replacing PCs in classroom
- BYOD model is in some districts; there is pressure on families to have technology, difficult to estimate how many might pay
- If creating expectation of own device at high school, it will require a good conversation and understanding of different models
- Equity; 2000 devices loaned out during COVID
- Stretching life cycle; teacher PCs – no, already run into ground; student devices – depends; iPads old and stuck on old operating system, security issues; Chromebooks already beyond lifecycle at 7 years old
- Need to pick investment and support over 6 years
- Not much leeway in extending; just fewer devices
- Funding grants? Not aware of any; other districts dip into AFG for network (not sustainable and intended for wiring), also AFG funding is huge need for aging facilities
- Not extending Wi-Fi; increasing capability (increased number of devices); increasing wireless access points, replaced when they fail, do a good job of not overprovisioning
- Have to replace in shorter timeframe due to security risks
- 20% increase in hardware costs since pandemic and supply chain issues; not coming down
- Teachers do a lot of work with computers; attendance, TTOC attendance, emails, need the educator laptop for administrative duties
- Don't have access to laptops for EAs; talking to schools, communal desktops for email, using Chromebooks in classroom

c. Music Options – Elementary Strings and Middle School Music

i. Elementary Strings

The Committee ran out of time to do small group work on this topic. It was decided that individual committee members would email responses to the following questions to Secretary-Treasurer Stride in order for them to be included into the minutes.

- Which is your preferred option? Provide rationale.
- Elementary Strings is not currently included in the 2023-2024 budget and you will need to make reductions equal to the cost of the option chosen. Would you reconsider your preferred option? Provide rationale.
- Is there a variation of these options or a new option the Committee should consider? Provide details.

Individuals and VCPAC reported back highlighting the following:

- Prefer to eliminate program; having it inside the timetable creates inequities for those not participating and music already exists in prep time at all elementary schools; delaying strings to grade 6 helps to reduce costs.
- Please consider elementary strings not being included in the budget for next year. Given the over \$4 million deficit, strings are already offered in our district at all grade levels from grades 6-12. Also, music is offered in K-5.
- Feedback for Elementary Strings is the 5 site Hub model. Music is in the curriculum

and offered at every elementary school in our district. The staffing is in addition to elementary staffing. An Elementary School Strings Program of Choice should either be cost neutral or a low cost which is similar to athletics or arts offered at elementary school. Visual Arts, Physical Health and Music help to contribute to a student's mental health and well-being and the Ministry has included these areas in the curriculum.

- Preferred option is strings as prep where possible (school choice). Cutting supplemental funding to Elementary Strings does not mean the district will not have music; it's part of the curriculum and all schools currently offer music in prep time so music will still be taught in schools. It just means that, similar to athletics in elementary school, music won't be funded outside of the timetable. The district is looking at a \$4M+ deficit, and while offering grade 5 students an opportunity to learn violin, viola or cello is nice in concept, it's a nice to have, not a must have.
- My preferred option is to eliminate it. Having it inside the timetable creates inequities for those not participating and music already exists in prep time at all elementary schools. Delaying Strings until grade 6 reduces cost.
- VCPAC feedback is attached as Appendix A

ii. Middle School Music

The Committee ran out of time to do small group work on this topic. It was decided that individual committee members would email responses to the following questions to Secretary-Treasurer Stride in order for them to be included into the minutes.

- Which is your preferred option? Provide rationale.
- Middle School Music is currently included in the 2023-2024 budget as Option 1. Given the projected deficit, if you had to choose an option that provides a budget reduction, which option would you choose? Provide rationale.
- Is there a variation of these options or a new option the Committee should consider? Provide details.

Individuals and VCPAC reported back highlighting the following:

- My preferred option is to reduce FTE by 20% and to look at further reductions next year including consideration to move band into exploratory. Middle school music does not generate staffing and will continue to be aggressively defended as a need during budget deficits rather than a want.
- Please consider looking at Option 5 band being offered as an exploratory. This would increase the number of students who take band in middle school and hopefully build strong music programs in high school.
- Feedback for Middle Music is a reduction of 20%. The music programs at middle school provide students who are interested with several different opportunities and with a reduction of 20% will still be able to offer many options. The funds are in addition to middle school staffing. Athletic opportunities provided to students occur after school at a low cost to the district and also help contribute to the mental health and well-being of students.
- Preferred option is band as an exploratory/elective or reduction of 20% this year, with future cuts to follow. We are in a deficit budget and while music is a nice to have, there are other items that are more in line with the strategic plan that we should be investing our money into. The number of music classes some students are taking should be capped as we can't afford to fund students taking numerous classes.
- VCPAC feedback is attached as Appendix A

Work Plan

The Committee reviewed the draft work plan for the upcoming meeting including reviewing priorities and savings, and reaching consensus on recommendations to the Board.

Questions

The following question was asked:

- If the funding for education has not increased, do we have a list of how much things have increased?
 - We do not currently have a list, but Associate Secretary-Treasurer Lutner has been keeping track of inflationary increases while working on the 2023-2024 budget.

Next Meeting: March 9, 2023 6pm-8pm in person

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

APPENDIX A: VCPAC FEEDBACK TO MUSIC OPTIONS

VCPAC opposes any cuts to the 2023-24 SD61 school budget that targets student programming. Music, at the elementary and middle school levels, has been severely cut for the past two years. If we continue whittling away at it, we will have no program left.

AMIS, as a sub-committee of VCPAC, has spent more than two years researching and speaking with current and former music students, teachers, arts leaders in the community, parents, and other music specialists across the province. We have sent hundreds of letters and made multiple presentations to the Board of Education, citing how important these programs are to the district and the community at large. Music teachers and families are feeling untold stress at having to advocate for this program year after year. Parents and families have told the District that they overwhelmingly value music education for their students and they do not want to see further cuts to this program.

VCPAC does not understand why music is being targeted yet again for cuts for the third consecutive year. **We are requesting that at the March 9 BAC meeting that District Staff provide a rationale why they are proposing cuts to student programming in our District, that provide such clear mental health and socio-emotional benefits and why cuts to other areas are not being proposed.**

Below, we have provided our recommendations for Elementary and Middle School music, comments about each option, and suggestions for further research and analysis.

Elementary Strings Recommendations

1. Offer Elementary Strings to each school in the current format while exploring options to keep the program within the school day. Currently, 47% of Grade 5s participate in Elementary Strings, which speaks to how popular the program is. The current program which offers Elementary Strings in 24 schools has 15 classes offered **outside** the school schedule, which is not equitable or accessible to all Grade 5 students in the district. Note that the current level of funding was for 15 schools in the 2021-22 school year; the level of funding has not increased, despite the program being now offered in 24 schools.
2. Provide Principals with the choice between a prep time program and in-school instruction. The Music Review noted that a significant number of principals in the district found that the Elementary Strings program interfered with access to learning in the classroom. If school admins do not want the Elementary Strings pullout program going forward in their schools, then individual participation in the prep model may be a way for them to still make the program available to students at their schools. (Strings does not have to be a one size fits all model.)
3. Offer a pilot program of five elementary schools to try out prep, if there is interest among five instrumental music teachers, principals and their school communities. This would give SD61 a chance to see the challenges and benefits of this model and to evaluate if it would be worthwhile to roll it out to the entire district. Note: Any pilot program would ideally run concurrently with the Strings program as is. This would be so that all students receive the same instrumental music opportunities in the District during a pilot program year.
4. Offer a pilot program to one family of schools to try a hub model. This could work if school communities, admins, school staffs, and music teachers agreed to be part of a pilot program to see what benefits and challenges there are to this model. Note: Any pilot program would need to run concurrently with the Strings program as is so that all students receive the same instrumental music opportunities in the District for the year in which the hub model is being piloted.

Comments About Each Option:

1. Keep as is:
 - VCPAC feels this is the most inclusive option for students currently, especially if offered inside school time. However, as noted above, we find it very concerning that 15/24 schools offer Strings outside the school day. This is not equitable or accessible to all Grade

5 students. **We strongly recommend that families and PACs be consulted on the schedule for their school community; this decision should not be made solely by principals and non-music teachers at our elementary schools.**

- Other benefits include: Convenient for parents to have their children participate at their own schools; funding available to help with the cost of instruments; provides a sense of pride and comfort to have the program at their schools; specialist music instructors are already in place; performances are included, which is a necessity for instrumental music instruction and provides a link to the larger school community; Strings gives many families the opportunity to experience the benefits of music education who otherwise may not be able to afford it on their own privately.

2. Hub model 5/10 sites:

Challenges:

- Students may face barriers to attending such a program and may not be able to travel to the hub sites. They may be participating in other activities during suggested times.
- Programming would almost certainly be in the evening since middle schools and high schools already have programming after school. They may not have space to run a hub model.
- There may be limits on how many students in the district could participate; there may be limits on teaching staff, especially with hubs that could have very large class sizes; specialist music teachers may not choose to stay in the district if the only opportunities for teaching this program were in the evenings.
- Participation rates in the program would likely drop as a result of this shift which may potentially affect the viability of the program going forward and would have an impact on Middle School Strings programs.

3. Prep:

Challenges:

- Not enough specialist teachers or instruments if offered to all Grade 5 and 4/ 5 split classes.
- Some schools would not have enough space to run this as a prep program.
- Possibly will eliminate FTE from general music teachers; how would that be reconciled?
- Students who may enjoy more comprehensive music instruction, may not want to learn Strings. What happens to students who do not want to do Strings?
- If schools decide they want to do a different prep due to the complicated nature of Strings, Elementary Strings disappears as a district program.

Ideas Worth Exploring and Researching:

- Explore if a prep scenario could include different instruments other than Strings. Perhaps each school community could pick within a group of instruments that worked best for them. The benefits of learning an instrument and reading music would still be there. One potential challenge would be trying to supply those particular instruments for all the

children in the class – under the prep model, this should not be a cost that families need to absorb.

- Can an Indigenous focus be added to the Strings program to make it more inclusive to all students?
- Are there ways to explore a middle school mentorship program? Perhaps it could be used as part of a hub program? Can Grade 6/7 strings students mentor Grade 5 students?

Middle School Music Recommendations

1. Keep Middle School Music as is. This program promotes inclusivity and equity. We should not be cutting popular performing arts programs that are so critical to our students' mental health and well being. Music gives students connections; a sense of belonging; a place to feel comfortable; and the same teacher over several years, which studies show can be integral to student success.
2. If further cuts need to be explored, VCPAC recommends a 5 to 10 percent cut across the board in the district. If this is considered, these cuts need to be done in an equitable way, which means they should not proportionally affect students who depend on Inclusive Learning or who are Indigenous.

Comments About Each Option:

1. Keep as is:

Reasons We Should Keep the Program:

- Students already have faced changes in programming over the past two years; when music cuts began, students were in Grade 7. They will be entering high school and have only known cuts to music, which we know is a passion for many of them.
- Families and music teachers are feeling strain that these cuts are targeting music every year.
- Further cuts would mean a decrease in qualified staff = a decrease in class and program availability.

2. Reduce FTE by 20%

Challenges:

- Continuation of cuts would continue the precedent of chipping away at the program until it is gone.
- Already middle school music programs have cut choirs and strings programs at district schools. The program cannot sustain further deep cuts and remain a high quality, vibrant program.

3. Adjust FTE to the size of the school population starting at base FTE 7.0. (It is currently 8.82).

Challenges:

- Continuation of cuts would continue the precedent of chipping away at the program until it is gone.

- It is inequitable to base the FTE on the whole of the school population when it involves just one subject being taught. Not an accurate measurement of the students being affected by the cut.
 - It is exclusionary to target school music programs based on size. Students are encouraged to go to catchment schools. If their neighbourhood school does not offer a music program with a larger FTE, it is inequitable for them to not have the same music opportunities that are offered at other schools.
4. Adjust FTE to levels of participation, (Note that this would increase the line item from where it currently is. Could go as high as 10.0 FTE.).

Challenges:

- The actual data broken down by school is not quite clear to us. We would like to have the data of each school and what the effects would be (how many teachers vs. how many students participating in music) before commenting any further.
 - Again this feels discriminatory – it penalizes students who are not in the catchment of a strong music school; limits opportunities for them.
5. Exploratory Option (Would only have cost for choir and strings.)

Challenges:

- The potential to diminish existing programs (especially band) is high if students are only allowed to pick two exploratories for those that want to participate in band.
- Students would not be able to be in a band program for the full year, which would impact their music learning and would likely mean that some would not continue. This would impact high school music programs.
- The whole idea behind exploratories is to let middle school students explore a variety of subjects and passions. Limiting these options feels short sighted and does not give them the same learning opportunities that other students have.