

**Report of the**

**K-12 Music Program Review Committee**

**Weston Public Schools**

**March 18-19, 2008**

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**Weston Public Schools**  
**K-12 Music Program Review**  
**March 18-19, 2008**

**Review Committee Membership**

**Chair**

Dr. William McManus	Chair of Music Education Department Boston University K-12 Director of Fine & Performing Arts (retired) Belmont Public Schools
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**Choral and General Music**

Charlyn Bethell	K-5 General Music Teacher Concord Public Schools
Stephen Murray	Chorus and General Music Specialist & Curriculum Leader Wayland Public Schools

**Instrumental Music**

Ken Culver	Band and Orchestra Director Westford Academy
Dr. Matthew Finnegan	Music Teacher Boston College High School

**Student Representative**

Cody Wood	Weston High School Alumnus Student at Case Western Case Reserve University
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## **Weston Personnel Interviewed and/or Observed**

### **Administration**

Anthony Parker	Weston High School Principal
John Gibbons	Weston Middle School Principal
Matthew Lucey	Field School Interim Principal
Stephen Shaw	Country School Principal
Deborah Dunn	Woodland School Principal
David Fuller	METCO Director

### **Music Faculty**

Christopher Memoli	Director of Music
Therese Provenzano	Weston High School & Middle School
Colleen Toland	Weston Middle School & High School
Joanne Crowell	Woodland School & Middle School
Leigh Larkin	Field School & Middle School
Deanna Leedy	Country School, Field School, Woodland School & Middle School
Lisa Nardone	Field School, Woodland School, & Middle School
Donna Nagle	Country School

### **Others Interviewed**

Parents including members of Weston Friends of Music  
Student representatives of all High School music ensembles

The Music Review Committee also had an opportunity to meet informally with Dr. Alan Oliff, Superintendent of Weston Public Schools and Dr. Cheryl Maloney, Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

## **Acknowledgement and Charge to the Music Review Committee**

The Music Program Review Committee wishes to thank the Weston Public Schools administration, faculty, parents and students who welcomed us to visit, examine, discuss, analyze, and reflect upon the K-12 music program. The entire process was transparent and inclusive. The Music Program Review Committee felt that all of their questions were responded to with thoughtfulness, honesty, and candor. The Committee wishes to thank Music Director Chris Memoli for organizing the visit so that the Committee was able to observe every aspect of the K-12 music program.

The following questions were presented as the Charge to the Music Review Committee:

- 1) Is the Music Department curriculum and program well-articulated and structured for students at all levels and interests in grades K-12?
- 2) Does the current staffing pattern effectively and efficiently support the needs of students and overall goals of the program?
- 3) Are music students and performance ensembles in the district reaching high levels of achievement?
- 4) Is the Music Department program assessable to and supportive of all students in the district?
- 5) To what extent does the Music Department work with other departments to initiate or support interdisciplinary programs?

The following additional questions that delve into more specific areas and subordinate to the five questions above were also presented to the Music Review Committee:

- a) How effective is the general music program?
- b) How does the Music program help students balance participation in activities such as Drama or Athletics?
- c) Do the facilities within the school district properly support the school music program?
- d) Are the teaching methods employed in music classes effective and do they lead to student success?

During their two day visit to Weston, the members of the Music Program Review Committee worked hard to accumulate the data and evidence to respond to the questions outlined in the Charge to the Committee. Classroom and rehearsal observations, examination of schedules, curriculum documents, concert programs, ensemble handbooks, teaching materials, the school system budget, and the physical facilities were the primary sources of the commendations and recommendations in this report. Valuable insights about the program were also gained through individual and group meetings with parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

To best address the questions in the Charge to the Music Program Review Committee, the findings, commendations, and recommendations in this report were organized under the following specific categories:

1. K-12 Music Program – Organization and Structure
2. General Music– Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
3. Instrumental Music – Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
4. Choral Music – Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
5. Staff and Staff Deployment
6. Program Accessibility and Student Participation
7. Facilities and Equipment
8. Program Administration and Support

A general summary relating to specific questions in the Charge to the Music Program Review Committee is included in this report beginning on page 24 of this report.

# K-12 MUSIC PROGRAM

## Organization and Structure

### Findings

#### General Music Program

- Kindergarten classes are scheduled for 30 minutes of music a week.
- General music classes in Grades 1 – 3 are scheduled for 30 minutes twice a week.
- General music classes in Grades 4 and 5 meet once a week for one hour. These classes appear to be too long for this age group.
- General music is provided to all students in Grade 6 for one quarter of the school year. Classes meet three times a week for 50 minutes during the quarter. Three different music teachers teach these classes.
- Sixth Grade General Music classes observed were very large – exceeding 30 students.
- General Music is elective in Grade 7. Students electing general music in Grade 7 are scheduled for one quarter. Classes meet four times a week for 50 minutes. Currently, there are only two sections of general music in Grade 7.
- There is no general music opportunity provided for students in Grade 8. A Musical Theater class is available as an elective but this class is not taught by the music staff.
- Middle School students have very limited general music opportunities after Grade 6. There are only two sections of general music in Grade 7 and no general music classes in Grade 8.
- There is an AP (advanced placement) Music Theory class at the High School, but no basic or introductory classes in music theory. The AP music theory class meets four times in an 8 day schedule.
- Other than the AP Music Theory class, there are no non-performance music electives at the High School. Many High School students not interested in participating in traditional music performance ensembles (band, chorus, and orchestra) are not being served by the music program.

### Choral Music Program

- Elementary choral rehearsals are held once a week after school for one hour and music teachers receive a stipend for conducting these rehearsals.
- In Grades 6, 7, and 8, chorus is scheduled twice a week for 50 minutes.
- Chorus rehearsals at the Middle School coincide with instrumental rehearsals allowing students to participate in both programs.
- The choruses at the Middle School are very large: Sixth Grade Chorus - 65 students, Seventh Grade Chorus - 66 students, and Eighth Grade Chorus - 73 students. This presents classroom management problems, inhibits effective instruction, and limits the instructor's ability to interact with individual students.
- There is a select chorus (Madrigals) at the Middle School which meets once a week for 50 minutes.
- Chorus sections in the High School meet for 1 hour 20 minutes 4 times in an 8 day schedule.
- Chorus sections rehearse separately and have very limited rehearsal time together as a full before concert. Students were very concerned about this.
- There is a single select chorus at the High School (Concert Choir) that meets for 1 hour 20 minutes, three times in an 8 day cycle.

### Instrumental Music Program

- Students are provided an early start to instrumental music training. Beginning string classes are offered in Grade 3 and beginning band instrument classes in Grade 4. These are appropriate grades for beginning string and band classes.
- Group Instrumental lessons in Grades 3-5 are scheduled for one half hour per week. Considering the large size of these classes and the individual attention required by beginning instrumental students, this amount of time is entirely inadequate.
- Students are pulled out of classes for music lessons in a way that minimizes disruptions for regular classroom teachers. Any single classroom is affected only once a week for one half hour.

- Instrumental music classes in grades 4 and 5 are much too large. Parents expressed concerns about the large number of children in Grade 4 and Grade 5 band classes.
- Orchestras in the three elementary schools meet once a week after school for one hour.
- Beginning Band (Grade 4) and advanced Band (Grade 5) meet once a week after school for one hour.
- There is not sufficient time to set up for the Fourth Grade Band and Fifth Grade Band rehearsals at the Field School. Rehearsals are held in the cafeteria and time is needed to set up chairs, stands, and percussion equipment. The teacher does not have sufficient time to set up the room and prepare for the rehearsal before students arrive.
- The Sixth Grade Band and Orchestra are scheduled for three 50 minute rehearsals per week.
- The Seventh and Eighth Grade Band and Orchestra are scheduled for two 50 minute rehearsals each week.
- Instrumental rehearsals at the Middle School coincide with choral rehearsals allowing students to participate in both programs.
- The High School Concert Band, Orchestra, String Ensemble, and Wind Ensemble each meet 4 times in an 8 day schedule. Rehearsals are for 1 hour 20 minutes.
- There are two jazz ensembles (Jazz Ensemble 1 and Jazz Ensemble 2) at the High School. Each rehearses once every 8 days for 1 hour and 20 minutes. This is not adequate rehearsal time for these two ensembles.
- There are two levels of band and orchestra at the High School. The Concert Band is made up of mostly ninth graders and plays music at a lower level of challenge, while the Wind Ensemble provides a greater challenge for students with more developed skills. A similar tiered system is in place for the High School Orchestra.
- Chamber music is scheduled for one period every eight days at the High School.

## **Commendations**

1. It is commendable that music is taught by music specialists in Kindergarten.
2. It is commendable that general music classes in Grades 1-3 are scheduled twice per week.
3. Elementary principals are commended for clustering like-grades together.
4. The High School Band, Choral, and Orchestral programs are structured to provide a sequential, developmental approach to skill development and the performance of more challenging literature.

## **Recommendations**

1. Pre-school music instruction should be considered for pre-school classes in the Woodland and Country Schools. Early childhood music is the foundation and backbone of a strong music program.
2. Schedule general music classes in Grades 4 and 5 at the Field School twice a week for 40-45 minutes rather than once a week for an hour.
3. Instrumental classes in grades 3 – 5 should be increased from 30 minutes a week to 45 minutes a week.
4. General Music should be reinstated in Grade 8. A variety of electives should be offered.
5. Consider restructuring the Middle School choral program in order to reduce the size of the choruses to a more manageable number of students.
6. Consider the establishment of a separate chorus for boys in the Middle School.
7. Consider implementing an introductory music theory class and non-performance music classes such as music technology, guitar, or Jazz/Rock History at the High School. This will make music instruction accessible to students who are not interested in participating in more traditional performance groups. An interdisciplinary course such as humanities should also be considered. Non-traditional performance opportunities such as African drumming and fiddling could enrich the performance program. There should be support for student led ensembles such as rock bands and student led chorale groups.

# GENERAL MUSIC PROGRAM

## Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

### Findings

- The general music curriculum is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and the National Standards for Music.
- There are six curricular strands running through the general music curriculum: (1) singing, (2) reading music, (3) playing instruments, (4) improvisation and composition, (5) critical response, and (6) connections.
- Many of the grade level objectives relating to each of these strands in the general music curriculum are undifferentiated and lack specificity. For example, the grade level objectives in general music for Grade 4 and Grade 5 are almost identical. It is unclear exactly what the students should be learning in any specific year and how learning is sequenced from year to year.
- Grade level learning objectives relating to interdisciplinary connections are much too general.
- A variety of methodologies for teaching general music was observed including eclectic approaches, Orff, Kodaly, and Weikart.
- Elementary principals spoke very highly about the quality of teaching done in music classes.
- Instruction in the general music seems to focus primarily on three of the curricular strands – singing, reading music, and playing instruments (recorder). There seems to be only minimal attention given to improvisation and composition, critical response (listening skills), and connections.
- While a high level of singing was observed in the elementary schools, there was very little correction of students who do not sing well. It is hoped that teachers create a safe atmosphere for students to sing alone and be corrected.
- There is a lack of consistency in recorder instruction. Woodland students sit in chairs and are encouraged to use proper posture. In observed classes at Field School and Country School, students sat on the floor to play their recorders.
- Special education students are sometimes taken out of general music classes for tutoring interrupting the nature of sequential instruction in music.

- Interdisciplinary connections were observed in some aspects of the music program, but were not widely or consistently in evidence. In the second grade, lessons linking music and social studies were observed and a future unit linking music to insects was planned.
- Technology is not used for instruction in the elementary general music program.
- There is some evidence of cultural and social studies connections in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade general music curriculum.
- Benchmark statements in the curriculum included guitar instruction, improvisation, composition, and purposeful movement to music. However, these activities were not observed.

## **Commendations**

1. General music teachers have diverse backgrounds and use varied methodologies in their teaching. Students benefit from these varied approaches to learning and performing music.
2. The quality of singing in the elementary schools is very good. Students sing properly and confidently. Elementary music teachers encourage students to make use of head voice and sing with a proper tone.

## **Recommendations**

1. More specific grade level objectives need to be developed for the general music program. General music teachers and instrumental teachers should work together to identify specific grade level objectives for the grades in which both general music and instrumental music is taught (Grades 3-7).
2. In general music classes, interdisciplinary connections could occur with subjects such as math, language arts, and science. The Review Committee recommends efforts to promote interdisciplinary teaching and learning at the elementary level be strengthened via staff development and common planning time for music specialists and classroom teachers.
3. Similar instructional approaches for teaching music reading should be implemented by both instrumental music and general music teachers in Grades 3 – 5.
4. Find ways to utilize technology in the elementary general music program. Consider using such software as *Hearing Music*, *Music Ace*, *Finale Notepad*, and *Making Music*.

5. Creative music activities (composing and improvisation) should be expanded in the upper elementary grades (Grades 4 and 5) and middle school general music curriculum. There also should be more emphasis on the development of music listening skills and the study of music of different historical periods, different genres and styles, and music of other cultures.

6. Considering the length of general music classes in the Field School (one hour), the curriculum and instructional approaches need to be reconsidered to keep students engaged and interested.

7. General music teachers should consider utilizing a unit approach to the development of curriculum. The Understanding by Design (UbD) approach (Wiggins and McTighe) is recommended. Information on this approach can be obtained from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

8. General music teachers could work together and with regular classroom teachers to design interdisciplinary curricular units.

## **CHORAL MUSIC**

### **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

#### **Findings**

- The choral music curriculum is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and the National Standards for Music.
- There are four curricular strands running through the choral music curriculum: (1) singing, (2) reading music, (3) critical response, and (4) connections.
- Many of the grade level objectives relating to each of these strands in the choral music curriculum are undifferentiated and lack specificity. For example, most of the grade level objectives for the Grade 7 Chorus are the same as the objectives for the Grade 6 Chorus. The learning objectives for the Grade 8 Chorus and the Madrigals (Grades 7 & 8) are almost identical. It is unclear exactly what the students should be learning in any specific year and how learning is sequenced from year to year.
- The elementary choruses observed sounded wonderful.
- Choral warm-ups address singing fundamentals consistently from level to level

- The repertoire selected for the High School Chorus and Concert Choir is of high quality and age appropriate.
- Overall, the teaching methods in the choral music program seem to be highly effective and engaging for the students.
- Special opportunities (All-District & All-State) are available to meet the needs of students who are gifted and talented singers.
- Students in the High School choral program are frequently given opportunities to reflect upon and self-assess their performance.
- It is not clear how choral students are formally assessed.

## **Commendations**

1. The chorus teacher at the High School has a very strong rapport with students. Students greatly enjoy this program.
2. There are two levels of choral groups at the High School.
3. Excellent choices of choral literature are apparent throughout all levels of the choral program: stylistic variety, culturally diverse, and a range of difficulty levels.
4. Chorus teachers demonstrated a strong knowledge of vocal and choral pedagogy.
5. Chorus teachers were well prepared for rehearsals. Many choral rehearsals observed were conducted from memory.

## **Recommendations**

1. The High School select group is still a large choral ensemble. A smaller advanced chamber group of some sort should be developed. A Jazz Choir running one rehearsal per 8 day rotation similarly to the Jazz Ensembles is one possibility.
2. Specific grade level learning objectives need to be identified throughout the choral music curriculum.
3. There should be more emphasis on teaching critical response and connections in choral rehearsals.
4. Assessment tasks relating to major learning outcomes of the choral program should be developed. Specific criteria for evaluation should be identified. This should be done for each grade level.

# INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

## Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

### Findings

- The instrumental music curriculum is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and the National Standards for Music.
- There are four curricular strands running through the instrumental music curriculum: (1) playing instruments, (2) reading and notating music, (3) critical response, and (4) connections.
- Many of the grade level objectives relating to each of these strands are undifferentiated and lack specificity. For example, under the reading and notating strand, the grade level objectives for Grade 5 and Grade 8 are very similar. It is unclear exactly what the students should be learning in any specific year and how learning is sequenced from year to year.
- An improvisation/composition strand is included in the curriculum for Middle School and High School Jazz Ensembles.
- Elementary band students are not developing proper fundamentals of playing instruments due to lack of time and inadequate teacher/student ratio.
- The Sixth Grade Band is much more orderly and disciplined than the Fifth Grade Advanced Band even though they are only one year apart.
- It is not clear why specific repertoire is selected for instrumental music ensembles, what skills/concepts are being taught by each piece, or how pieces relate to pieces done earlier in the year.
- Overall, the teaching methods in the instrumental music program seem to be highly effective and engaging for the students.
- Special opportunities (All-District & All-State) are available to meet the needs of students who are gifted and talented instrumentalists.
- There is an appropriate frequency of performances for all instrumental ensembles.

## **Commendations**

1. A well balanced instrumentation is evident in bands and orchestras at both the Middle School and the High School.
2. Literature performed in the High School Band and Orchestra provides a challenge for the students.
3. Technology is very effectively used for assessment of the High School Band and Orchestra students.
4. Instrumental teachers were well prepared for rehearsals. Many instrumental rehearsals were conducted from memory.
5. High School instrumental ensembles perform advanced repertoire at a high level of proficiency. The High School strings are particularly strong and play advanced repertoire at a very high level of proficiency.

## **Recommendations**

1. Specific grade level learning objectives need to be identified throughout the instrumental music curriculum.
2. Fourth and Fifth Grade Band classes need to focus more on the development of solid playing fundamentals and proper rehearsal discipline.
3. The teaching of theory, compositional techniques, and music history should be infused into instrumental rehearsals. Broader musical knowledge regarding historical periods and styles, compositional techniques, vocabulary, and music theory can be taught through the rehearsal of a piece.
4. While the High School Band and Orchestra have a well developed assessment system, including on-line assessment, regular assessment was not seen as a priority in other parts of the program. Regular and appropriate assessment (on-line or otherwise) should be implemented throughout the elementary and middle school levels of instrumental music program.
5. Assessment tasks relating to major learning outcomes of the instrumental music program should be developed. Specific criteria for evaluation should be identified. This should be done for each grade level.

## **STAFF AND STAFF DEPLOYMENT**

### **Findings**

- Music teachers observed were exemplary and multi-faceted music educators.
- Building principals offered unsolicited praise of individual music teachers.
- Country School has a full time general music/string teacher (Donna Nagle). All other schools have shared music staff.
- Woodland School music staff is shared with two other buildings (Middle School and Fields School).
- Woodland and Country School principals would be interested in sharing staff between their two buildings to give them more flexibility and to have teachers be a larger part of the school culture.
- Three different teachers teach Grade 6 general music classes (Crowell, Leedy, and Larkin). It is not clear that they are implementing the same program.
- Several staff members (Leedy and Toland) are overscheduled, particularly considering travel time and the many non-teaching responsibilities associated with teaching instrumental music. These teachers must spend preparation time to attend non-teaching responsibilities.
- Some of the large Middle School ensembles are understaffed given the large number of students in these ensembles.

### **Commendations**

1. The staff members observed are exemplary and multi-faceted music educators capable of teaching a variety of music courses. All are good musicians who appear to work well together. A high degree of collegiality among the entire music staff was apparent.
2. Most of the large instrumental ensembles are team taught and teachers seem well coordinated.
3. Accompanists are provided for all choral rehearsals allowing the instructor to focus on conducting the ensemble.
4. Two music teachers are provided for the Sixth Grade Band which has about 85 students.
5. Stipends are provided for after school elementary chorus rehearsals.

## **Recommendations**

1. Consider assigning all of the general music and string classes at Country and Woodland Schools to two music teachers.
2. Two music teachers should be assigned to the Grade 4 Beginning Band at Field School as this class is very large (over 90 students) and includes students with special needs.
3. The schedules of both Deanna Leedy and Colleen Toland need to be reconsidered. The time they must spend on non-teaching responsibilities relating to teaching instrumental music (instrument care and maintenance, setting up for rehearsals, music distribution, collection, and filing, preparing students for district auditions, etc.) needs to be taken into consideration when determining FTE's. This is of particular concern since both of these teachers are teaching multiple music specialties in multiple buildings and both seem to have many more preparations than the rest of the music staff with less time for preparation.
4. Travel time needs to be addressed for teachers as most music staff travel between schools. Mileage should be recorded, reported and compensated.

## **PROGRAM ASSESSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION**

### **Findings**

- Almost 50% (337 students) of the students in the High School participate in music ensembles and over 80% (449 students) of the students in the Middle School participate in music ensembles.
- A very large percentage of High School music students participate in after school sports, drama, and other non-music activities.
- All rehearsals for High School music ensembles are scheduled during the school day and therefore do not interfere with after school sports or other activities.
- The participation of METCO students in the choral and instrumental music program is very strong, particularly at the elementary level. There were not significant numbers of METCO students participating in the instrumental programs at the High School.
- Private instrumental instruction is facilitated by the school system (students are encouraged to improve their own playing through private lessons).

- Many METCO students do not have an opportunity to study instruments privately and are unable to keep up with the performance demands of the program beyond elementary school.
- There is very little opportunity for Middle School students not involved in the performance program to study music after grade 6. There is a single elective music class in Grade 7 and no general music classes in Grade 8.
- There is a lack of non-performance music electives at the High School. The only non-performance music class is AP music theory. High School students who do not participate in music performance groups (band, chorus, and orchestra) have no opportunity to study music in school other than AP music theory.
- Jazz Ensembles I and II provide an ensemble experience for students in the band program which focusses on a popular style of music. There is no similar opportunity for students in the orchestral (string) program.

## **Commendations**

1. Participation in the band, orchestra, and choral programs at both the Middle School and the High School is extremely impressive for a school system of this size.
2. The Weston METCO Director works closely with the Director of Music to encourage Boston students to participate in the instrumental music program.
3. A large number of METCO students participate in the elementary and Middle School music program.
4. There is strong leadership and commitment from Chris Memoli to recruit and maintain METCO students in the instrumental music program.
5. Music ensembles do not conflict with after-school athletics and other activities.

## **Recommendations**

1. Efforts should be made to encourage and enable METCO students to continue participation in the instrumental music program beyond elementary school.
2. Establish a scholarship program for instrumental lessons so needy students who want to can participate in all aspects of the program.

3. Consider establishing an additional ensemble for string players dealing with more popular music styles.

4. During a week when either a chorale or instrumental ensemble is having a concert, students who are participating in both chorale and instrumental ensembles should be excused from the rehearsals of the ensemble not participating in the concert in order to adequately prepare for the concert.

## **FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT**

### **Findings**

- General music classes and string lessons are taught in beautiful, well designed music rooms in both of the K-3 schools (Country and Woodland).
- General music rooms appear to be well equipped with print materials, Orff instruments, pianos, and sound equipment.
- The Choral rehearsals at Country School were held in two locations – the music room and the library. Since the music room is used at the end of the day for bus dismissal, the chorus rehearsal is interrupted. The chorus rehearsal begins in the library for the first 15 minutes of class and then moves to the music room for the balance of the rehearsal. The library space is not adequate for a chorale ensemble as the space is cramped and it is not possible to use an accompanist in this room as there is no piano.
- The sound system in the Country School is of poor quality. During a Grade 2 performance, the sound quality of the system was very poor and feedback was a constant problem.
- The placement of lockers in the Woodland School music room is awkward and their use causes constant interruptions in the classes.
- The space for instrumental music classes in Field School is much too small and there is only one exit to the room.
- Band equipment (percussion equipment) is stored in the hallway at the Field School.
- The current Field School music room is adequate but this room will become a regular classroom next year and music classes will be moved into a much smaller space. This will greatly restrict delivery of the full music curriculum which includes movement components as well as use of a full complement of Orff instruments.

- The Middle School choral room is multi-tiered and large enough to accommodate the choruses. However, the room is rectangular and the teacher area is quite small. Students have difficulty hearing each other.
- The High School choral room is too small to accommodate the number of students involved in the program.
- The electric piano in the High School chorus room frequently malfunctioned during rehearsals observed.
- Instrumental rehearsal rooms at the Middle School and High School are large and appropriately designed for large ensembles rehearsals.
- Lighting in instrumental rehearsal rooms at both Middle School and High School is inadequate.
- There is inadequate storage space for music equipment and instruments at both the Middle School and the High School.
- The performance spaces in both the Middle School and High School are too small to accommodate the size of the ensembles and to allow for combined performances.

## **Commendations**

1. Woodland and Country School (K-3) are new and beautiful facilities with well designed and equipped music rooms.
2. A percussion studio is provided at the Middle School for a local percussion instructor during the school day so that students can take lessons during free periods.
3. The instrumental rehearsal rooms in the Middle School and High School are adequately designed and equipped for band and orchestra rehearsals.
4. The instrumental and choral rehearsal rooms at the High School are assessable to the auditorium so that ensembles can easily utilize both spaces for rehearsal purposes.
5. There is a substantial inventory of quality school-owned instruments for the band and orchestral program.

## Recommendations

1. Find a single adequate space for the Country School Chorus rehearsal.
2. Replace the sound system in the cafetorium at Country School with a higher quality system that has dual speakers.
3. An adequate music room for general music classes should be provided in the Field School.
4. It is recommended that the three elementary music classrooms be equipped with at least one MIDI work station (computer, interface, and synthesizer) for student use. Installed software might include: *Garage band*, *Music Ace*, *Print Music*, etc.
5. Improve the lighting in instrumental rehearsal rooms at both the Middle School and the High School.
6. Install ceiling projectors and appropriate screens in the music rehearsal rooms in the Middle School and High School.
7. Consider installing SMART Boards in general music rooms and rehearsal rooms throughout the system.
8. Provide a higher quality digital piano for High School chorus rehearsals.
9. Consider providing dedicated Piano/MIDI labs in any future major renovation of the Middle School and High School.
10. Consider renovation of the both the Middle School and High School choral rooms in any future renovation project. Both need to be larger with adequate storage space for music, a multi-level design, and a higher ceiling in order for students in the choral ensembles to hear each other.
11. The district would be served well with a new fine arts performance facility to be shared by the High School and Middle School. Given the size of the ensembles district wide, there is a need for a much larger performance space.

## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT**

### **Findings**

- There is significant support for the music program from all levels of the administration.
- The music staff and system administration have a good working relationship.
- Elementary principals indicated that music teachers have a strong working relationship and are well supported by classroom teachers.
- The Music Director is a strong advocate for the music program and is well respected by fellow Weston administrators, faculty, parents and students.
- The K-12 music program is ably led by a Music Director who is responsible for program organization, budget, curriculum development, staff development, program advocacy, public relations, and staff evaluation.
- There is an adequate budget for music materials and equipment. The Music Director reported that he has no difficulty obtaining materials and equipment needed to support the program.
- Most of the equipment and instruments used in the music program appears to be well maintained and in good repair.

### **Commendations**

1. The Director of Music is clearly visionary, very organized, and provides outstanding leadership for the music department.
2. The Director of Music provides excellent support for his staff and strongly advocates for the music program. He has done an outstanding job of selecting music teachers who are versatile and who work well together.
3. The Director of Music meets with the entire music staff on a monthly basis.
4. The Weston Music program has a very high level of visibility to the community. The local press keeps the program in public view.
5. The Weston Friends of Music are commended for their commitment to and support of the music program in the Weston Public Schools.

6. It was apparent from letters received and from interviews that many parents are very enthusiastic and supportive of the music program. They expressed appreciation for the excellence of the program and the positive impact the music program has had on their children.

7. The building principals are very supportive of the music program.

8. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent are strong advocates for the music program. Superintendent Oliff was recently awarded an Advocacy Award by the Massachusetts Music Educators Association.

## **Recommendations**

1. Use the Web creatively to communicate with the school community. Ideally, have a music page for each school for outreach to the community about music teaching and upcoming events.

## **SUMMARY RESPONSES TO THE CHARGE TO THE MUSIC REVIEW COMMITTEE**

The following are summary responses to the questions that were presented as the charge to the Music Review Committee:

*Is the Music Department curriculum and program well-articulated and structured for students at all levels and interests in grades K-12?*

The general music program is well structured in Grades K-6 and all students in these grades have an opportunity to learn to sing, read music, play classroom instruments and recorder, listen to music with understanding, and learn about music of other cultures and historical periods. The instrumental program is well structured in Grades 3-12 with a focus on instrumental technique, ensemble skills, reading music, and performing band and orchestral repertoire. A well structured choral program is in place for Grades 3 – 12 with a focus on singing technique, ensemble skills, music reading, and performance of choral repertoire.

For students who are interested in studying music but not interested in participating in traditional music ensembles (band, chorus, orchestra), there is very little opportunity to study music in the Weston Public Schools after Grade 7.

The music curriculum document itself needs to be revised to provide clearer expectations for students at each grade level in each area of the program. While the document is based on the music standards specified in the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework and

the National Standards for Music, grade level objectives need to be more clearly articulated and sequenced from grade to grade.

The current focus on the Weston Public Schools Music Program is on performance, which is producing outstanding results in the band, choral, and orchestral programs. Within the performance program the focus is primarily on the development of individual and ensemble performance skills. The development of an understanding of the form and structure of music and knowledge of the cultural and historical context of music performed should also be considered as major outcomes of the performance program. This should be taken into consideration in any revision of the curriculum. Assessment focuses primarily on performance skills (singing and playing instruments) and the ability to read music. There seems to be little assessment of student ability to describe, analyze, and evaluate music, or student knowledge of music of other cultures and historical periods.

The Music Program Review Committee recommends a revision of the curriculum document for the purpose of identifying major learning outcomes for each grade and development of assessment tasks and rubrics to assess the degree to which students are achieving these learning outcomes. The music staff should be provided with appropriate training in curriculum design and development.

***Does the current staffing pattern effectively and efficiently support the needs of students and overall goals of the program?***

One of the greatest strengths of the Weston music program is the staff. Throughout the system, music teachers are highly motivated, energetic, professional, passionate, and dedicated to students of all abilities. Chris Memoli is to be congratulated for assembling such a talented staff and for promoting a high degree of collegiality among music teachers. To address the needs of the district, however, several instrumental teachers have been given assignments at multiple buildings with multiple specializations and with very limited time to attend to the many non-teaching responsibilities of teaching instrumental music. More efficient ways to utilize this talented staff should be considered to avoid teacher burnout or loss of these teachers to another system.

**Are music students and performance ensembles in the district reaching high levels of achievement?**

The Music Review Committee was very impressed with the achievement level of performance ensembles (bands, choruses, orchestras) at both the Middle School and the High School. The most advanced groups at the High School (Wind Ensemble, Chamber Orchestra, and Concert Choir) are performing advanced literature very proficiently. The level of performance of the most advanced groups at the High School is extremely impressive for a school system of this size. The Weston Public Schools can be justifiably proud of the achievement level of the music performance ensembles.

**Is the Music Department program assessable to and supportive of all students in the district?**

General music instruction is provided to all students in Grades K-6. All students in grades 3 and 4 are provided an opportunity to begin studying a musical instrument. In addition to students who live in Weston, a significant number of METCO students take advantage of this opportunity. At the Middle School and High School, a vibrant music program is readily available to students interested in playing in the band or orchestra, or singing in the chorus. A very high percentage of students participate in these programs. For a school system of this size, the level of student participation is extremely impressive.

However, for students not interested in participating in performance groups, there is very little opportunity to study music beyond Grade 6. The only offerings are a single general music elective in Grade 7 (guitar class) and an AP Music Theory class at the High School. The Weston Public Schools should try to provide opportunities for all interested students to study music. General music electives should be provided in Grade 8 and courses such as music technology, basic music theory, guitar class, alternative music ensembles, music history, and humanities should be considered at the High School.

**To what extent does the Music Department work with other departments to initiate or support interdisciplinary programs?**

While there is some evidence of interdisciplinary work between the Music Department and other departments, it appears to be limited to a few units in the elementary and sixth grade general music program. There was no evidence of interdisciplinary connections between the choral and instrumental programs and other areas of the curriculum. Given that the music staff, especially the instrumental music staff, is already much overextended, it is unreasonable to expect the staff to find time to work with other departments to either initiate or support interdisciplinary programs. If interdisciplinary programs are a priority in Weston, music teachers have to be provided with time to work with regular classroom teachers on the development of interdisciplinary units.

**How effective is the general music program?**

The Music Review Committee feels that an effective general music program is provided for all students in grades K-6. The curriculum developed for this program is consistent with the music standards in the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework (1999). The time provided at each of these grade levels seems adequate and the general music teachers are providing very effective instruction. Students are singing very well throughout the system.

It is the Review Committee's feeling that the general music program in Grades K-7 could be strengthened by the development of more specific grade level objectives, stronger connections to other areas of the curriculum, and more outcomes based assessment of student learning.

The Music Review Committee did not see much evidence of communication relating to curriculum and instruction between general music teachers and instrumental music teachers. The elementary general music program and instrumental program should be mutually reinforcing. A common approach and language for teaching rhythms in general music and instrumental music classes in the elementary grades should be considered.

In Grades 7 – 12, general music is almost non-existent. There is a single general music elective for one quarter in Grade 7 and no general music at all in Grade 8. At the High School, there is a single AP Music Theory class and most of the students electing this course are already participating in the performance program. In the opinion of the Review Committee, the general music program and non-performance opportunities in music in Grades 7 – 12 are entirely inadequate.

**How does the Music program help students balance participation in activities such as Drama or Athletics?**

Given that all music ensembles at the Middle School and High School are scheduled during the school day, students have no problem participating in after school activities such as drama or athletics. A significant number of students in the High School music program play sports in the afternoon. Students appreciate that music classes are scheduled so that they can participate in sports and other activities while still being able to participate fully in the music program.

**Do the facilities within the school district properly support the school music program?**

The music facilities at the Woodland School and Country School are exceptional and fully support the music program.

The music room at Field School is adequate for general music classes, but it is the understanding of the Review Committee that this room will be used as a regular classroom next year and that general music classes will take place in a much smaller space. The room at Field School where instrumental music classes currently take place is totally inadequate – too small, only one exit, no ventilation, and no storage space. Adequate and appropriate space for both general music classes and instrumental music classes must be considered in any renovation of this building.

With the exception of limited storage space, the band/orchestra rehearsal rooms at the Middle School and High School are well designed and adequately support the band and orchestra programs. Lighting should be improved in both of these rehearsal spaces.

The choral rehearsal rooms in the Middle School and the High School are not adequate and adversely affect the teacher's ability to rehearse the choral ensembles and the students' ability to hear each other. Larger rooms appropriately designed for choral

rehearsals should be provided in any future renovation of the Middle School and High School.

The performance spaces at both the Middle School and the High School are totally inadequate for the current music program. It is clear that the program has outgrown the performance facilities. The stage at the High School is not large enough to properly seat the concert band or full orchestra and it is impossible to perform any works for combined ensembles. In any future renovation project, the Weston Public Schools should seriously consider building a much larger and more appropriate performance space which could be used by both the Middle School and the High School.

**Are the teaching methods employed in music classes effective and do they lead to student success?**

At all levels (K-12) and areas of the program (general music, choral music, instrumental music), very effective teaching methods are employed as evidenced by the high achievement level of the students participating in the program. General music teachers use a variety of different instructional approaches (Kodaly, Orff, etc.), and each approach seems to be effective. Students are learning to sing well and they are developing a good understanding of the basics of music. Instrumental and choral teachers in the Middle School and High School employ very effective rehearsal techniques with excellent attention to fundamentals of good performance. The high achievement level of the performing ensembles (bands, choruses, and orchestras) at both the Middle School and the High School provides ample evidence of the effectiveness of the instruction these students are receiving.

**Final Comment**

The Weston Public Schools can be justifiably proud of the music program that has been developed in recent years. Very few school systems of this size can boast of such a quality program. It is apparent the success and growth of the program have to some degree outgrown the facilities and are putting considerable pressure on the staff, especially the instrumental music staff. An increase in staffing for the instrumental music program should be given very serious consideration as soon as possible, and the improvement of music facilities at Field School and the Middle and High Schools should be considered a priority in future renovation projects.

The recommendations in this report are intended to provide support for the Music Department and to the Weston Public Schools Administration as they work to further improve the music program for the children of Weston.