



# Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39 (Vancouver)

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## Jamieson Strings FAQ

*We understand that there are some questions and concerns from Jamieson parents about the status of the Strings Program. We have created this FAQ to help provide parents with answers to some of the commonly asked questions. We hope that parents find this to be helpful.*

**Did district staff order the elimination of the Advanced Strings before-school program at Jamieson?**

No. No one from district management, senior management or the Board of Education directed the school to cancel the program.

**Is the Advanced Strings program extra-curricular or part of school staffing?**

It is extra-curricular. It is not part of the teacher's regular full time staffing assignment at the school.

**Can the teacher continue the Advanced Strings program?**

If the teacher chooses to continue with the before-school Advanced Strings program, he is absolutely welcome to do so. As with any extra-curricular program at a school, this is done on a voluntary basis by staff, and administration never direct staff to volunteer their time.

**Was the Advanced Strings program formerly part of the teacher's regular assignment?**

Yes. Prior to 2015-16, Jamieson and 5 other schools were allocated a small amount of part-time district strings staffing, and at Jamieson, a portion of this was used for the optional Advanced Strings before-school program.

**When and why did Advanced Strings stop being part of the regular teaching assignment?**

In the Spring of 2015 during the Budget process for the 2015-16 year, it was decided that the 6 schools with partial District Band/Strings staffing would no longer receive that District staffing. Jamieson stopped receiving District Strings staffing starting in September 2015. Instead, the school was given an equal amount of school-based staffing to make the teachers position a full time position and support Strings instruction of grade 4-7 students during the school day.

**Will the Strings program continue next year at Jamieson?**

Yes. All students in grades 4-7 will continue to have Strings classes as part of their weekly instruction. Because it is no longer part of the Optional District Band and Strings program, the school is not impacted by the proposed cuts to Band and Strings at 44 other Vancouver schools. Jamieson and 5 other schools are able to provide Strings (or Band) as what is referred to as a "prep model", and homeroom classes are able to receive instruction as a group.

**Will Advanced Strings continue at Jamieson next year?**

Because it is an extra-curricular activity, it will be the teacher's decision if he continues to offer the program. School and district administration would not want to pressure any staff member to offer extra-curricular activities. Although staff and parents are always appreciative when staff volunteer their time, it is solely the decision of each staff member whether they are wanting to offer extra-curricular programming for students. We will respect the teacher's decision on this.

**Does the District realize how much the Advanced Strings program is valued and how worthwhile the community believes it to be?**

Yes – it is clear that it is a quality program, and we can appreciate why the community would be so grateful to the teacher for providing the opportunity for students. We understand that students choose to audition to become part of this group.

**We heard that the school gave the Strings teacher some extra preparation time each week to help with Advanced Strings – is this true?**

Yes. The school Vice Principal provided the Strings teacher with some extra release time beyond the regular 100 minutes a week that full time teachers contractually receive. This was done as a good will gesture and to help with the transition from having some District Strings staffing to being a full time "prep teacher". The intention was that this was a short term gesture for one school year. The Vice Principal was doing this in addition to his own regular teaching and administrative duties.

**Can the school offer extra preparation time to the teacher next year as compensation for his extra-curricular efforts?**

No. The intention was for this gesture to be for one year. It is also not the practice in any other school to provide teachers with extra prep time for their extra-curricular efforts. There are hundreds of teachers in the district who offer many hours of voluntary hours for extra student opportunities such as drama, music, sports, clubs, etc. These teachers are highly appreciated within their communities, but do not receive any additional time off from their teaching duties for their efforts. It is important that schools are consistent in their practice around this. We are also anticipating an increase the the Vice Principal's responsibilities for next year, and it is not a sustainable option that can be provided over the long term.

**Did the music teachers at the other schools who lost district staffing and switched to a "prep model" also receive this extra preparation time each week?**

No. This was an in-house gesture that was unique to Jamieson. Other schools were not aware that this was happening at Jamieson, and they did not provide the time for their teacher(s).

**Why does the Strings teacher also teach things like gym? Why doesn't he teach music full time?**

This would be a school-based decision, and if school staff (including the prep teacher) chose that he teach music full time, he would be able to do so. It was school staff preference that younger students not receive Strings instruction, and that the teacher instruct a couple of the primary classes in other subject areas – such as Physical Education.

**Is there any way that the Advanced Strings program could become part of the regular duties of the teacher?**

Yes. If the school staff chose to use some of their non-enrolling staffing for the program, it could be possible. This would involve reallocating time currently used for programs such as Resource, Library, English Language Learner support, or other non-enrolling areas. This would be a school-staff decision, and school administration can answer questions about this topic.

It would require that the program occur between the hours of 9 am-3 pm (during instructional hours).

**Does the class-size limit of 30 apply to the Advanced Strings Program?**

Because the Advanced String Program is currently extracurricular, class-size regulations do not apply. If it were to become part of the regular school program, the class size limit of 30 students would apply, and each group could not be any larger than 30.

**Is there a cost to the Advanced Strings program?**

As an extra-curricular program, the costs of any supplies would be paid by the school and the community. We understand that the PAC has also been supportive financially for supplies, music, instruments etc.

There is a staffing cost factor to having the program as part of the regular school instruction. This would be the staffing cost associated with having someone such as the Vice-Principal provide the teacher with release time for him to teach this extracurricular program