

VANCOUVER BOARD OF EDUCATION
School District No. 39
ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT
1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 5K8

June 8, 2016

Dear Jamieson School Parents,

We understand that there is some concern among the parent community about the status of the Strings Program at Jamieson School. Our intent with this letter is to provide all parents at the school with some detailed, factual and historical information around the topic, and answer some questions we have been receiving at the district level. We hope that you find this helpful.

Jamieson School is one of six schools in the district that offers Strings or Band classes as a prep model. As such, all students in grades 4-7 at Jamieson receive Strings instruction during school time on a consistent weekly basis. They will continue to receive this instruction next school year as well. District staff are not requesting that any programming at Jamieson be eliminated, and district staff have not directed that any cuts be made at the school level.

The Strings teacher at Jamieson has a full time continuing teaching position. Although the majority of his portfolio is teaching a Strings program, school staff chose collaboratively (with his input) that he not teach Strings to the primary students. For this reason, the teacher also teaches some physical education classes to some of the younger grades. This was a school-based decision, and district staff do not intervene in such decisions that are made collaboratively by teaching staff and administrators locally at the school level.

Until 2014-15, six schools (including Jamieson) received up to .20 FTE assigned to District Strings or Band staffing. As part of the budget process for the 2015-16 school year, this partial district staffing ended for these six schools, and the schools switched to model where a Strings or Band program was provided to students as "teacher prep" (i.e. when the class is taught by the Strings teacher so that the classroom teacher gets his or her allocated preparation/planning time). At Jamieson and the other five schools, this resulted in the staffing becoming 1.0 FTE prep staffing. This decision was made in the Spring of 2015 by the Board as part of the budget process. As a result, Jamieson and the five other schools were no longer part of the District Band/Strings program, and were able to provide Strings or Band instruction to students from their own allocated school based staffing.

Up until the end of 2014-15, part of the teacher's use of the extra staffing provided by the District was to teach the "Advanced Strings" class for select grade 6 and 7 students. This was an optional enrichment program, and was by audition for students deemed highly capable and interested in Strings. After the 2014-15 school year, this "Advanced Strings" program (and any other before-school strings instruction) was no longer part of the school's allocated staffing, and no longer part of the teacher's paid teaching duties, but rather was extra-curricular.

In order to allow for a smooth transition for the Jamieson community with the loss of the district staffing FTE, the school, through the school's allocated admin time, was able to provide the teacher some additional prep time each week, and the teacher chose to continue to teach the Advanced Strings enrichment program off-timetable (outside of school hours and outside of his paid duties). This additional prep time was provided by the school's Vice Principal. The intention had been for this to be a one-year

transition possibility and an act of good-will, and was not intended as a multi-year solution by the school. It was made clear in written communication from then Associate Superintendent Ciarniello that this was intended to be a short term solution for that particular school year only. There were no similar gestures made with any of the other impacted schools – who also have similar extracurricular programs.

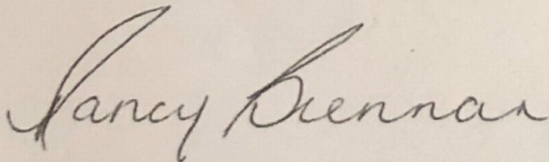
For the 2016-17 school year, all grade 4-7 students at Jamieson will continue to receive Strings instruction during the regular school day under the prep model. Because of the switch to the prep model last year, the proposed cuts to the Optional District Band and Strings Program at forty-four Vancouver schools will not impact the prep Strings program at Jamieson.

The teacher is absolutely welcome to continue with his before-school enrichment strings program of Grade 6/7 Advanced Strings. District staff are not ordering the elimination of this program. School and district staff are unable, however, to provide the teacher with additional preparation time to compensate for the extracurricular programming. This is consistent with the practice of all other schools in the district. We are always very appreciative of the extra time that some staff choose to devote to extracurricular and out of school enrichment programs for students in music, sports and other areas. We are not able, however, to provide extra time or funding to compensate these teachers. It is the teacher's choice whether he continue with the before-school programs, and District and School staff would not mandate him to do so, nor would we insist that he stop the program. As is the case with all teachers, it is entirely his choice as to whether he wishes to volunteer his time for an extra-curricular program.

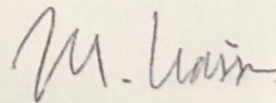
For the Advanced Strings to be part of the school's paid staffing allotment, school-based staff would need to make the decision to use some of their non-enrolling staffing for the program. This would be a school-based decision, and not one in which District staff would be involved. School administration can answer any questions you might have about this particular option, as it would involve reallocating time currently used for Resource support for students, Library time or English Language Learner support, as well as other non-enrolling areas.

We hope that this answers some of your questions and clarifies some information. Attached is an FAQ list that may help clarify further.

Sincerely,



Nancy Brennan
Associate Superintendent, Learning Services



Magdalena Kassis
Director of Instruction