

## **Plan for Music Instruction in the Mitchell School District: Fall, 2020**

### Purpose:

The Mitchell School District has a long and even illustrious record of music instruction and programming for its students. The value of K-12 music programs, additionally, has been demonstrated through research and experience to be important both as an inducement for students to engage in other academic pursuits and as a worthy subject of study unto itself. Music and the other fine arts can be said to be, in fact, at the apex of humanity's academic and cultural pursuits.

Thus, the current COVID-19 pandemic is a particular challenge. Just when students have found themselves cut off from so much of what brings them joy in school and in life, singing and the playing of most musical instruments have been identified as particularly strong transmitters of the COVID-19 virus through increased exhalations. The challenge then is how to give students what they very much need—vocal and instrumental music instruction, practice, and performance—while also keeping students, their instructors, and their families reasonably protected from the transmission of the virus.

This plan, based on state and national recommendations, some of the latest relevant research, and the expertise of our instructors, building principals, and facility managers, is the Mitchell School District's strategy for meeting this challenge.

### Elementary Music:

- Elementary Music Instruction shall be held in the regular music classrooms.
- All three elementary music classrooms (GBR, LBW, LF) shall be equipped with HEPA filters by the Buildings and Grounds Department. To the extent possible, elementary music schedules shall be adjusted to allow for 12 minutes (i.e. one air exchange) between different student sections (classrooms).
- During music instruction, both students and staff shall wear masks, even and especially during periods of actual singing.
- Music teachers, in order to allow students to see the instructor's face during instruction, may record lessons in advance and then webcast those lessons on one screen to eLearning students while appearing live, in mask, on a second screen.
- Music equipment (simple instruments, etc.) will be sanitized between classes. In order to allow for this, rotation of curriculum units will be implemented where appropriate. In some cases, additional equipment may be purchased. The goal of 1:1 music equipment will continue to be pursued, but while meeting sanitation guidelines (thus, probably no recorders at this time.)
- Elementary concerts will be postponed until second semester or offered on a virtual basis.

### Fifth Grade Band:

- Fifth grade band shall only be held in the general music classroom or another classroom/office outfitted with HEPA filtration. To the extent possible, scheduling of student sessions shall be adjusted to allow for 12 minutes (i.e. one air exchange) between different student sections (classrooms).
- Absorbent material will be in place during instruction, practice, and performance for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade band in order to collect moisture from brass instrument spit valves. These materials will be replaced by the music staff on a daily basis after every rehearsal or performance.
- No fifth grade large group band will be held until second semester at the earliest. The District will re-assess the possibility of fifth grade large group band at the end of first semester.
- Students and teachers will wear masks at all time, including during playing through ‘playable’ masks or other methods demonstrated in coming research. However, when playing instruments outside, students will be allowed to remove their masks during actual playing time. Before and after playing, masks will be in place.
- Bell covers will be in place for all music instruments when played, other than flutes and percussion. Face shields shall be in place for flutists in lieu of masks and bell covers.
- Students will be responsible for the sanitation of their own instruments. When instrument sharing is necessary, the instruments will be sanitized between use by instructors or other adults. Instrument sharing will be avoided whenever possible. When the instructor feels the student is not providing suitable sanitation, the instructor will take additional steps to ensure proper cleaning.
- Other music equipment, including music stands and chairs, will be sanitized between usages.
- Fifth grade band sign-up will be held in a larger facility, in all likelihood the PAC, in order to allow for social distancing.

### Middle School Vocal Music:

- The MMS vocal room will be covered with HEPA filtration.
- In order to allow for social distancing, MMS choirs will be taught and practice outside as much as possible. When such is not possible, alternative locations may be utilized including the south gym, the ice arena, etc.
- Masks must be worn at all times, including during actual singing. We will investigate ‘singing masks’ for students during vocal music classes and practices with attention to research on their health aspects.
  - Consideration will be given to amplification systems to accommodate for the muffling effects of masks.
  - Meeting recommendations on shortened rehearsal times (30 minutes) will not be necessary when practicing outside. In the vocal classroom, classes will be adjusted or classrooms rotated to allow for shortened rehearsal times or smaller groups, with a 12-minute break between sessions if possible.

- Performances: MMS Vocal concerts will be split into smaller sections (e.g. grade level only) or offered virtually. Masks will be required during performances. Spectator seating for performances will be roped off in order to require social distancing. To the extent possible, performances will also be recorded/broadcast so spectators may watch from home.

### High School Vocal Music:

- The Performing Arts Center Ron and Sheilah Gates Auditorium, Black Box Theater, and related classrooms at the PAC will all be covered with HEPA filtration.
- In order to allow for social distancing, all large group vocal instruction at the high school level shall be offered in the PAC auditorium on the stage.
  - Masks must be worn at all times, including during actual singing. We will investigate ‘singing masks’ for students during vocal music classes and practices with attention to research on their health aspects.
  - Consideration will be given to amplification systems to accommodate for the muffling effects of masks.
  - Meeting recommendations on shortened rehearsal times (30 minutes) will not be necessary when the PAC is in use due to air volume and exchanges. In other classrooms, classes will be adjusted or classrooms rotated to allow for shortened rehearsal times of no more than 30 minutes.
  - Performances: In order to avoid problems of social distancing, we will very likely split band/vocal performances, on separate evenings, in order to reduce crowds. Masks will be required during performances. Spectator seating for performances will be roped off in order to require social distancing. To the extent possible, performances will also be recorded/broadcast so spectators may watch from home.

### Middle and High School Band:

- The Performing Arts Center Ron & Sheilah Gates Auditorium, Black Box Theater, and related classrooms at the PAC will all be covered with HEPA filtration. The MMS band room will be covered with HEPA filtration.
- Absorbent material will be in place during instruction, practice, and performance for high school and middle school band in order to collect moisture from brass instrument spit valves. These materials will be replaced by the music staff on a daily basis after every rehearsal or performance.
- Students and teachers will wear masks indoors at all times, including during playing through ‘playable’ masks or via other methods demonstrated in coming research. The high school marching band will not be required to wear masks during outdoor practices but will be required to do so as they arrive to practice, anytime they enter the building, and when they leave practice. If there is inclement weather and the marching band rehearses indoors, all staff and students will be required to wear masks through the use of playable masks. If the middle school band is rehearsing outside, the students will be

required to wear masks as they move outdoors but will not be required to use them once outside. They will then be required to wear masks again as they move indoors. Outdoor sessions will last no longer than 30 minutes with a minimum of a 5-minute break between session.

- Bell covers made of MERV13 will be in place for all music instruments when played, other than flutes and percussion, both indoors and outdoors. Face shields shall be in place for flutists in lieu of masks and bell covers.
- In order to allow for social distancing, all large group instruction at the high school level shall be offered in the Gates Auditorium on the stage. The MHS band will be using the entire space of the theatre (seats, stage, orchestra pit, etc.) The MMS will use a 'split' schedule, reducing numbers of students in half, in order to allow social distancing.
- Performances: In order to avoid problems of social distancing, we will split band/vocal performances, on separate evenings, in order to reduce crowds. Masks will be required during performances. Spectator seating for performances will be roped off in order to require social distancing. To the extent possible, performances will also be recorded/broadcast so spectators may watch from home.
- Students will be responsible for the sanitation of their own instruments. When instrument sharing is necessary, the instruments will be sanitized between use by employees or other adults. Instrument sharing will be avoided whenever possible.
- Other music equipment, including music stands and chairs, will be sanitized between usages.

These recommendations were arrived after careful review of guidelines from and research conducted under the auspices of the National Federal of High School Associations and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers. These were then adapted to the specific circumstances of the Mitchell School District, its programming and facilities.