

CR Music Program: The Past, The Present and The Future

As part of last year's budget cuts, the music teaching staff at each high school was reduced from 3 full time teachers to 2.5. To help explain the elimination of one full position at the high school level, the administration held a parent meeting on June 8, 2009, which included a PowerPoint presentation which detailed music enrollment, student-teacher ratios, and a teacher schedule for South for 2009-2010.

To gain a more in-depth understanding of these cuts, Citizens For Education compared the PowerPoint with other available district documents, which led to many questions. Instead of Citizen's usual practice of directly interviewing a teacher or department chair for answers, Superintendent Mark Klein requested that we frame questions about music to him in writing. In just a week's time he graciously gave us answers, in writing, and indicated whether the response came from his office or from Lee Hauslein, the district's Music Curriculum Coordinator. The written information we received is incorporated throughout this article in quotes.

Understanding High School Music Courses

Council Rock's high schools offer students seven alternate day course options in Band, Choir, and Orchestra, where participation in after-school rehearsals and public performances are an integral and necessary requirement of the course. The music curriculum also includes nine other course offerings. Students can choose from courses offered five days a week, on alternate days, or for a semester. There are courses for students who have interests that range from playing guitar to musical theater to Advanced Placement in music theory. Because some of these academic courses do not always meet the district determined minimum enrollment, the administration regarded music education as a place to make budgetary cuts.

Implementing the Cuts

To implement staff cutbacks, North's Choir Director, Ed McCall, now spends part of his day at Richboro Middle School. South's Band Director, Christie Milliken, spends part of her day at Goodnoe Elementary School. These cuts at North and South were part of what Mr. Klein referred to as, "A total of 1.5 staff positions (were) reduced for the 2009-10 school year" in music and "total savings salary/benefits is approximately \$120,000.00." To restore the cuts to the high school music program, the district would need to hire a teacher for the 2010-11 school year at a contractual starting salary of \$43,064 with a Bachelor's degree, or \$53,830 with a Master's degree. A benefits package would be added to the salary cost.

Music Course Enrollment Numbers

The June 2009 presentation addressed music class enrollment. Citizens compared the enrollment data from the PowerPoint slides to separate class size data provided to us by the Administration. The chart below shows this comparison. The bolded, gray highlighted numbers show where there are discrepancies between the two sources of administrative data. "C" means that two classes are combined and the teacher provides differentiated instruction to meet student needs.

NORTH	<u>PowerPoint</u>		<u>Class</u>	<u>PowerPoint</u>	<u>Class</u>
	2007	2008	<u>Data</u>	<u>Projected</u>	<u>Data</u>
			2008	2009	2009

Marching Band	76	48	48	67	69
Symphonic Band	50	29	56	38	45
Concert Band	75	51	51	33	44
Chorale	87	56	56	39	34
Symphonic Choir	128	124	124	107	116
String Orchestra	22	22	22	20	17
Symphony Orchestra	67	53	53	38	49
Music Appreciation	0	8	8	0	0
Music Theory	16	18	18 "C"	19	15
AP Music Theory	8	12	18	9	17
Music Tech	15	15	12	12	16
Musical Theater	0	0	20	17	19
Honors Music Arranging	7	5	"C"		16
TOTAL STUDENTS	551	441	486	399	457
# of Teachers	3	3	3	2.5	2.5
Teacher Load	187	147	162	159	182

	SOUTH		PowerPoint	Class	PowerPoint	Class
				Data	Projected	Data
	2007	2008	2008	2009	2009	2009
Marching Band	36	52	32	44	65	
Symphonic Band	38	28	27	21	0	
Concert Band	30	20	28	28	24	
Chorale	52	78	66	37	32	
Symphonic Choir	86	73	97	73	79	
String Orchestra	0	0	0	34	32	
Symphony Orchestra	96	92	91	50	50	
Music Appreciation	30	20	17	0		
Music Theory	25	19	20	18	13	
AP Music Theory	11	18	16	13	13	
Music Tech	26	43	33	18	17	
Musical Theater	0	0		0	0	
Honors Music Arr./Improv. "C"	Missing from PP		14	Missing	10	
Intro to Guitar	Missing from PP		26	Missing	25	
TOTAL STUDENTS	430	443	467	302	360	
# OF Teachers	3	3	3	2.5	2.5	
Teacher Load	143	Not valid	155	Not valid	144	

Although there are many discrepancies between the two sources of Council Rock data, most are statistically insignificant. Because of the nature of scheduling, it is not expected that projected numbers would be exact in early June. The biggest discrepancy in North's 2008 data is in the case of two classes entirely left out of the presentation: one section of Symphonic Band with 27 students (there were two sections at North, but only one was accounted for) and Musical Theater with 20 students. The PowerPoint was also missing two of South's classes in the data for 2008 and projections for 2009. Class size data Citizens received from the administration showed both *Introduction to Guitar* and *Honors Music Arranging/Improvisation* as classes that are currently running, however they were not included in the PowerPoint. Not including these classes makes any calculations for a teacher's student load invalid in the PowerPoint presentation.

Student-to-Teacher Ratios

The June 2009 PowerPoint listed the following information regarding student/teacher ratios of music teachers and “other” teachers:

Average Load – Music Teacher – 136:1

Average Load – “Other” Teacher – 130:1

(“Other” is defined as teachers of Math, Social Studies, Science, and English.)

Using either the district’s PowerPoint data or other class size data provided to Citizens by the administration, the average load for music teachers differs greatly from what the administration stated last June. Even using the district’s PowerPoint data for 2008, with missing classes for South & North, when all the students from the PowerPoint are added, the student-to-teacher ratio is 147:1 for both schools.

Using the 2008-09 class size data that was available to the administration when it was making decisions last year, the music teacher’s average student load is different from what was presented in June. North had 486 students taking music classes and three teachers, for an average of 162. South had 467 students and three teachers, for an average of 155.

Council Rock Music Teacher Schedules and Preps

The June 2009 presentation included the proposed 2009-10 schedules for Council Rock South’s music teachers. (There was no schedule information shown for North.) This slide revealed that the majority of a music teacher’s schedule is comprised of single section courses, and the variety of those courses requires different preparations.

South’s Department Coordinator, Chris Simon, who has a period for coordinator preparation, is teaching five different courses: two sections of *String Orchestra*, two sections of *Symphony Orchestra*, *Music Theory 1*, and *Improvisation and Honors Music Arranging* in the same period.

Corey Axler, who taught 212 students last year, teaches five different courses this year: *AP Music Theory*, *Intro to Guitar*, *Music Technology*, two alternate day sections of *Chorale* and three alternate day sections of *Symphonic Choir*.

Christie Milliken spends only three out of her maximum five period teaching day at Council Rock South. In one of those three, she assists the CARES team, which helps students at risk access school and community services. It was proposed that she teach three different alternate day courses in her remaining two periods at South: two Sections of *Marching Band*, one section of *Symphonic Band*, and one section of *Concert Band*. She is only at South for one half of the day and is still teaching 89 students. According to Mr. Klein, she still must “have the contractual amount” of travel time to get to Goodnoe, eat lunch, teach students at Goodnoe, travel back to the high school for a full prep period, and then lead after-school band practices.

Last year at North, when the district was making staffing decisions, Mr. McCall taught 208 students for 4 preps in *Chorale*, *Symphonic Choir*, *Music Appreciation* and *Musical Theater*. This year, by the district’s projected estimates, he was scheduled to teach 146 students in *Chorale* and *Symphonic Choir* in his part time capacity at North.

The fact that this year, Mr. McCall and Ms. Milliken have to prepare for many different courses at both the high school and their second assigned school (Richboro Middle and Goodnoe) seems counterintuitive to Mr. Klein's written response to the question "How many preps do Mr. McCall and Ms. Milliken have?" His response was, "Their schedules and preps are comparable to all other secondary school teachers."

Scheduling and Tracking Music Participation

Despite the fact that "tremendous effort goes into working with students to try to make schedules fit" in music, Citizens has received anecdotal feedback from parents that this year, because at least one of the three teachers is only in their high school for part of the day, students have dropped out of music because of scheduling conflicts. Other students are taking a different music class than that of their after school co-curricular (i.e., they are in the orchestra but could only fit band class in their schedule, etc.)

Citizens understands, as Mr. Klein stated, that in a "schedule that is as complex as each high school, it will be always impossible to meet every student's need," and "to characterize these difficulties as uniquely a music issue would be wrong." Nevertheless, since it is impossible to meet every student's needs when a teacher is in a building for a six period scenario, how much harder must it be if a teacher is only part of a 2.5 teacher department and is only available for two or three periods daily?

To what extent the teacher cuts will affect participation in Council Rock's music program is going to be hard to assess. The district does not conduct formal surveys on why students drop out of music, nor does the district track retention levels of music students as they move through school levels or even through grade levels at the high school.

Benefits of Music Education

The benefits of music education must be considered when proposing cuts to the program. Although Citizens did not ask in time to get a response before deadline on whether the district tracks the correlation between music students and academic success, it has been often observed that high achieving students are very often in music. **Research suggests that music programs help to create brighter students, and making music has been shown to develop skills such as math, reading and critical thinking.**

The importance of music is reinforced by its designation as a core subject under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This means music teachers have the same requirements for professional development as teachers of Math, English, Social Studies, and Science. Council Rock music enhances the quality of life in the community at school assemblies, local parades and concerts. Council Rock's high school music performance groups enhance Council Rock's reputation when they win competitions, perform outside of Bucks County, and travel internationally.

Assessing the Budget Cost/Benefit of CR's Music teachers

Citizens is suggesting that the assessment of a music teacher's worth for budgetary funding should take into consideration, along with the benefits of music education, the total amount of students taught, the amount of total preps, and average student load. Council Rock high school music teachers often teach classes that have one section, and most teach at least four different courses. **The amount of comprehensive and extensive preparation that goes**

into having more curricular courses than other teachers should be considered when evaluating a music teacher's workload.

No matter how you evaluate it, **Council Rock high school music teachers have an average student load that is more than the 130:1 cited by the district for teachers of Math, Social Studies, English and Science.** Furthermore, taking the periods per day that the music teachers are assigned to teach music classes (without the Department Chair's prep or an assignment to CARES), there is an even larger student load. For instance, dividing North's Department Chair, Mr. Bogle's 2008 load of 123 students by the four periods he teaches, results in an average of over 30 students per period.

Citizens believes when doing a cost/benefit analysis, the district should not only look at the enrollment in each music teacher's course, but also the total number of students taught, divided by the number of periods a teacher is available to teach.

Monitoring Music's Future

Citizens believe that if the district considers the total amount of students taught by the few teachers in the music department, the teacher's average student load, the amount of preps and the great benefits of the music program, the restoration back to three music teachers in each school should be a high priority when planning next year's budget.

Citizens will continue to monitor Council Rock's music programs, seek statistical information from the district, and will write a follow up article in our spring newsletter. Contact us at Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com to share information about an individual student's experience with music or music scheduling and we will try to incorporate some of this feedback in our next article. In the meantime, our readers are encouraged to be a voice that advocates for the restoration of three full time music teachers at each high school. Please communicate with the School Board members whose names and contact information are on the crsd.org web site under the School Board tab.