

AN OPEN LETTER TO REGINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BAND PROGRAMMING

The Regina Symphony Orchestra has been listening carefully to band teachers and to the broader music community, many of whom have expressed thoughtful and serious concerns about Regina Public Schools' recent proposed changes to elementary school band.

We recognize that many school divisions are under financial and operational pressures and are examining whether existing models can be improved. We also understand and strongly support giving every child the opportunity to encounter an instrument and experience the multifold benefits of making music, especially with their peers. However, RPS's proposed changes would result in band no longer being an option for Grade 6 students in Regina, putting at risk one of the most effective, developmentally rich structures schools already have for engaging diverse learners.

Band is not only valuable only because it teaches music. It is valuable because of what it asks of students. It teaches them to listen, to focus, to work with others, to contribute to a group, and to take pride in disciplined effort over time. Research in this area, including work by Dr. Assal Habibi and others, suggests that sustained music ensemble training can strengthen attention, self-control, and many other aspects of child development. Put simply, band helps build the habits that support student success in school, and in all of life's complexities.

Many of the band teachers, parents, and community members we have heard from are not opposed to change. By and large, they are open to an even stronger, more accessible, and more inclusive model. They are willing partners in developing a new, better, more effective and sustainable vision. The Regina Symphony Orchestra is also a willing partner in that conversation. We would welcome the opportunity to help convene educators, school leaders, families, and community arts organizations to work toward a model that is educationally sound, financially and operationally realistic, and right for the children of Regina.

This decision deserves extremely careful thought. It deserves broad consultation with band teachers, parents, and students. And it deserves a solution that expands opportunity without weakening one of the most valuable experiences students have.

Sincerely,

RSO Board of Directors and Executive Leadership