



## Unified School District 232

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**De Soto – Shawnee – Lenexa – Olathe**  
[www.usd232.org](http://www.usd232.org)

**Brian Schwanz, Ed.S**  
Executive Director of Secondary Education

**To:** USD 232 Board of Education  
**From:** Brian Schwanz, Executive Director of Secondary Education  
**Date:** November 30, 2022  
**Re:** Preliminary Report to the Board of Education regarding Orchestra (**DISCUSSION**)

During the Board of Education's regularly scheduled meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>, we will have an initial presentation regarding the potential of creating an orchestra program in USD 232.

### **Background:**

During the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board at their July 2022 meeting, Sarah Anderson, junior at Mill Valley High School, had a presentation for the Board regarding adding orchestra in USD 232. The Board requested that the administration investigate adding orchestra.

### **Conversations:**

We have had the opportunity to talk with several districts in the area regarding their orchestra programs. During the board meeting on December 5, we will share with the board some of the information gleaned from those districts. Information we have gathered included how they started their programs, schedules, what grade level they introduce orchestra, the number of instruments they provide, challenges they have encountered, and costs. Also, in our conversations with districts, they have shared other districts or individuals that would be good to talk with about their orchestra program. As we continue our research, we believe it would be good to visit some districts to see how they set up their programs, especially schools that must share space between band and orchestra. It was shared with us many times that it was exciting to hear that USD 232 was considering an orchestra program.

We also had a conversation with our Instrumental Music Teachers about adding orchestra as an option for students. They were able to share with us their thoughts, what we need to consider as well as what they see as challenges.

Districts that we have spoken with regarding orchestra:

- Lawrence
- Auburn Washburn
- Blue Valley
- Raymore Peculiar

Districts that we plan to talk with:

- Maize
- Andover
- Gardner Edgerton
- Salina
- Shawnee Mission

**Costs:**

There are costs associated with the initial startup of an orchestra program. There are also expenses that we need to consider as recurring costs. To get a better idea of the costs of instruments, we met with KC Strings in Merriam. KC Strings is a well-known company that many school districts and symphonic organizations use for procuring instruments as well as repair of instruments. We had some initial numbers of instruments provided to us from other districts that would be necessary to launch a program. KC Strings was able to provide us estimated costs of instruments. The initial estimated cost for instruments to start the program at all the schools would be in the neighborhood of \$325,000. This initial cost is for the district owned instruments. Most students that play the violin, viola, and cello will rent their instrument, but we need to have some inventory at each school. As the program grows, the district would need to increase its inventory at the schools.

A yearly cost that must be considered is a budget for teachers to purchase music to grow their music libraries along with instrument repair costs. An additional yearly cost will be teacher(s) salary and benefits. If we begin the program at all the schools, we would need, at a minimum, three teachers at an average cost of \$60,000 per teacher.

**Considerations:**

Some items that will need to be considered as we continue to discuss orchestra:

- Where do we start the program?
  - Do we start the first year at elementary and middle school and then expand to high school?
  - Do we begin at all levels?
  - Do we only offer orchestra at the secondary schools?

- Rehearsal Space
- Humidity Control
- Shared Classroom
- Storage
- Building/Class Schedules
- Music Store Partner
- Staffing/Schedules

**Next Steps:**

- Visit schools that are similar to our schools to see how they handle space (shared classroom, storage, etc).
- Continue conversations with the Curriculum and Instruction Department and band teachers regarding schedules and space.
- Conversations with facilities regarding how to add storage to current buildings or if we are able to add storage.
- Interest survey to parents of elementary and middle school aged students.

We look forward to sharing this information and more specifics with the Board of Education at the December meeting. If you have questions, please reach out.