



**PLEASE NOTE:**

Our existing Band Program will continue next year without interruption for students in Grades 5-12.

The June 8<sup>th</sup> (Delisle Composite School) and June 10<sup>th</sup> (South Corman Park School) parent meetings will be postponed until September 2015. The purpose of these meetings will be to determine how the Band Program can be grown, especially in high school, and how costs can be reduced.

June 3, 2015

### **Band/Music Education in Prairie Spirit School Division**

Thank you for your many emails, letters, phone calls and passionate pleas for Band to continue in Prairie Spirit School Division. You will be pleased to learn that in the Prairie Spirit Board of Education Meeting on Monday, June 1, 2015, the Board provided the following direction to administration:

*Although the Board is facing severe financial hardship and is required to make many difficult reduction decisions, the Board will continue to provide financial support to keep the Band Music Programs operating in their current locations. The Board remains committed to supporting and expanding the musical experiences to students who are not enrolled in Band.*

### **Background Information to the Board Decision**

The Band program provides valuable lifetime experiences for students. As recently as three years ago, Prairie Spirit was determined to expand the band program to grade 5-12 students who reside in the northern area of our school division. Unfortunately, limited finances have moved us from hopes and plans of expansion to thoughts of reduction.

The extent of reductions required with the \$7.1 million funding shortfall are beginning to impact programs that enrich classroom experiences and engage students in meaningful ways. We have been committed to reducing, rather than eliminating, programming to decrease costs. The reductions have occurred in areas such as teacher-librarians, career and work experience, technology, division office staff and Educational Associate support for early learning to name a few. Comments made in the media would have you believe that this is of our own doing and that we alone have the autonomy to make this choice. We may have the ability to make choices, but there are no good choices to be made given the inadequate funding that the school division is receiving from the province.

In our recent communication to you, we shared that our goal was to engage more students in music education, especially in high school. The enhanced music program will require time and additional resources to determine if it is a desired choice by students. We must also determine, with the assistance of parents and students, how to make Band more appealing and feasible for our high school students. Currently, Band is not available as a music option across the school division and we must explore options to achieve programming equity in our schools.

For many, the decision to retain Band will feel like the situation is resolved. It is not. Our collective focus and energy should be directed at the inequity in the provincial funding model. The \$7.1 million shortfall is challenging our Board to provide educational opportunities that our communities expect and deserve. Music education, including the continuation of Prairie Spirit's Band Program, is important, but it requires

funding. Our choice is to expand music experiences for our students. The funding to our school division limits these choices.

Thank you once again for your feedback and your passion for musical excellence. We apologize for any emotion and hardship that you experienced when you learned that the Band Program was going to be eliminated. Your voice helped us to reconsider. The same requests that you made of Prairie Spirit should be made to the Ministry to adequately fund our programs.

Thank you to the teachers involved in the band and music program. The uncertainty of your teaching assignments and explaining the changes have been taxing and demanding. Thank you to the principals for fielding questions and for supporting parents, students and the Division Office throughout this process. Your leadership and assistance is greatly appreciated. Noel Roche, Learning Superintendent, and Jon Yellowlees, Coordinator, have been instrumental in guiding the music education analysis process to its current decision. In the past three to four weeks, their insight has been invaluable.

Our Board has been committed to making decisions that are "student first" in all of their deliberations for many years and this is yet another example of them doing so. We appreciate their vision and flexibility to make mid-course corrections, while immersed in making many substantial financial decisions that are impacting the school division. We look forward to working with you in September to grow our band experiences for our students.

Sincerely,

John Kuzbik  
Director of Education

**Questions? Please contact:**

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