

**TO: Board of Education**  
**FROM: Middle School Planning Team**  
**RE: Music Classroom/Multi[purpose Room**  
**DATE: May 5, 2014**

**Answers to Questions:**

1. Please provide a detailed description of the entire scope of the proposed project.

**The current situation in the Middle School is such that the auditorium/stage is used as a daily, multi-period teaching space/classroom including storage for over 50 delicate instruments.** The three orchestras have before school rehearsals and classes on stage every day for at least four periods. Exploring Music classes (non-performance classes) also use the stage for classes, making stage use four, five, or more classes every day. At least twice during the school year, for about a month's time, the Band and Orchestra switch locations, and the bands use the stage as their classroom. During that time, the stage is used six to seven times per day for classes and rehearsals (and storage of a great deal of large percussion equipment).

Part of the uniqueness of this situation is the size of the instrumental classes and rehearsals that meet on the stage. Orchestra and Band classes range from approximately 20 students to nearly 40 students, and during early morning rehearsals, approximately 70-90 students meet in this space at once. Early morning rehearsals occur three to five days per week for most of the school year. Adding to this special situation is equipment. The Orchestra and Band both have equipment appropriate for their programs including string basses, cellos, violas, violins, timpani drums (large kettle drums), bass drums, snare drums, cymbals, marimba, xylophone, bells, etc. These instruments take up a great deal of space (when being used and when being stored) and are also very delicate and sensitive to temperature and humidity changes. Instruments can break or sustain damage with changes in temperature and humidity.

**The scope of the proposed project is to create an additional music/multi-purpose space and storage area that would allow the stage/auditorium to NOT be used as a daily teaching space.** Not only would this allow the music program the ability to use and protect its valuable and delicate equipment, it would **allow the entire school population to use the auditorium as needed.** As described above, Orchestra and Band classes can have high numbers of students and also use a lot of equipment on a daily basis, thus making "changing spaces" to allow a non-music class to use the auditorium very challenging. There are actually no other usable spaces in the building that can accommodate an Orchestra class (not even considering their equipment too)! Therefore, if a non-music class needs to use the auditorium, the Orchestra or Band cannot rehearse at all and needs to find an alternative space to even accommodate such a large group of students. The Chorus and Band room are being used every period, and so those sizable alternatives are not available.

Additionally, the Exploring Music teaching spaces are not large enough to accommodate 18-25 students (the size of our EM classes) including equipment. In EM, students learn piano, acoustic and electric guitar, world drumming, mallet instruments (xylophones, metallophones), recorder, and music technology; our current teaching spaces simply cannot accommodate students and instruments.

2. Why is the project needed in your building? Please include logistical, enrollment, infrastructure, curricular, security, and other current concerns that it will address.

**The main reason for the project in the building is that the music department’s plea for an adequate performance ensemble space was eliminated from the bond over a decade ago; the program is even more robust now.** The auditorium is often shared for various events, including assemblies, contests, Student Organization (S.O.) Talent Shows, special events, and presentations. The projected music/multi-purpose room will provide an additional space in which we can teach classes, for when the stage is used for assemblies and other activities, those daily music classes lose instructional periods.

**Logistical:** Currently, there are two spaces in the school that can hold 37 or more students - the Band and Chorus rooms. Throughout the day, classes in the Band and Chorus rooms are held simultaneously along with the Orchestra’s schedule, therefore, these spaces are not available for strings instruction, even without instruments. Instruction is lost, and due to the overlapping schedule of classes, orchestra does not have a place to hold a class when the space is lost. Use of the auditorium for parent meetings and community meetings require multiple set-ups for the stage, with little time to re-set the stage for early morning rehearsals.

**Enrollment:** ALL students are enrolled in music classes. There are 853 students enrolled in Performing Ensembles. The other approximately 274 other students are enrolled in Exploring Music.

Ensemble	Grade	Houses/ CHOICE included	Enrollment
Band	6th	Butler/Fountain	42
		Cooper/Popham	31
	7th	Butler/Fountain	34
		Cooper/Popham	34
	8th	Butler/Fountain	30
		Cooper/Popham	31
Orchestra	6th	Butler/Fountain	34
		Cooper/Popham	36
	7th	Butler/Fountain	27
		Cooper/Popham	36
	8th	Butler/Fountain	18
		Cooper/Popham	23
Chorus	6th	Butler/Fountain	80
		Cooper/Popham	79
	7th	Butler/Fountain	76
		Cooper/Popham	82
	8th	Butler/Fountain	77
		Cooper/Popham	83

**Infrastructure:** Appropriate lighting rather than fluorescent lights will enhance students’ ability to focus and benefit from reading music in rehearsals. The heating structure of the new classroom will improve

consistency in room temperature, which will not only benefit the students but also help maintain fragile instruments in good condition. Currently, the instrument storage is located outside of the auditorium and the band room in the hallway. As the storage is kept locked at all times, teachers must supervise in giving students accessibility to these lockers. A built-in storage space will help combine the spaces, minimizing set-up time, increasing the security for instruments, and allowing for more effective instructional time during class periods.

**Curricular:** The limited space in many of our music classrooms affects our curriculum in various ways. The small classes for Exploring Music limit the expansion of possible group work in the curriculum, due to lack of sight from the teacher's supervision during class. When events are held on stage, forcing the ensemble classes to be replaced into another location, instruction and curriculum are severely affected (losing rehearsals critical to concert preparation).

The new classroom will enable the curriculum to expand, encouraging group work and interdisciplinary projects. The new classroom will offer a large space beneficial to Exploring Music units such as Electric Guitar (with the help of electric outlets), Acoustic Guitar, Drumming Circles, Movement, and more. The performing ensembles will have a secure place for rehearsal, avoiding the conflict for spaces.

**Security:** For emergency lockdown, the stage does not provide adequate hiding places for the large number of students in ensembles. It is not feasible to lock all the auditorium doors in a timely manner. There are multiple entrances in the auditorium, and it is difficult to manage such a large space when classes are in session. Students have been trained to enter through one specific set of doors which lead directly to the stage; however, there is a possible danger of falling off the stage and other injuries related to the class being held on stage (especially with curtains closed during the class periods in an attempt to create a closer, classroom-like environment). The safety and sustainability of our school orchestra and band instruments are largely affected. Currently all school instruments are left on stage. The auditorium is open to anyone all day, and left unlocked after school, leaving the expensive instruments accessible to anyone, or open for possible damage/loss without any security. We have had incidents of damage and vandalism on these school instruments (equipments). For maximum security, music teaching areas should be secured from the rest of the school building, especially after school hours and weekend activities.

In Exploring Music classes, students often work in small groups throughout the music wing hallway, due to the lack of space. Students are working on the floor, often in traffic areas, in front of doors, and closets, exposing themselves to minor accidents.

The new proposed classroom will provide added safety and security for the students. The classroom will provide enough space for the Exploring Music classes to spread and work in groups while still inside the classroom. It will also provide a safe entry way for students to enter the room. The school equipment will be reserved and secured in much better condition for long term, as we will be able to securely lock the room at the end of the day.

**Ventilation/Air Temperature Control:** The temperature should remain constant; between 65 and 72 degrees F, with relative humidity between 35% and 50%.

3. What are the implications of the project for emerging instructional methods and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning? Please describe some specific instructional plans for the space.

At the Middle School, we aim to encourage learners who are divergent thinkers, adaptable, independent, and creative thinkers. **The spaces that we provide should be compatible with the SEFT vision – supportive of all disciplines and modes of active and collaborative learning. Not all of our music room designs currently reflect this vision. By its nature, a music program needs more space.**

There is no current open space where physical MOVEMENT activities can take place in the school, other than the stage. Our Lincoln Center Education program is limited when teaching artists come into regular classrooms to work with students for such programs as a recent Alvin Ailey performance. The Dalcroze Eurhythmic Approach to music education cannot even be considered in our current curriculum. With a new designed space, other pedagogies may be developed. The curriculum for Exploring Music, specifically our World Music units, should include ample room for movement, which is integrated into the music experience of all world cultures. Ballroom dancing is taught in the elementary schools, and in our own gymnasiums there is an African dance unit in eighth grade; however, the music department has no areas to incorporate movement that is free from music stands, chairs, concrete pillars, or other room dimensions that limit alternative teaching modes.

With enrollment for performance ensemble classes often doubling the size of regular classes, the possibilities for Video Conferencing have been ruled out over the years. These classes just cannot fit in the library classroom. This technology and the collaboration with our librarian can greatly enhance our instructional methods. Consider, for example, a Video Conference with The Manhattan School of Music, or visits with an out-of-state composer at different stages of a commissioned piece. Students could learn about the creative process first-hand, and play excerpts for the composer, enhancing opportunities for revision of the creative work.

Besides the use of a new SmartBoard on the stage, the use of mobile devices and technology has yet to be fully addressed for strings classes. The idea of including electric string instruments into the program has never been considered, due to limitations of space, accessibility to electric outlets, etc. We have not yet solicited from the students themselves ideas they would include for design. What do they see as being advantageous with a newly designed space? Finally, in addition to instructional plans for the space, there currently is no area for the repair and maintenance of string instruments.

4. Please describe the features of the space that will provide flexibility as new instructional methods are introduced.

The new music/multi-purpose room may be built with glass that provides a view into the outdoors; curtains can be hung to adjust the acoustic properties of the room. The room would be a welcoming area for instruction, with more natural light. Storage of musical instruments will be more secure and more safely set back when the room is used for school presentations or S.O. functions. The room design would have better ventilation and acoustics for students to hear soft music, with adequate natural and overhead lighting and dimmers for flexibility in instructional methods. This would enhance lessons using technology or small performance opportunities, such as a viewing of student iMovies/PSAs, cabaret evening, or a smaller Chamber Winds concert.

5. Does the project provide new opportunities for collaborative and interdisciplinary instruction? Please describe.

The classroom will provide a large space to facilitate collaborative and interdisciplinary instruction. Currently all music classrooms used by Exploring Music courses (excluding the stage) accommodate less

than 26 people in the room. The new classroom will provide opportunities for future collaboration with other departments including subjects in Physical Education, English, Social Studies, Related Arts, etc.

6. How does the project contribute to the sense of community and connectedness in the building?

**Every middle school child is enrolled in a music class. Therefore, each and every student will have the opportunity either to learn in the new classroom or to benefit from its creation.** For many years, the Exploring Music classes have rotated through three classrooms that are lacking as appropriate instructional facilities. One is very small and does not have windows. There is little or no space for students – growing students – to move around, much less play percussion instruments and guitars. Another room currently being used as a classroom is next to the dumpster/delivery area. Since it is a basement room, it tends to smell musty. However, it is not advisable to open the windows as the odor from the dumpsters would in no way help the air quality of the room. Furthermore, the noise made by very loud delivery trucks is distracting and annoying. The third room is not one room but rather three small rooms separated by walls and doorways. This division isolates students within a class from each other and from their teacher. The size of the rooms simply does not provide the comfort and ease necessary for a successful learning environment.

There is no other classroom in the middle school that is so lacking in sufficient space. When students leave their houses to attend music classes that are held in the three classroom described in the previous paragraph or on the stage, they feel detached from, not connected to, the rest of the building. A new classroom with windows, adequate heating and of a substantial size would enable music students to feel that they are valued members of the school community and would provide them with a sense of connectedness to the building.

Removing daily Orchestra classes from the auditorium would free up the space for other uses. For example, during concert time, chorus classes could rehearse in the space in which they will perform. Additionally, the Chorus would have more flexibility in scheduling early-morning rehearsals. Currently, early-morning rehearsal time for chorus students is limited to the days of the week (Mondays and Fridays) during which the Orchestra students do not use the space. English teachers could bring their classes in when doing skits. Greater opportunity to invite guest speakers would be provided. Assemblies would no longer present the scheduling nightmare they currently present. A new multi-purpose room would enable the auditorium to be more available to others, thus fostering connectedness and community throughout the building.

7. Does the project scope address specialized instructional programs such as the arts, physical education, special education services, etc. Please describe the specific instructional uses for the new space.

The scope of this project addresses a specialized instructional program in the arts, specifically music. In the new space, the Orchestra, Band, and Exploring Music classes would be afforded opportunities for consistent rehearsals in a space designed for classroom musical use. This space would be used with several class ideas in mind: large group rehearsals with instruments, small group sectional rehearsals, Exploring Music classes with guitars, drums, etc. and collaborative group work to name a few.

Additionally, music classes often record rehearsals during class time to help the students hone their listening, reflection, and critical thinking skills. With a space focused on music and multi-purpose use, recording equipment could be used regularly, thus enriching the rehearsal experiences of our students.

Also, with the addition of this space, storage of instruments would become less of an issue. The Music Department, as is a necessity for 21<sup>st</sup> Century musical development, contains a great deal of equipment including instruments and recording and stereo equipment, along with technology such as a SMARTBoard. In this new space, storage of this equipment could be accounted for in a more practical and usable way in the daily lives of our students. Bringing 20-40 delicate instruments from room to room for daily classes and rehearsals uses class time and rehearsal time (and can be detrimental to the instruments) that ought to be spent on instruction, critical thinking, reflection, collaboration, and creation.

8. Does the project incorporate the use of technology as an integrated feature of the space?

The room would be outfitted with the Smartboard that already exists on stage. This space would afford an addition of a meeting room with a Smartboard as well the space to accommodate acoustic instruments and portable technology such as iPads and laptops.

As part of our exploring music curriculum, this additional space will help facilitate our electric guitar unit. This unit utilizes technology that includes electric guitars and midi/usb equipment including ipads, irigs, headphones, and stomp boxes. This technology takes up a great deal of space. The completion of the project will help with both instruction and storage.

In addition, there is potential in the future for having a sound proof soundbooth (similar to the Speech room). This would help facilitate individual practice and recording projects. Such projects are already used for assessment. Having the space to house a soundbooth would alleviate some of the issues we encounter when students work to complete recording projects. This includes being able to monitor students while practicing and recording.

9. Will the project reflect environmental and sustainability improvements? Connections to the outdoors?

By creating a multipurpose room in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the design and materials will be those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New construction provides the opportunity to use sustainable materials and energy-efficient electrical systems. Modern heating and lighting units will be installed and will be more easily controlled by the teacher of the class that is using the room. Additionally, the new space will have doors that may be closed thereby preventing energy from escaping or being wasted. Currently, the stage of the auditorium is being used daily as a classroom, and, as a classroom, it is deficient in many ways. It is nearly impossible to adequately heat the area and the lighting system does not provide enough illumination for the students. The new project would be more energy efficient, thus reflecting environmental and sustainability improvements. The new multipurpose room would have windows which would allow natural daylight to easily stream into the room. Operable windows would enable a natural flow of fresh air and a connection to the outdoors.

10. If the project doesn't get the green light, how will the problems identified above be resolved?

**If the project does not get the green light, unfortunately, the problems will continue to affect the entire school community.** The S.M.S. administration works hard to accommodate those who wish to use the auditorium for special programs, while trying not to disrupt music classes. This has proven to be an overwhelming task and one that is becoming more difficult each year to tackle. **Part of the reason that this issue is becoming more difficult to solve, is that the music program has grown tremendously while the need/opportunity for special programs to take place in a 'multi-use room'**

**has also grown.** Throughout the year the academic teams often need a space that can accommodate large groups for culminating activities and interdisciplinary curricular events. This convergence creates situations that are difficult to resolve. Presently, the problems are resolved by displacing classes into spaces that are too small to handle the amount of students. In addition, classes often cannot complete the work that was intended while at the same time, guest presenters cannot get in the auditorium to properly set up their presentation. It becomes a kind of 'lose-lose' situation. This will of course continue to be the case until the project is completed.

**CONCLUSION:**

**We asked Dorothy Golden and Rachele Ketterer to provide their perspective as drama directors/choreographers who use the stage. They appreciated the opportunity to do so.**

**Q: Might you suggest some benefits to new construction that would highly benefit your program?**

“Suggestions would include or support anything related to storage space and the ability to have sets on stage for as long a period as possible. For example, we've had to disassemble several set pieces because they are too large to store in the existing space. It also greatly affects our rehearsal time if we have to re-set and set up the stage space before/after each on stage rehearsal. While the teachers involved are always very generous with their classroom spaces, having a designated area for either rehearsals or for storage that is just for the musical would help immensely. During the actual performances themselves, the bathroom facilities available are not large enough for our cast to utilize for changing/make-up/using the bathroom during a show. Some small spaces (with mirrors/shelves) that could be used as individual music rehearsal spaces when they are not changing rooms (similar to the small rooms in the Scarsdale Public library's private tutoring areas) would work well for our make-up/hair needs.”

**Q: What have been your challenges affected by these spaces?**

“Our challenges stem from a lack of central musical/play storage. It makes it hard to organize our materials in a way that would allow costuming/prop work to be quick and efficient, rather than spread out and disorganized over two areas. In addition, it becomes difficult to put our sets back together each year when the storage spaces for them are so small. As a result, the sets take up enormous room backstage, affecting other performances like the Talent Show and the use of the stage as a classroom.

Whenever we need to access pieces of the set, it becomes a very tricky (and mildly dangerous) situation, as the pieces, which are heavy and designed to lie flat, are stored on their sides in a space too small to turn them around. Two people, working together, can hardly fit in the space while moving set pieces, which are often very heavy and unstable when removed from the existing storage space.”

**Q: What are your needs going forward?**

“Most basically the musical requires a large storage space, adequate to house costumes, sets, and props independent of other storage spaces. It would be unique to just house materials for the musical in such a way that the items could be perused as needed and large enough for multiple individuals to work in the room and move set pieces without feeling like they are compromising their own safety or the structure of the set pieces by doing so. In addition, this space should have adequate room for the racks of costumes, allowing them to be hung during storage. Ultimately, it would be fantastic if there was enough classroom

space to allow the stage to become wholly dedicated to the musical during both rehearsals and performances.