

To: Dr. Bartelt and School Board Members  
From: Karma Krzysiak and Sue Metzger  
Re: Proposed Westfield Band and Choir trip to St. Louis, MO

This year the Concert Band and Concert Choir are planning their ninth trip to participate in the Music in the Parks Music Festival in St. Louis, MO. The dates for this trip will be April 24- April 26, 2020. The focus for this trip includes providing students with performance experiences, audience attendance experiences, opportunities for travel and visiting tourist attractions, camaraderie amongst the music students and a reward for their hard work throughout the year. Each group will perform in a ranked music festival judged by three nationally known judges. While the exact performance venue has not yet been determined, we have been guaranteed to perform in an auditorium (as opposed to the usual gymnasium performances) which is an important experience for the students. The tentative itinerary will include leaving quite early (6:00 am) on Friday morning and performing for the judges later in that day. Before performing for the judges we will visit the St. Louis Arch, and have lunch at the National Blues Museum while listening to a live blues band. On Saturday, students will spend the day at Six Flags, where they will attend an awards ceremony and dinner for all the ensembles performing at the festival. On Sunday after checking out of the hotel we will head to City Museum where we will have lunch and spend the next few hours exploring this amazing interactive museum made entirely of repurposed materials. We should arrive back in Bloomingdale at approximately 7:00 pm.

At this point we have 70 students who will be attending the trip, plus 17 chaperones. We are fortunate to have enough chaperones to keep the adult to student ratio at 4 students for every adult. The high chaperone ratio is crucial in maintaining proper supervision of the students. The students are grouped into hotel rooms based on a quad occupancy. Each room of students is supervised by an assigned adult. This adult ensures that their 4 students are accounted for at all times (on buses, restaurants, Six Flags, nightly at curfew).

When planning the first trip to St. Louis, it was envisioned as a reward for all the hard work and long hours that the students put into participating in band and choir. The trip has proven to be a great combination of providing a valuable musical experience along with memorable social/emotional experiences that the students will always remember. After having done this 7 times previously, we have learned that there were some unexpected benefits from the overall experience.

1. Our students learn a great deal from hearing themselves and each other in a real performance venue (auditorium as opposed to middle school gym) causing them to listen and adjust in a way that they have not been able to previously.
2. The clinics conducted by the adjudicators following the performance allow the students to gain additional musical insights from another director's perspective.
3. Throughout the weekend we watch as they develop deeper, more meaningful relationships with their fellow musicians. For some of our students it is the first time they actually develop relationships with new friends, and these friends become friends for the rest of their time at Westfield and beyond. It is gratifying to watch them develop in their social interactions as well as their musical development.

As we prepare our students for the Music in the Parks Festival they are involved in numerous musical activities. Every Westfield band student takes a weekly lesson where they work on the fundamentals of their instrument. As part of the curriculum for their lessons they participate in a chamber music program where they are playing in small groups, creating an ensemble that requires much more independence and maturity to perform in. They perform a Chamber Music concert, as well as performing at solo and ensemble contest in front of a judge.

The Concert Choir members are also given the opportunity to perform solos or ensembles at the contest in February as well as at the Chamber Music concert. Both the Concert Band and the Concert Choir perform at the Illinois Grade School Music Association District Contest in March which helps in preparing them for participation in the Music in the Parks Festival.

We have found our performance-based trips to St. Louis to be a unifying and musically enriching experience for all of our students. There is not one former student who comes back to visit who does not bring up their memories of the trip that they attended, so we know that it has a lasting effect on their lives. We look forward to going on our ninth trip to St. Louis this year.