June 25, 2020

The Rhode Island Department of Education’s Back-to-School guidance document singled out BAND and CHORUS as two classes that should be “suspended or occur virtually”:

RIDE will not change their original language but has agreed to share RIMEA music instructional guidance with the next Commissioner message to Superintendents on July 3rd. In the meantime, teachers, please get the following message out to your admins and school-opening teams quickly. If possible, please try to speak to them about it. Our band/chorus students need everyone’s help.

We are writing to clarify recent RIDE guidance regarding band and chorus.

1. Band and chorus are integral, academic curricular subjects, and critical parts of students’ lives and their school day.

2. RIDE guidance does not state that band and chorus curricular-based academic classes cannot take place in person. These band/chorus classes can and should meet in person, in the same manner as all other academic classes as follows:
   a. Non-performance aspects of chorus and band/wind instrument playing - aligned with national standards - can take place in-person consistent with the guidance on in-person instruction for other academic curricular subjects.
   b. Performance aspects of chorus and band/wind instrument playing should take place with students and staff 14 feet between stable groups/pods, or virtually. This is until more definitive research is released concerning the dangers of singing/playing wind instruments, along with possible mitigation procedures to significantly reduce the risk for COVID-19 transmission.

3. The Rhode Island Music Education Association will be releasing a guidance document by the end of the month for the variety of music education settings in the state - including band and chorus - with consideration for scheduling, classroom set-up and materials, and curriculum. This document will be centered on best practices to ensure equitable access to music education for all students.

4. As more research becomes available in the coming month - including a large-scale definitive study specific to music performance and aerosol transmission - music educators, in partnership with health and safety experts will provide detailed information on how or if students can safely take part in in-person group performances.