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### **Kids In Concert faces possible closure following loss of lease**

*Free North Kitsap music and youth development program calls on community to help it find a new home*

**Suquamish, WA. February 12, 2026.** On Friday, January 30, the leadership of Kids in Concert (KIC), a North Kitsap County-based music and youth development nonprofit, received notification that its lease agreement with West Sound Academy would not be renewed for the 2026/2027 academic year. Citing the need for West Sound Academy to “steward our facilities in a way that best supports our students and school community moving forward,” Catherine Freeman, Head of School, wrote that, “[West Sound’s] own evolving programming and operational needs” informed the school’s decision. Kids in Concert now needs to find a new home or risk having to shutter its programs. KIC has been at West Sound Academy since 2023, when it moved from the Suquamish United Church of Christ.

Kids in Concert was founded in 2010 by Bainbridge Island and North Kitsap-based musicians and mental health professionals and began with a pilot program at the Suquamish Tribe’s Marion Forsman-Boushie Early Learning Center. Since 2013, the organization has offered a free after-school music and youth development program along with a low-cost summer musical theater camp. KIC’s school-year program has been supported through a combination of private donations and grants, including from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Norcliffe Foundation, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Allen Family Philanthropies, and Bainbridge and Kitsap Community Foundations.

91 students are currently enrolled in KIC’s school-year program, which includes instruction in string and percussion instruments, musical ensembles, choir, and social and emotional programming. Demand for KIC’s programming is high, with 91 children enrolled and 32 on the waitlist. Students range from ages 6-18 and come from communities across north Kitsap County, including Suquamish, Indianola, Kingston, Poulsbo, and Bainbridge Island. Just under 50% of KIC students identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), with 19% identifying as tribal members. 30% qualify for free or reduced school lunch.

In addition to musical instruction, KIC’s program emphasizes community, mentorship, and youth development, and includes college readiness programming and leadership training. Jason

Koontz, a longtime teacher at Suquamish Elementary, argues that programs like KIC are “unheard of” in many other communities, saying, “KIC has offered a source of pride and feeling of community for so many of my students over the years. This program is one of the greatest opportunities our kids have, and it would be a major blow to lose it.” Speaking to the program’s impact, he notes, “Some of my students find success and belonging through KIC that they are not getting anywhere else.”

KIC students perform in several free community concerts throughout the year. KIC’s chamber groups perform regularly at community events throughout Bainbridge and North Kitsap and have partnered with area musical organizations including Amabile choir, North Kitsap High School Choir, Singalong and Sounds, and the Kingston High School Band.

In 2023, [KIC was designated a “Community Partner” by the Seattle Symphony](#), a recognition of the organization’s commitment to, “expanding opportunities for historically underserved youth across the Puget Sound region to enhance their musical development and broaden music education access in the community.” As part of this partnership, KIC students have performed in two side-by-side concerts with the Seattle Symphony, including at Benaroya Hall in April 2024 in a program featuring Native musicians from across the region. Seattle Symphony Senior Director of Education and Community Engagement, Jeremy Jolley, writes, “Kids in Concert is Seattle Symphony’s closest partner toward providing music education to students in Kitsap County. Their commitment to creating a community around music making, supporting the whole child, and ensuring that everyone is welcomed are the reasons we are proud of our long-term partnership.”

The leadership of Kids in Concert is now looking for space beginning in August 2026 that can accommodate their program needs. “We’re looking for a welcoming, flexible space in the North Kitsap area that can support our ensemble-based music program several days a week,” says Rebecca Marchand, Executive Director of Kids In Concert. “That could be a school, church, community partner, or commercial space. What matters most is having room for full-group rehearsals, smaller breakout instruction, supervised gathering time, and secure storage so we can continue providing a safe, consistent, and high-quality experience for our students.” Speaking to community demand for accessible music programming, Marchand says, “The continued growth and demand for our program sends a clear message: Kids In Concert fills a critical gap in access to music education in our region, Our enrollment and community interest have grown year over year, reflecting how deeply this program is wanted and needed.”

“Kids In Concert exists because students show up, again and again for music, connection, and belonging,” says Laura Milleson, Artistic Director and co-founder. “Many of our students would not otherwise have access to music education. As we look for a new home, we’re focused on protecting what matters most: a welcoming space where young people can gather, learn, and make music together, regardless of experience or resources.”

If you would like more information about this topic please contact KIC Executive Director, Rebecca Marchand, at [rebecca@kidsinconcert.org](mailto:rebecca@kidsinconcert.org).

For more information about Kids in Concert, or to make a donation, visit [www.kidsinconcert.org](http://www.kidsinconcert.org).