

A Message to Parents about the Band Experience

Perseverance makes you stick with a job until it's done. It's your own built-in taskmaster. When children learn to play a musical instrument, they are also learning perseverance. Students need real determination to take the mystery out of notes and rhythms and turn them into music. It's a healthy stubbornness that develops into perseverance. The rewards of perseverance are accomplishment of any goal set before you and a healthy sense of pride.

Can your child attain this quality? Of course! Musically, the means to this end is through a little stick-to-it-iveness (continued effort). After a while this effort turns to a good habit that benefits any endeavor--music, schoolwork, or almost anything you can think of. We believe you are investing in an opportunity to give your child not only the vast benefits of a musical education, but some of the necessary qualifications for a full and happy life--poise, self-confidence, concentration, self-discipline, and perseverance. Whether your child goes on to be an outstanding performer or just average at the instrument does not matter, because the experience of music will do much to enrich their life. Years from now your child will thank you.

Frequently Asked Questions About The Band Program

Does my child need any previous musical experience to join the band?

The students will be taught all the fundamentals of reading and playing music, and it is not necessary for them to have any previous musical experience.

How do I decide which instrument my child should play?

We will meet with you and your child and suggest the best instrument(s) for him/her to play based on his/her interests and physical characteristics. It is fine if your child has no idea what instrument he/she wants to play, because we will help him/her select an instrument.

How do I get an instrument for my child?

Instruments may be purchased or rented through a reputable music store. Certain brands of instruments are preferred because of their quality of tone, tuning, and reliability. A list of the suggested instruments will be given to you when you meet with a band director. You are not required to buy a new instrument. Most music stores offer a good choice of new and used instruments. If you are going to purchase a used instrument that has not been examined by a qualified repair shop, we suggest that you allow one of the directors to look at the instrument before you make your purchase.

When do I need to get the instrument?

It is suggested that you make arrangements for an instrument as soon as you have met with a director, because the music stores will sell out of the used instruments quickly. After reserving an instrument, it is best to let the music store keep the instrument until next August. We do not want your child to try playing the instrument until he/she is shown step by step how to assemble and produce a sound on the instrument. Bad habits, which are hard to break, are developed when the students try to figure this out by themselves.

Will the instrument I am buying for my beginning band student last them through high school?

If your child is an average player, this instrument will be fine for him/her to continue using throughout his/her high school years. If your child is an average to above-average player, then you probably will want to consider purchasing a better quality "step-up" instrument for the 7th, 8th, & 9th grades.

Should I try to give my child a head start by having them take private lessons this summer?

No. We prefer to start all the students at the same time and have them all learn the basic fundamentals from the same person. This helps to avoid confusion with different terminology or concepts. Private lessons are extremely beneficial once the basics have been taught in class at the beginning of the year, and we will discuss your child's participation in the private lesson program at that time. Enrollment forms for the private lesson program will be distributed at the beginning of the school year.

How much will my child need to practice to be successful?

Each student will be expected to practice at home and this will be a portion of their grade in the class. Of equal importance to time is the structure and quality of the time. Regular, nightly practice is essential in learning to play an instrument.

Will my child have rehearsals outside of the regular school day?

The only required before/after school rehearsals for beginning band students will be a couple of dates prior to the Beginning Band Concert in May. The Symphonic and Honors Band students do have one hour per week of practice that is outside of the school day (before or after school). Every effort is made to schedule these once a week section rehearsals with the Symphonic and Honors Bands at times that don't conflict with the students other activities.

Will my child be able to participate in band and athletics?

Yes. Sixth grade students are not eligible to participate in middle school athletics due to state guidelines. However, in the 7th & 8th grades, students are able to participate in both band and athletics. The band directors and coaches work together in order to allow the students to participate in athletics, as well as many of the other school activities. Approximately 50-70% of the current 7th/8th grade band students participate on one or more of the FSMS athletic teams.

As a parent, what can I do to help my child be successful in band?

1. Arrange a regular time and place for him/her to practice.
2. Show an interest in his/her progress.
3. Help your child keep a daily record of his/her practice time on the Practice Report.
4. Keep your child's instrument in good repair and always make sure he/she has extra reeds, oil, etc.
5. Encourage him/her to play for others when the opportunity arises.
5. See that your child takes his/her instrument, practice report and music to school every day and home every night.
6. Know what days your child has private lessons or extra band rehearsals and help him or her to remember these important dates.
8. Discuss with the band directors anything that will help them to understand your child.
9. Attend all of your child's performances.
10. Take a proactive role in all things musical relating to your child.
11. Volunteer to assist the directors at as many band activities as possible.