

# Welcome to Pre-Band

Dear 5<sup>th</sup> grade parent,

This year, as you probably already know, your child will be rotating every grading period into a different elective. For this period your child will be in the Pre-Band elective. This is a time for your child to be introduced to the possibility of being in the band program in the sixth grade.

We will be teaching your child basic music theory and evaluating his suitability and taste to be a musician. The students will learn how to perform music through the use of a musical instrument called a recorder. If your child played the recorder in elementary school, and can find it from the depths of their room, they may use it. If you do not have one, you may buy one at The Music Place in Mansfield or Music and Arts in the Highlands in Arlington. Please do not buy them at the various stores where they will only cost \$1.00. Those do not play in tune and the software games we play will not recognize the pitches coming from them. I have a few that I can loan out during the rotation (yes, they have been sanitized), but they stay in my room and cannot be used for home practice.

During our time together, your child will be introduced to all the band instruments. We will have units on the brass instruments, woodwind instruments and percussion instruments. The students, after they have been introduced to all the instruments, will have the opportunity to choose a few to try. At that time we will assess if the student will be able to produce a “first sound” on the instrument. If they can successfully produce a good sound, then that instrument will be a choice for them when it’s time to sign up in the spring (April/May). If they are not able to produce an acceptable sound, then we will keep trying to find other instruments that they will be successful on.

We have found the students are happier if they are matched with an instrument **they** have chosen, and they are more apt to stick with the program and get more out of the experience. I assure you that **no pressure will ever be applied to your child to become a part of the band program or to play a certain instrument. We do have some limits, however, based on their audition and other factors.**

Reasons why your child might not receive a first choice on an instrument for 6<sup>th</sup> grade:

1. Limits on school owned instruments-We are limited by our inventory. These are normally assigned on a first come, first served basis after letters are returned in the spring.
2. Instrumentation limits-We don’t need 50 saxophones. The first students, who auditioned well enough, to return their letters in the spring, will be allowed in the class. Percussion hopefuls will have to pass my coordination test and a second audition with our percussion teacher. If successful, they will be allowed into percussion class.
3. Physical limits-Arms too short for trombone, hands too small for bassoon, etc.

You will be getting information explaining the program and the process as we move through the rotation. At any time, if you have questions about the process, or the band program, please call us. Know that you have until the end of school to make a decision about joining, but we only have this time period to test your child on the instruments. We have to test **all** the fifth graders in the school one grading period at a time. For the child who doesn’t want to be in band, the sampling of an instrument becomes simply an interesting exposure to instrumental music. We look forward to teaching your child some music fundamentals and working with them at any rate. Be sure to call if you have questions, and have a great year.

Our grading policies reflect those of our school and the district. All of our grades are based on hard work, not talent level.

*(See the Grading Guidelines in the Appendix of the Intermediate Student Handbook and see Board Policy EIA Local: Academic Dishonesty.)*

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# 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Band FAQ's

This page is just answering some questions you didn't know you had. As usual, if you have any other questions call us at the number at the bottom of the page.

**When does my child select an instrument for band?** We are on a rotating elective schedule. That means we will not see your child after this grading period. The testing process is very thorough. Encourage them to pick an instrument they like, not one their friends have chosen. They will pick their instrument in late April/early May, when they register for 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

**How much time are we talking here?** In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade we have minimal outside-of-class rehearsals. Your child will be asked to practice 20 minutes a night on their own any 5 nights a week. There are two or three evening concerts a year lasting only 30 minutes in length. Attendance at these concerts is required. Middle schools have some after school rehearsals and of course high school has the marching band practices. But, in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, you're OK.

**What if my child wants to play sports?** Sports will not conflict with band until well into high school. Many of our current Asa Low band kids are involved in sports.

**What if my child has no talent?** During the six weeks we will make sure the student is physically able to produce a sound on the instrument of their choice. Other than that, there are no musical requirements. To get the best qualified students in the percussion class there is a second audition requirement. We would also like for future percussion students to have had piano lessons, but we are more concerned with finding great students.

**Are lessons required?** These days, to compete in high school and middle school competitions, every student should take private lessons. However, they are not required. You should know those private lessons are an excellent opportunity to work one on one with an instructor that is an expert on that instrument. Private lessons are for everyone, not just the students who are struggling but also for the student who wants to go above and beyond his classmates to be the top player in their section. Private lessons are \$17 a week and you schedule the time and pay the teacher yourself. A list of approved private lesson teachers is available upon request from the band department.

**Why is my child trying an instrument when we know he doesn't want to be in band?** It is simply a requirement of pre-band. The selection and playing of an instrument is simply an educational experience to the student who doesn't want to be in the program, but is vital to the child who **does** want to be in the program. If your child doesn't want to be in the program but then later changes their mind, we will not have the time to test them because of the vast amount of students we have to test. In the next few weeks the following instruments will be made available for your child to test.

**Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Bassoon, Alto Sax, Trumpet, French horn,  
Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, Percussion.  
*(Underlined are school provided)***

The next form you receive will be an information gathering form. Filling out this form will not mean that you are signing up for band. The teachers will use this info to track your student's interest in band and be able to contact you if we have any questions. With this form, you will be able to sit down with your child and look at pictures of the instruments that are available in band next year. You will also be able to select three instruments that you would like to try to play in class. After that sampling of instruments, an application to join band will be sent home in the spring. When you receive the application to join band you will have a supply and instrument list attached to help you figure your cost to get in the program. Be sure to count the cost of time and money before you commit.

We are excited about the possibility of your child being introduced to the discipline of instrumental music. We typically see grades increase and study habits improve among band students. A Canadian study in 1994 concluded that I.Q. for special reasoning increases as much as 40% in children who study music. The program will follow your child through to graduation if he chooses, and could provide him with scholarship money for college. If some of your questions weren't answered here, feel free to call.