

# Elementary Beginning Band

♪ A Parent's Guide ♪



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*Welcome to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Band program at Fishkill Plains Elementary School! In this handbook you will find everything you need to know about your child's involvement in the Beginning Band program.. I am looking forward to working with your child and helping them get off to a great start!*

## **Curriculum**

The Beginning Band curriculum will focus on learning proper fundamentals for performing on an instrument both physically and technically. Students will learn a solid foundation of performance fundamentals including tone production, rhythm, blend, balance, intonation, dynamics, articulation, musicianship, rehearsal behavior, and systematic home practice routines.

## **Benefits of Participating in Band**

### *FOR YOUR CHILD:*

Music participation enhances:

- Problem solving & troubleshooting
- Concentration
- Teamwork
- Goal setting & achieving
- Self-expression
- Coordination
- Memory skills
- Self-confidence and esteem

### *FOR YOUR FAMILY:*

A child's music study also offers opportunities for shared family experiences, including:

- Music event attendance
- Family music making
- Performing for and with family and friends
- Learning about the lives of composers and the culture of various civilizations
- A sense of accomplishment and pride for the entire family

## **Band Rehearsals**

Every band student will have only **one** band class per six-day cycle during the school day. Each rehearsal is 40 minutes. *The actual cycle day and time of day will be determined in the fall.*

## **Band Lessons**

Each band student will also be assigned a 30-minute small group lesson time also only **one** day each six-day cycle. Their lessons will be scheduled for that same cycle day all year; the actual time of the day will rotate through the day from one lesson to the next. These small group lessons are a required part of the instrumental program. Classroom teachers will have schedules of all band lessons (students will also receive a copy), and students will be excused from class to attend. During lessons, your child will learn individual specifics about playing his/her instrument that cannot be taught during the full band rehearsal. Therefore, small group lessons not only contribute greatly to the individual's musical achievement but to the entire ensemble's achievement as well.

## **Instrument Transport & Storage**

Students are always allowed to bring instruments to and from school on the bus with few exceptions (ie. a full sized Euphonium or Baritone Horn). Due to safety concerns, size of the instrument, and limited "extra" space on busses, Euphoniums (Baritones) are not allowed on school busses. That said, each student is expected to bring his/her instrument home at the end of each school day, over weekends, and before long vacation breaks or absences. This will allow them the opportunity to practice and develop their musical skills. Please remind your child to take their instrument home so there is no damage resulting from instruments left at school.

## **Performances**

*Performance dates will be announced in September when the district-wide dates are finalized.*

These performances are not optional; they are a required aspect of the Band program. Therefore, when the dates are published in September, please mark your calendars. It is vital that your child attend. Each performance is an opportunity for you to see and hear what your child is learning in band as well as the progress they are making. Each child plays an important role in the performances. Please show your support for your child by attending the performances. I understand that illness and emergency situations occur. Please communicate any performance scheduling conflicts as far in advance as possible. *If your child needs a ride, I am confident that one could be arranged with a fellow band student.*

**Note:** In the past we have combined our winter date (usually mid-Jan.) with the Orchestra.

## **Concert Dress**

Concerts are a wonderful learning opportunity for our students. It is a time to bring together everything they have learned and worked very hard on. As an integral part of the learning process, it is important that students take their performance seriously. Dressing appropriately can only enhance their awareness that performances are very important. Therefore, 5<sup>th</sup> grade band students are asked to adhere to the following for all performances. If girls choose to wear a skirt or dress, it should fall *below the knee when sitting*. This is an important consideration if students are to use proper posture while playing. Ladies may also wear nice pants so that skirt length is not an issue! For boys, nice pants and a button down shirt will be fine. Ties are not required but make a good impression. For boys and girls: no shorts, sneakers, tank tops, or spaghetti strap tops. If you have any concerns, please contact me as soon as possible. The night of the concert will be too late to find a solution.

## **Securing an Instrument For Your Child**

Your decision to provide your child with a quality musical instrument is an investment in your child's future. In making it possible for your child to play a musical instrument, you are providing the opportunity for self-expression, creativity and achievement.

Please act now to secure an instrument for your child for the fall. If you use one of the local vendors, you should complete one of their contracts and send it to them by *early July*. That will insure delivery to the school by early September so that your child will not miss having an instrument on that all-important first lesson. Be sure that your rental includes the book we will be using in 5th Grade: “**Standard of Excellence-Book 1**” for your child’s specific instrument. Also, if possible, please purchase a folding music stand. A music stand helps promote proper posture when playing. Please proceed with extreme caution if you are buying an instrument on the Internet. There are many instruments advertised on the Internet that have low, enticing prices. All too often, these instruments are of low quality. I have had instrument repair technicians actually refuse to work on some of these because the metal on some is so soft, they will not hold when adjusted. Please, if you have a question about an instrument’s make or model, do not hesitate to ask!

## **Grading**

Your child’s quarterly Band grade is comprised of the following: their lesson grade average (which includes their completed & signed practice chart at each lesson), their band class grade, and their concert participation. Regular rehearsal and lesson preparedness is also factored into their grade. **Being prepared for Band & lessons is a very important part of their overall Band grade.** Students need to have: a pencil, all of their music, their lesson book and instrument in good working order. Additionally, for each lesson they need their signed practice sheet. At all times they need the appropriate supplies for their specific instrument. Please see the list that follows.

## Materials and Supplies

All 5<sup>th</sup> Grade band students need the lesson book, “Standard of Excellence - Book 1”. Be sure this book comes with your child’s rental. If you own or borrow your child’s instrument, you must purchase this book (see local dealers below).

**Note:** An “*Enhanced*” version (purple stripe on cover) of the book is available with a Play-a-long CD or access to audio files for a few extra dollars. This version is not required but some students in the past have found it fun to play along with the accompaniments while working on the assigned exercises.

All students must come to lessons with the following supplies:

- Pencil (no pens of any kind!)
- Folder for all music and papers
- Practice Sheet: completed and initialed by parent for each lesson
- “*Standard of Excellence - Bk. 1*” lesson book
- Required instrument-specific accessories (see below for your instrument!)

Each instrument has its own needs. Please be sure your child has the following supplies in their case as soon as possible:

FLUTE:	absorbent handkerchief (not polyester)
OBOE:	Oboe swab, 2 <i>extra</i> reeds (either <b>Jones or Fox Renard</b> brand are safe choices. Ask for - “ <u>Medium</u> ”. And save the tube/case the reed comes in - take care putting reed back in.)
CLARINET:	clarinet swab, box of 10 reeds, (strength 2 ½) and reed a guard <b>Rico Royal (light Blue box)</b> , & Vandoren brands are the <b>best choices</b> .
SAXOPHONE:	saxophone swab, box of reeds (strength 2 ½) and a reed guard <b>Rico Royal (light Blue box)</b> , & Vandoren brands are the <b>best choices</b> .
TRUMPET:	valve oil, slide grease, a small cloth (for cleaning up grease and oil)
FRENCH HORN:	valve oil, slide grease, a small cloth (for cleaning up grease and oil)
TROMBONE:	slide cream - <u>NOT Valve Oil!</u> ( <i>Trombotine, Yamaha Slide Cream</i> or <i>Slide Lubricant</i> ), a small water spray bottle, small cloth (for cleaning up grease)
EUPHONIUM: (aka - Baritone)	valve oil, slide grease, a small cloth (for cleaning up grease and oil)
PERCUSSION:	Nothing extra apart from the Bell/Drum Pad kit (yet!) (In Jr. High, they will need to purchase additional sticks, mallets and stick bag.)

*If you have any questions about any of these supplies, please contact me.*

**These are the 3 companies that service our students’ rental & supply needs:**

- *Diefes & Mikalowjeski Music*: 635-1120 ([www.dandmmusic.com](http://www.dandmmusic.com))  
(aka - *D & M Music*, is owned by *John Keal* in Albany)
- *Paul Effman Music*: 452-8582 ([www.pauleffmanmusic.com](http://www.pauleffmanmusic.com)) - located near Arlington HS
- *Music & Arts*: 877-693-5204 ([www.MusicArts.com](http://www.MusicArts.com))

**Additionally, here are some other dealers that can meet your supply needs (not rentals):**

Alto Music in Wappingers: 297-0011 ([www.altomusic.com](http://www.altomusic.com))  
WWBW.com - The Woodwind & Brasswind ([www.wwbw.com](http://www.wwbw.com))  
InterstateMusic.com - Interstate Music ([www.interstatemusic.com](http://www.interstatemusic.com))  
Amazon.com - also sells the lesson books and accessories

## “Practicing at School” versus “Practicing at Home”

Please understand that there is a MAJOR misunderstanding by most beginners in reference to in-school practicing and outside of school practicing. The “band lessons” within the school day are meant for learning new material, focusing on creativity and molding of musical thought. At school, students will work on various musical exercises and will be given assignments in the traditional take home-and-practice context. Each student will usually have at least 8 days between lessons to accomplish this on their own time - as is with any other class homework assignment. “Home Practice” is an essential process where the student covers the fundamental work and breakdown of musical technique. Please consistently monitor your child’s home practice. Their musical growth and progress depend on it. Remember too that we expect to see your initials on the practice chart!

## The “Art of Practicing” as a Young Musician

I know the novelty of being in band will eventually wear off. The months of October and November will be a crucial time in your child’s band experience. Below you will find some points on how to practice “correctly” and what to look for as a young musician:

- 1) Be sure your instrument is in good working order - ALWAYS
- 2) Listen to, and practice with, the CD’s or DVD’s (only comes with the “*Enhanced*” version of the lesson book for a small additional cost – ask your rental company)
- 3) Analyze your own playing through “*fragmented*” practice:
  - a. Slow down tough fragments and work them out, note by note if necessary.
  - b. *Count* (beat number system) or *say* (using the “tu” syllable method) the rhythm - be sure your counting and timing is correct.
  - c. Increase speed as comfort and accuracy increases.
  - d. Piece fragments back together into full musical phrases.
- 4) Mark in your music (in pencil) what needs attention through brackets/parenthesis; review playable sections as well.
- 5) Do not simply practice what you CAN play, but also practice aspects of your instrument that you CANNOT play as well as others (high/low areas of your range, tonguing, new notes & fingerings/slide positions, sticking technique, etc.)
- 6) Practice in front of a mirror at times to analyze your posture/embouchure (facial setting of the instrument on the lips or in the mouth)
- 7) As often as possible, perform for someone other than yourself (mom, dad, dog/cat, etc.)

## Home Practice Support

Every good musician must practice his or her instrument regularly. At their first lesson, your child will receive a practice sheet (a copy is included in this packet) where their assignment will be recorded and the student is to write down their practice times each day. At the next week’s lesson I will check the completed practice sheet for adequate practice time. I begin the year with a minimum of 100 minutes between lessons. This can be accomplished if they practice 15-20 minutes a day for 6 of the days between lessons. After the **Winter Informance**, that amount will increase to 150 minutes between lessons. Take a look at your student’s practice habits. Do they have a regular routine? They should be coming to you asking for your initials as verification of the total time they practiced each week. Some students naturally make time for practicing. Others need to have a parent help schedule their time. You know your child best. Encourage them as often as possible - they want and need it.

## **How you as the Parent(s) fit in**

Parental support is an essential element in a child's success with music study. Musical achievement requires effort over a period of time. Here's how you can help your child:

- Provide a quiet place for practice.
- Schedule a consistent, daily time for practice (at least 20 min. at a time).
- Encourage your child to play for family and friends.
- Talk to your child about lessons. Ask them to show you what they are learning!
- Make sure your child's instrument is always in good working order.
- Remain nearby during practice times as often as possible.
- Praise your child's efforts and achievements. As you hear improvement, let him/her know.
- Expose your child to a wide variety of music, including concerts and recitals.
- Set reasonable goals.
- Show interest.

## **What not to do**

Your child's progress will be greatly enhanced if you:

- Don't use practice time as a punishment
- Don't insist your child play for others if he/she doesn't want to
- Don't ridicule or make fun of mistakes or less-than-perfect playing
- Don't apologize to others for your child's weak performance
- Don't expect rapid progress and development in the beginning

## **If your child starts to lose interest**

In the event that your child starts to lose interest in his/her music study, *don't panic & don't give in.*

- Discuss the situation with your child to determine why their interest is declining.
- Talk to your child's Band director to see what might be done to rekindle their enthusiasm.
- Encourage your child to continue with the lessons for an agreed period of time (in consultation with the director).
- Offer increased enthusiasm and support

## **Assessment**

Each day, whether it is during lessons or the large group Band class, students are assessed on their musical preparation, progress, behavior, and responsibility. While each student is performing, it is very clear who is or is not performing at an appropriate level. Generally, each student's lesson is graded based on preparedness, performance, and their home practice record. A quarterly band report card will be sent home with your child's academic report card. Band receives a number grade of 1-4 with comments added just like the Special Area classes. Understand it is *very* common for most students to receive a "2" for the first quarter.

## **Upgrading Your Child's Mouthpiece or Instrument**

If you decide to upgrade or purchase (instead of renting) your child's instrument, please speak with me (or another trusted instrumental teacher) before doing so. We have experience with various brands and models and I would be happy to assist you in making the best possible purchase for your child. Be wary of that "great deal" online! All too often, "what you see isn't what you get." And the old saying really is true, "You get what you pay for." If the price is fairly cheap - then so is the instruments quality and your child's progress will most certainly be affected!

## **Contacting Mr. Banda**

Finally, if you have any questions concerning your child's progress, please know I am available to discuss them with you. I welcome your comments, questions, and input. I travel between the 3 schools throughout the 6-day cycle. If you need to contact me, please leave a message for me at:

- Fishkill Plains Elementary Main office: 227-1770
- John Jay High School Main number: 897-6700 x30066

**Email:** [Ryan.Banda@wcsdny.org](mailto:Ryan.Banda@wcsdny.org)

**Website:** <http://www.wappingersschools.org/Domain/1319>

Please consider emailing me a quick "Hello" simply to help me establish a mailing list as an additional method of communicating time sensitive information or updates/changes as well as information regarding your child's progress. Sometimes those flyers and handouts just don't find their way home to you as they should.

Additionally, I will be updating my webpage once next years' schedules and dates are set. That site can best be accessed from either of my schools' home pages under the "Teacher" section.

I'm looking forward to a great year working with your young musician!

Sincerely,

Mr. Ryan Banda  
Director of 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Bands,  
Fishkill Plains Elementary  
Director of Symphonic Band  
John Jay High School



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