Band Handbook

We are so excited you chose Band at Ooltewah Middle School!! We hope that you and your family had a wonderful summer and are excited to be back at school and here at OMS for the 2019-2020 school year! Students will have the opportunity to experience the incredible joy of learning to play an instrument and becoming a musician while becoming close friends with peers within their class. The band program here at OMS involves many students and offers six concert band classes as well as several extracurricular opportunities. In addition to developing quality musicians and performances, band teaches self-discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Moreover, students participating in band develop friendships that last a lifetime. We enjoy a tradition of strong ensembles in the Ooltewah band program, and we look forward to continuing to raise the standard of excellence.

Ooltewah MS Band Program
The Ooltewah Middle School Band program is a comprehensive instrumental music education for students in grades 6-8. OMS students begin playing wind or percussion instruments in the fall of 6th grade in our “Beginning Band” and are divided into two “like instrument” classes for the entire 6th and 7th grade years (brass class and woodwind/percussion class). Students are then placed into two full concert bands for the 8th grade school year. All band classes at OMS meet daily for 40 minutes as part of the traditional scheduling system. The OMS Bands are proud to be a feeder program to Ooltewah High School band program and all students are encouraged to join the Ooltewah High School band after completing middle school.

6th Grade Beginning Band Classes
These classes consist of students new to instrumental music. Students are divided into like-instrument classes where they receive instruction on the fundamental skills necessary to play their instruments. The classes focus on producing quality sounds and developing basic playing technique. These courses also teach music reading skills, rhythmic concepts, ear training, and some basic music theory. Daily practice at home is essential to develop fundamental playing skills. Private lessons are strongly encouraged for individual attention and to accelerate progress.

7th Grade Band
These classes consist of students with at least one year of experience on a band instrument. In the seventh grade, students develop technique, extended ranges, knowledge of many keys, and sight-reading skills. Students are divided into like-instrument classes where they receive instruction on the fundamental skills necessary to play their instruments. This concept of instruction allows for each child in the band program to receive instruction they personally need.
to achieve the highest level of success on their instruments. Seventh-grade bands also focus on ensemble playing, ensemble dynamics, and performance. These students will have the opportunity to perform at the Solo/Ensemble Festival, and to audition for district band clinic.

8th Grade Band
The 8th-Grade Bands are the most advanced bands at OMS and perform more demanding band literature. Advanced technique, mature tone quality, extended range, advanced rhythmic and metric reading, expressive playing, and individual musicianship are emphasized in these classes. Development of ensemble playing skills is a daily focus in rehearsal, while individual responsibility for parts shifts to the student. Eighth-grade bands also focus on ensemble playing, ensemble dynamics, and performance. These students will have the opportunity to perform at the ETSBOA Performance Evaluation, to perform at Solo/Ensemble Festival, and to audition for the district band clinic. Students are expected to practice often (almost daily) and are expected to be prepared with their parts prior to assessments and rehearsals.

Band Classroom Rules

1. Be Respectful - When a director steps on the podium, all talking stops. No talking is allowed without a raised hand. Please respect teachers, instructors, band directors, fellow students, and the property of others. Handle only the instrument that belongs to you. Blurtling out, socializing, and back-talk are unacceptable.

2. Be On Time - Be in the band room before the bell rings. Be in your seat with your instrument ready to play 2 minutes after the bell rings.

3. Be Prepared - Practice the assigned music at home; have your instrument and all materials every day.

4. No Food - There will be no food, drinks, gum, or candy in the band room. The ONLY exceptions are OMS approved water bottles and times when the directors approve candy/snacks.

5. Clean-up - Your instrument case must be left in your locker during and after class. Binders are to be stored only in the folio cabinets. Items left out will result in loss of participation points. Be sure to pick up all trash and personal belongings and lower your music stand before you leave your seat.

Discipline and Behavior Plan
Violation of classroom rules will result in the following consequences.

1st Offense - Verbal Warning
2nd Offense - Student is relocated in the classroom and given an alternate paper assignment following with an email or phone call to home.
3rd Offense - Student is removed from the classroom and will receive office referral.

*Students who disrupt a rehearsal may be removed from the room for that class period and lose participation points. Also, the severity of a student’s action may result in immediate consequences not following the above steps.
Grading
Students’ grades will be divided as follows:

1. **Daily Participation (50% of total grade)** - Students are to be prepared with materials, on time, attentive, and responsive in class. Materials include instrument or sticks and mallets, music and technique book, pencil, and tuner. Each student will receive 20 points for each day.

2. **Practice Recordings (30% of total grade)** - Practice recordings are used as a record of a student’s practicing habits. Practice recordings are due by 2:15 every Friday. All students must submit a minimum of one video per practice category to receive full credit. The two practice categories are Scale Practice and Concert Music Assignments. Those students who do not have access to personal or school issued technology at home will be required to turn in paper practice log to Mr. Johnson by Friday at scheduled class time in place of practice recordings. Those students playing school instruments too large to take home on the bus must make up practice recordings either before school or play alone in class.

3. **Playing Tests, Written Tests, & “Playoffs” (20% of total grade)** - Individual playing evaluation of method book materials, scales, or band music in class. These exams will be both in class and through recordings. Play-offs consist of lines out of the band books. Each nine weeks there will be a set number of play-offs for students. Play-offs can also be from the concert music and can be assessed during class or by recording.

**NOTE:** Please remember that practicing is much more effective if you practice several times per week in shorter amounts of time rather than one or two long sessions. The ideal practice schedule is 30 minutes a day for 4-5 days a week rather than one day per week for 150 minutes.

*Band classes do not count towards practice time. Practice recordings and logs will not be accepted after Friday, except in cases of illness or other excused absences.

Practicing
Practice is a necessary element for success on any musical instrument. While it is true that the sounds will certainly be amusing at first, the student must learn to “hang in there” and try to address, solve, and master specific problems during each practice session. Repetition will be necessary to train the fingers, learn the valve combinations, sticking rudiments, improve music reading, etc. **CONSISTENT DAILY PRACTICE** is the key to mastery and improvement.

Moreover, the way in which a student practices usually determines how successful he/she will be on that instrument. Those practice habits are formed early. As parents, please take an active role in your child’s music study. Your support, encouragement, and structure at home will be important in helping your child find success. Even parents with no musical background can be of great help to a child studying music by monitoring practice sessions.

Here is a list of important considerations for home practice:

- Encourage practice as a priority, not something to do after all else is done.
- Schedule a consistent, daily time to practice.
• Be sure to practice using a music stand rather than placing music on a bed or desk. This allows for proper posture and playing position. Good habits only!!! -Provide a quiet place for practice. Avoid distractions like the TV, Stereo, etc.
• Remain nearby whenever possible and monitor the routine (see below). -Praise your child’s efforts!

Beginner Band students will NOT have to practice hour after hour in order to make progress. It is BEST if practice sessions are short at first, with a specific goal in mind. To that end, we will try to make the individual assignments as specific as possible. Students should begin practicing about ten minutes a day five to six days a week and gradually increase practice time until a daily routine of thirty minutes is established. The important factor, though, is that they practice FOUR to FIVE DAYS a week – on a consistent, daily basis.

**Sample Practice Routine**

• Warm-up (5 minutes): mouthpiece playing, long tones
• Technique (15 minutes): scales or technique assignments from class
• Band Music (15 minutes): selections programmed for the concert - focusing on the difficult sections that need improvement and/or were marked in class to be worked on.
• Fun (10 minutes): any other music the student enjoys playing in addition to what has been isolated and worked on from band class

"THE MORE YOU PRACTICE – THE BETTER YOU GET – THE BETTER YOU GET – THE MORE YOU ENJOY IT!"

**Private Lessons**

With so band students and only one full-time music teacher, there is not always the opportunity to give students the benefit of individual instruction in school as often as we would like. Fortunately, there are many professional musicians in our area who offer private lessons on a weekly basis for 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the teacher. Fees also vary from teacher to teacher. Students who take private lessons have the benefit of individual attention, progress at a faster rate, and become very motivated to practice and be successful. We have found that most students who are successful in auditioning for honor groups such as District Honor Band and All-State Band are students who see a private teacher each week. We encourage all of our students to take private lessons from a professional musician. See the directors for more information!

**Playing Exams, “Chair Tests”, and Placements**

Playing exams, “Playoffs”, and auditions for chair placement within a section often bring a great deal of emotion and stress to the life of a student. Please remember that because each and every student is important to the success of the band, it is imperative that students be heard individually and receive feedback on their progress. Auditions and playing tests judge a student's performance at one specific time under one specific set of circumstances. Therefore, it is essential that “Playoffs”, chair placements, and playing exams be viewed only as a part of the
learning process and not as an end in itself. Performance tests may be announced or unannounced.

**Equipment & Care of the Band Room**

Percussion equipment is for the use of our percussionists only. Just as nobody but yourself is to play on your instrument, the same is true for the percussion instruments. Due to limited space, most of this equipment is left in the rehearsal area at all times and it can be a temptation to touch it. Treat percussion equipment as if it were someone else’s property. In a matter of speaking it does belong to somebody else – the school. **Do not tamper with or play someone else’s instrument at any time.** This rule must be followed and will be strictly enforced. Students may not touch another student’s private or school loaned property at anytime, without permission, and will be written up if observed doing so. Instruments and the materials are valuable and the expectation is that students must respect others’ belongings. The use of the band room is a privilege. Only students who are actively practicing or have sectionals & ensemble rehearsals will be permitted in the band room. Please see your director if you have special circumstances in this regard. Any student that is not a band member will not be permitted to enter the band room. Please make your friends aware of this important policy. Make arrangements to meet your friends someplace else after you pick up or return your instrument and music to the band room. (Note: The band room and practice rooms are for practice only – they are not a space to “hang out.” Space is limited and must be utilized appropriately. It is the responsibility of each band member to help keep the band areas neat and orderly. The chairs and stands are to be kept in place. There is to be NO food, drinks, candy, gum or horseplay in the band room. This policy will be strictly enforced in accordance with school policy. The only exception regarding food & drink consumption is by permission of the band director.

**School Owned Instruments**

Ooltewah MS has a large and great inventory of school-owned equipment. A student using school-owned equipment must fill out an instrument rental contract with parent signature before an instrument can be issued. The board of education, as well as the music department, have invested thousands of dollars for school owned instruments. Students performing on a school-owned instrument will receive an instrument in proper working condition. Students are expected to treat and maintain the instrument with care throughout the year. Should the instrument need to be repaired at any point during the school year, it is the responsibility of the student to take the instrument to the repair shop for proper maintenance in a timely fashion. At the end of the school year, any remaining damage will be assessed, and the student will be charged.

*Students who do not take care of school owned instruments will lose the privilege of using one!*

**Concert Uniforms**

We take pride in having a neat, professional appearance each time we perform. Please check to see that your child has the following items of clothing to wear for our concerts and events/audition (7th/8th grade)
Sixth Grade Bands-
Boys: Dress pants (Khaki is suggested), dark socks, dark dress shoes, and “band issued T-shirt
Girls: Same as above plus long dresses/skirts and blouses.

7th & 8th Grade Bands –
Boys: Black pants, long, black socks, black shoes, and white- long sleeved dress shirt.
Girls: Black long pants / ankle length skirt and black, 3/4 length sleeve top.
(short skirts, shorts, cargos, capri-style pants, and tennis shoes are not appropriate)

OVERVIEW
Beginner Band is an experiment. At first there is the BIG QUESTION – “Will I ever learn how to
play my instrument?” Understand that it will take time for that question to be answered.
However, meaningful progress will take shape if:

1) there is a three-way partnership comprised of the teacher, child, and parents
2) parents are SUPPORTIVE & INVOLVED in their child’s musical life and
3) the parents help guide their child’s home practice habits. The student will need to understand
that EVERYTHING will be new at first – like learning to walk, ride a bike, tie one’s shoes, etc…it
cannot be learned instantly. Patience and persistence will be required by everyone involved. If
these conditions are present, the answer will be a resounding “YES!”

COMMITMENT
Success is not measured by what we start, but rather by what we complete. In music, every
musician is expected to play an entire composition from beginning to end. Even though there
may be errors in the performance, you would not see an individual simply stop and put his or her
instrument away due to errors. The important qualities of tenacity and persistence establish
habits for a positive and productive way of living, no matter the area or subject. Success breeds
success in every avenue of life. Therefore, a successful and well-trained musician will tackle life
with the knowledge of “what it takes to get there,” and the wisdom of “what it brings to life.”

ATTITUDE
The key to success and achievement in any quality organization is the ATTITUDE of its
individual members and leadership. Band is not a requirement, but an elective. It is therefore
assumed that every member of the band program wants to be in the band class. The willingness
to cooperate with the directors, clinicians, and other students involved in the program toward
group and individual self-improvement goals are essential. There will be times when students
will be asked to place the needs of the group above personal wants and desires. At these times,
an individual’s dedication and willingness to make sacrifices are an important part of his or her
commitment to the band program.

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Member’s Responsibility
Every member involved in the band program assumes certain responsibilities simply by being a
student in band class. Unlike your other classes, everything you do affects every other person in
the ensemble as well as how the public perceives the group. It is expected that all of the
students enrolled in a band class attend all concerts. When an individual misses a concert or festival performance, it has the potential to have an extremely devastating effect on a band’s performance due to that missing part and the band moral. It is similar to a quarterback missing a football game or a championship game. Excused absences are defined as personal illness or a death in the family. A note from a parent/guardian is required for any absences. Every student should continue to strive toward personal improvement on his or her chosen instrument through daily practice.

**Parent’s Responsibility**

Parents provide both tremendous emotional and financial support to students in a musical ensemble. It is that essential and positive support from parents that helps stoke the fire of a child’s interest and passion in any activity. We recognize that and plead for it. Encourage and monitor your student’s progress on his or her instrument. Parents are also responsible for his or her child’s attendance at all band concert performances. If a student has missed a concert due to illness, a note must be written from the parent/guardian and sent to us upon the student’s return to school. Anytime that an instrument is taken to the repair shop, please send a note with your child indicating how long he or she will be without an instrument. Brass players should still bring their mouthpieces to school and buzz all their music to keep up their endurance while their instrument is in the repair shop and all students should attempt to receive a loaner from the music store while the instrument is in repair.

**Director’s Responsibility**

It is the director’s responsibility to provide a safe, fun, and encouraging environment for students to learn as well as create an engaging music education curriculum. We will provide high quality musical instruction along with care for every individual student each and every day. We will maintain a quality learning environment despite the high numbers in class and cultivate our student’s interest and passion for music. The director at OMS monitors each student’s progress musically, their personal & social development and growth, and their classroom behavior. We support the OMS learning and behavior plans, believe in steady communication, and are always proactive in our communication with parents. As students improve and develop their musical skills, we provide students with more opportunities to learn and perform in various musical settings.

Music is essential, and we consider it a privilege to share this wonderful experience with our beginning band students. As your director, it is my desire to provide a quality instrumental music experience for every student. Additionally, it is my goal that our young musicians develop facility on their instruments, learn more about the “language” of music, and experience the thrill of performance.

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Handbook Affirmation and Signature Page

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have fully read and agree with the entirety of the 2019-2020 Ooltewah Middle School band handbook and have discussed any handbook concerns with the band director before signing.

Parent Name (Please print)

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Parent Signature

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Student Name (Please print)

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Student Signature

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Today's Date

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