

Beginning Band Information for Parents and Students

I am thrilled to be making music with your kids..... its going to be an exciting adventure! We have a great time learning our instruments and playing music together in this class. Students also gain important skills such as self discipline, self confidence, cooperative learning and teamwork, how to read music, music history and theory. Many studies have shown that learning to play an instrument helps your brain develop in ways nothing else can and music performance improves student's skills in math and language arts as well. Its an awesome place to meet great people and develop lasting friendships. We have two night concerts this year and hopefully some fun field trips. Students will be able to read music and play many tunes on their instruments by Christmas! Its an amazing process and I love teaching this class. We strongly recommend students stick with it for at least a year, but if they decide they would rather do something else, they may transfer to a different class after the first nine weeks.

This is the only time Kennedy students can try band..... so sign up now!

Instruments: Kennedy has many of the larger instruments available to rent through the school for \$50.00 for the year. There are also scholarships for those who need them. (Please see Ms. Sloan for scholarships.) An excellent place to rent instruments is Pacific Winds. We will send home information flyers. The first few days of band we demonstrate all of the instrument choices: flute, clarinet, alto sax, tenor sax, trumpet, trombone, baritone, tuba, bells/percussion. (All percussionists must start on bells.) Students will get to try each instrument and make a their choices if they haven't already decided. We like to get started playing as soon as possible, so renting the instruments and buying the books and supplies early is recommended. (Also, the best instruments go first.) Some of the more difficult instruments like oboe, bassoon and french horn are also an option; please talk to me about the challenges of these instruments.

Beware of inexpensive instruments; sadly these instruments are usually not bargains. In many cases, the instruments are of poor quality and the parts cannot be replaced. Local music stores will often not be able to repair them. Students with poor quality instruments tend to do poorly in band and get frustrated because they don't sound as good as the other students which makes them want to drop out. The bitterness caused by poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price. Pacific Winds offers free evaluations on any new or used instruments. I recommend an evaluation prior to any purchase. Please feel free to ask me about instruments you may wish to purchase.

Books: We will be using **Standard of Excellence Book One** which costs \$9.95 for most instruments and \$10.95 for horn and bells/percussion. Scholarships are available for books as well. (See Ms. Sloan.)

1. **Instrument care:** review the first few pages of the band book Standard of Excellence with your students and remind them to clean and care for their instruments daily. Instruments are fragile and extremely expensive to repair. Students will be responsible to pay for any repairs needed.

2. Home Practice (25%of the band grade)

- a) Its best to establish a practice time and place that is consistent each day.
- b) Always make sure students practice with their CD's. (CD's come with their Standard of Excellence Book .) The CD's show good tone, rhythm, note length and pitch, and are fun to play with. Students should listen, model and match pitch.

- c) Remind students to stay focused and use their time wisely; play correct notes and rhythms and always use good tone and good posture (sit up straight, feet on floor, back away from chair etc.)
- d) Parent signed practice cards will be required each Mon. 10 minutes a day is an 'A'. Late cards will receive lower grades.
- d) Always encourage your kids: learning a new instrument is hard!

3. Private lessons are the best way to ensure success and keep your kids motivated. They are not required but highly recommended. (There are a few instruments like oboe, bassoon and french horn that take extra teaching so if your child chooses one of these instruments, they really need to take private lessons or they will likely be frustrated. I teach bassoon and am happy to do it for no charge before or after school.) Call Pacific Winds 343-5660 or myself for names and numbers of private teachers.

4. Students will be graded on behavior and participation(BP Points) (50%), practice cards (25%) and quizzes, playing tests and returning parent signed info sheets(25%). BP points are given for effort, respect, good attitudes, following rules, being prepared and listening. Practice cards need to be signed by a parent and are due at the beginning of each week. The best way to ensure success is daily practice. Grade sheets will come out every two or three weeks. Students receive points for bringing the grade sheets back with parent signatures.

4. Pacific Winds has fun solo books that you may want to purchase. Books like "Disney Favorites" or "Patriotic Songs" can be excellent motivators once kids master the basics.

5. The Greek philosopher Plato once said that "music is a more potent instrument than any other for education." Music, it has been shown, trains the brain for higher forms of thinking. It has been scientifically proven that students involved in music in school have higher grade point averages, score an average of 20- 40 points higher on SAT tests (verbal and math), and are generally higher academic achievers than those students who don't participate in music classes. So encourage your students to stay in band: the benefits are enormous.

6. Extra Help and After School Practice: I am available to help students individually after school or students can just hang out in the band room and play music with their friends or practice on their own. This practice time does count on practice cards as long as the time is used well.

7. Concerts: Our two night concerts for the year are scheduled. These are like the final exam for band class and participation is required. If there is a conflict, I need to know one month in advance. Band is like a team sport and every player is essential to our success. Students should be from 15 to 30 minutes early to warm up and tune and should dress up. Concerts start on time and last around an hour.

Dec. 5 All Bands in the gym at 7:00 (students come 15 min. early)

May 24th: Beginning and Intermediate Bands 7:00

Thanks for supporting your kids musically. Always feel free to e-mail: decker@4j.lane.edu or call me with questions or concerns. I like to communicate as much as possible via e-mail so if you have an address, please write it below. I like to know how you and your students are feeling about band.

Parent involvement is very welcome and often makes a big difference in a student's success. Please call or mail me any Email you want more information about your student's participation in band. I appreciate and value your interest and will enjoy working with you to make this a successful year.

Charlene Decker

Please sign the form below and return this portion with your student as soon as possible. This is very important and worth a lot of points for your student. Thanks!

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I have read the Band Information Letter and marked the concert dates on the calendar. I

Student Name _____

Student Signature _____

Parent or Guardians Signature _____

Phone number _____

e-mail address _____

Questions, concerns, comments: _____
