



St. Johns Middle School
St. Johns Public Schools

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5th Grade Students and Parents:

This letter is to inform you that 5th grade students have the exciting opportunity to begin playing an instrument next year. Students will be able to choose from the band and orchestra instruments.

As students are deciding what instrument they might want to play, they are asked to make decisions about an instrument based on the sounds they like. Some students are drawn to the band sound, while others like the orchestra sound. **We encourage you to look over the videos on www.bepartofthemusic.org. Select the “Interested in Band” and/or “Interested in Orchestra” options.**

On Friday, April 28, 5th graders will travel to the MS to learn more about 6th grade. Mr. Scholes (MS Band teacher) and Mrs. Parker (MS/HS Orchestra teacher) and some of their students will show the students the band and orchestra instruments. The students will hear band and orchestra music played by students.

There will be an informational meeting on Tuesday, May 2 at 7:00pm in the Middle School Auditoria. All 5th grade parents and students are invited to attend. There will be an introduction to the instruments that students can choose to play in 6th grade. There will also be information about how to set up a rental with Marshall Music. This is a great way for students to have a quality instrument without having to pay for it all at once.

BEWARE OF CHEAP INSTRUMENTS!!!!

In all seriousness, there are a LOT of cheap instruments for sale in the world, especially online. We do not recommend buying instruments from the internet. The prices can be low, but often the instruments are very poor quality and unplayable. In the case of musical instruments, cheaper is usually not better.

We recommend checking with your music teachers before making a purchase.

We want the students and parents to be informed when they make their decision because it is our hope that the student will be committed to the instrument and continue playing beyond 6th grade. The longer one works at it, the better they become and the more they will enjoy it. We encourage students to make a decision and stay with it for the entire year.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We would like to help you in this exciting time in your student's life. If you cannot attend the April 28th meeting, you can contact us using the info below.

Thank you,

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6th & 7th Gr. Band
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Jenn Parker
6th-12th Gr. Orchestra
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(989) 227-4275

Here is a collection of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Answers to help you and your child make the right choices regarding music programming at St. Johns Middle School.

6th Grade Band and Orchestra FAQs

1. What instruments can students play in 6th grade band and orchestra?

In 6th grade band, we start the flute, oboe, clarinet, alto and tenor saxophone, trumpet, french horn, trombone, euphonium and percussion (bells/practice pad).

In 6th grade orchestra, we start violin, viola, cello and bass.

2. We found a new instrument for \$100 on eBay. Should we buy it?

BEWARE!! There are a ton of cheap band and orchestra “instruments” out there. Most are cheaply made “instrument-shaped objects” that wouldn’t even make a good lamp. Seriously, most instrument repair shops won’t fix these when they break, and trust us, they will break. If you are looking for something inexpensive, look for used instruments for sale. Mrs. Parker or Mr. Scholes can help you with brands to look for that would be quality instruments. It would be a good idea to check with Mrs. Parker or Mr. Scholes BEFORE you purchase an instrument. Learning an instrument is difficult on a good instrument; it is impossible on a cheaply made, instrument-shaped object.

Another issue with buying an orchestra instrument is that you don’t want to get the wrong size. Orchestra instruments come in different sizes to make it easier for students to reach with their fingers. If you buy an instrument that is the wrong size, it can be very frustrating for the student.

Renting a band or orchestra instrument is a good option. For the orchestra instruments, when you rent, the student can switch instrument sizes whenever they need to, and there will be no additional charge. You will get information on renting instruments from Marshall Music at the parent night.

3. If my student does not do band/orchestra in 6th grade, can they join in 7th grade?

The short answer is yes, they can join in 7th grade. However, they will be a year behind everyone else and will be playing catch-up. It’s not impossible, but it does take more work on the student’s part to make up the difference.

4. When do students need to have their instruments?

Students will not need their instruments on the first day of school, there is already enough going on. Their teacher will let them know when to bring it the first time.

5. Is there a prerequisite to playing percussion?

No, there is not a prerequisite to playing percussion. Students who have played piano/taken piano lessons will find playing the mallet instruments (bells, xylophone, marimba, etc) similar to playing on the piano. Many people think percussion is just drums but it is not. 6th graders begin the year playing bells to develop skills on mallet instruments, playing melodies like the other instruments. Later we start to add practice pads and other instruments.

6. Are the concerts part of their grade?

Students are excited to show parents what they have been working on, and therefore are usually excited to perform at a concert. Band and orchestra are performance classes, and the concert is the culmination of all the work done in class. Yes, concerts are generally required. However, unique circumstances arise, and will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

7. What are the parent participation expectations?

Parent participation is minimal at the middle level, and really just limited to fundraising. The MS band sponsors 4-5 dances (with a DJ) during the year, and we ask parents to volunteer as chaperones. For orchestra, there is a fundraiser or two that may require some parent help.

8. Are there other resources where we can find information on the band and orchestra instruments?

More information about the individual instruments in band and orchestra can be found at bepartofthemusic.org This website is not St. Johns specific, but shows what the various instruments in band and orchestra sound and look like. It is another resource to help families make a decision.

9. I still have questions about band or orchestra. Who do I contact?

- Band: Mike Scholes scholesm@sjredwings.org
- Orchestra: Jenn Parker parkerj@sjredwings.org