



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. There will be an opportunity, as soon as possible, that you will get information on renting instruments from Marshall Music (they are currently closed).

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