

# Beginning Band at Fowler Middle School

Brandon VanDyke, Director

503-431-5074

[bvandyke@ttsd.k12.or.us](mailto:bvandyke@ttsd.k12.or.us)

## WHY SHOULD MY STUDENT BE IN MUSIC?

Participation in music is a great way to encourage new development and exploration. Murry Sidlin, former conductor of the Oregon Symphony, has been quoted as saying "Kids who immerse themselves in the joys of music start to think abstractly. They learn about working together toward a common goal. They set higher goals for themselves and take pride in achievement. For some who might otherwise become lost in the dangerous wilderness of childhood, music offers hope and even a reason for being alive." Being in a musical ensemble requires hard work, but it is also a lot of fun!

## OUR PHILOSOPHY:

Beginning Band classes are designed to teach basic performance techniques and develop fundamental playing skills that enable students to continue with more advanced bands in later years and, hopefully, will inspire a life-long appreciation of and participation in music.

- In many ways, Beginning Band is the first year of a 7-year instrumental music program that progresses through high school.
- I work very hard to make music an enjoyable, meaningful, and rewarding experience for the students, but I also hold the ensembles to high standards of performance.
- Class meets during the school day, every day, for the entire year. We are very fortunate to have this schedule here at Fowler Middle School!
- In addition to class time, students are expected to practice about 25 minutes a day for 5 days a week. 6<sup>th</sup> graders also have two or three evening performances during the school year.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

- **What instruments can be played in band?**
  - Woodwind Class starts out with either the flute or the clarinet
  - Brass Class starts out with either the trumpet or the trombone
  - After our first concert, students who demonstrate the interest and musical independence required will have the opportunity to change to other instruments, including oboe, bassoon, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, horn, euphonium, tuba, or percussion. All of these instruments will eventually be a vital part of a well-balanced concert band.
  - *Between 1/4 and 1/3 of the band will change instruments during the course of the year!* This is important to keep in mind when completing a rental agreement with a store. Will they allow instrument switches, and do they have a wide variety of instruments available, such as oboe, bassoon, horn, etc?
- **What is needed to participate in band?**
  - Instrument
  - Various instrument supplies
  - Method book
  - Concert clothes
  - A SmartMusic Account
    - The account is free, but requires an e-mail address for the parents and the student.
- **Where do I get an instrument? Buy, rent, or use one owned by family member?**
  - Buy: It is generally **not** advisable to buy an instrument before the first year of band.
    - The student may switch to a different instrument
    - The student may not stay in band...
    - **If you do decide to buy an instrument, I strongly recommend purchasing only from a music store. Band instruments sold by non-music stores (such as Amazon or Walmart) are usually low quality instruments that do not play well and cannot be repaired if damaged.**
    - If you have a question about a specific instrument or brand of instrument, please check with me. If I have not heard of the brand in question, you should not purchase it.
  - Used Instruments, whether from a family member or from a private reseller, will need to be checked by an instrument repair shop or a private instructor. The instrument may be a bargain, but...
    - Students with broken instruments often have difficulty getting the sound they want, which results in frustration, and eventually quitting band.

- Old instruments that have not been played in a while often need cleaning at the least, and adjustments to key mechanisms, etc. might be needed.
- Rentals:
  - Music stores offer different plans for renting instruments. Here are some things to think about when renting an instrument:
    - What is the cost?
    - Is the rent paid monthly or for the whole school year?
    - Does the store apply the cost of the rent towards the purchase of an instrument?
    - Does the cost of rental include repair costs? If they have an option to do this, I highly recommend it!
    - Does the music store allow instrument switches? If so, what instruments are available?
    - Does the music store have a repair shop? If your instrument needs repair, it will be a lot faster if the store has its own repair shop.
    - What is the quality of the instrument? The better the instrument, the more success the student is likely to have in playing it!
  - In any case, reserve an instrument sooner rather than later. Stores often give better instruments to the first people to put their names down (though all of the instruments will work!!)
  - List of stores at the top of my list:
    - Tigard Music: 503-620-2844 (and online at [www.tigardmusic.com](http://www.tigardmusic.com))
    - Beacock Music: 1-800-729-7134 (and online at [www.beacockmusic.com](http://www.beacockmusic.com))
    - Wally's Music: 503-656-5323
- Another option:
  - Fowler has a limited supply of instruments for students to use. We ask that families pay a \$100 instrument use fee, which is slightly less than the typical rental amount. However, in the past, we've been able to partially waive this fee depending on the financial need of the families involved. **If the cost of an instrument is a barrier, please speak with me about it and I will do everything I can to make it possible for your child to play an instrument!**
  - Any families interested in renting an instrument from Fowler should contact Mr. VanDyke via e-mail at [bvandyke@ttsd.k12.or.us](mailto:bvandyke@ttsd.k12.or.us)
- Regardless of what option you choose, it is vital that your student has an instrument to play no later than the second full week of school. Students who do not have an instrument by that time may be dropped from the class. Please contact Mr. VanDyke if you are having difficulties acquiring an instrument, so he can assist you!
- **How is band graded?**
  - My current grading system is as follows:
    - Daily Rehearsal Participation & Citizenship (25% of the grade)
    - Playing Tests & Written Tests (25% of the grade)
    - Performances! (30% of the grade)
    - Practice Reports (20% of the grade)

#### PREPARATION FOR SUCCESS:

- To Play or not To Play...
  - It is generally best to NOT play the instrument at all until taught how to do so in band class. Bad habits are easy to form without proper instruction, and are very difficult to get rid of.
  - In fact, it might be best to not even open the case! Every year, I have a very excited band student come to the first day of band with a broken instrument because they didn't quite know how to put it together!
- Private lessons?
  - Some students cannot wait to get the instrument out before band starts next fall. If it is a possibility, I encourage families to get a head start on the instrument with private lessons during the summer. I have a list of teachers I recommend for lessons who will teach proper assembly and good playing technique.

#### SOME FINAL THOUGHTS:

- Sports and band are not mutually exclusive activities!
  - Many band students at both Fowler Middle School and Tigard High School also play sports. Schedule conflicts between band and sports are very rare, and can usually be worked out in advance.
- Any parent can help with volunteering, and the band department always needs volunteer help!
- If you have any further questions, please contact Mr. VanDyke by phone at 503-431-5074 or via e-mail at [bvandyke@ttsd.k12.or.us](mailto:bvandyke@ttsd.k12.or.us)