



West Des Moines
Community
School
Elementary Band

Parent Guidebook



West Des Moines Elementary

Notes

Welcome to the WDM Elementary Band Program

You are about to become a “Band Parent” now, and from your student’s first tentative notes through the final High School Band concert, your support is the most important aspect of his/her Band experience. Participation in Band is one of the best educational experiences for becoming a productive member of society. The teamwork involved in the process of making music ensures that no child is left behind. Participation in band involves young people with others. Playing together creates a feeling of camaraderie that often extends beyond the band room. Knowing that others are depending on you as you depend on them creates a feeling of belonging—of being an essential part of something bigger than oneself.

- Music encourages *creativity* as an inventive thinking style. The study of music supports wonderment, imagination, appreciation and sensitivity.
- Music is *communication*. It is a language unto itself and allows the student an understanding of something that cannot be found in any other part of life.
- Music allows *critical assessment* by teaching the student to access factual as well as emotional sides of the mind in the same process.
- Music teaches tenacity and persistence. The sense of *commitment* the student learns from this will follow him his entire life. Self esteem is built here!

Studies conducted by university researchers, by school boards and college entrance boards indicate that participation in music enhances mental processing, actually enlarging the cortex area of the brain. Students studying music had statistically higher grade point averages than those who did not and scored higher on SAT and ACT college entrance exams. The longer a student remained in music, the higher the academic benefit.



Educational Non-Discrimination Statement

The West Des Moines Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability in educational programs and activities.

Separating the notes or.....ta taTonguing!!

- **Flute** - Say tu, placing tongue behind top teeth and release air.
 - **Oboe**
 - **Clarinet**
 - **Saxophone**
- } Touch tip of tongue to tip of reed and
release air.
- **Brass** - Say tu, placing tongue behind top teeth and release air.



General Tips for All Players

- Posture! Posture! Posture!
- Make sure to sign practice charts for each weekly lesson.
- Clap and count the rhythms.
- Three steps to successful practicing: 1) Count the rhythm, 2) Say note names with fingerings/positions while tapping foot to maintain the rhythm, 3) Play the exercise.
- Try using CD accompaniments. They might be too fast at first, but will give you the idea of how the piece is played and how you should sound.
- Warm air = slow air; cold air = fast air
- Remember, you have an important role in which the greatest accomplishment is the ensemble. What better preparation for your role in life?



Band Parent Guidebook

Motivation

You may be asking yourself, "How do I keep my student motivated?"



By continuing to support and encourage, you can help your child stay excited every day as he was the very first day. Expect your child to succeed. Playing an instrument is a process and requires day to day practice to see results. Let your child know that music, like many subjects, takes time. Once the newness wears off and the excitement of daily practice becomes more of a chore, it takes creativity and perseverance to overcome the possible excuses; "I'll do it later, I promise"; or "it's getting too hard"; or "I don't need that much practice".

- Ask to hear old favorites as well as new, challenging works.
- Have your child perform a few tunes at a "concert" for the family.
- Have your child practice with someone else. There are duets included as part of the assignments that are easy and fun. The book works with any combination of instruments, as long as they use their own book.
- Ask your child's band director for suggestions for alternate, fun, sheet music to play for a change of pace.
- The start of full band rehearsal is a great motivator. Band is a social occurrence and the thrill of hearing themselves all together can give a huge boost.
- Go to concerts, purchase musical tapes or CD's or just listen to the radio. Ask your child if he/she can pick out his instrument sound from the group you are listening to.
- Attend your child's performances. There is no better way to show that you value music-making and that you're proud of your child's achievements.



Fifth Grade Band

THE LESSONS

Fifth grade recruiting takes place the first two weeks of the school year in the West Des Moines Community School District. A demonstration is given followed by a brief investigative hands-on try out. All interested students are then invited to try out one instrument of their choice. They will try out the woodwind and brass mouthpieces to determine their best physical adaptation. The results of the above "try-out," as well as the student's personal interest and the need for balanced instrumentation, are used to guide the student toward appropriate instrument choices.

Instruments may be purchased or rented through a music store.

Interested students may learn to play the flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and percussion kit. However, the school has purchased the more expensive band instruments (i.e., oboe, tenor saxophone, French horn, baritone horn, and tuba). These instruments, after fall testing, are available to rent through the school. Rental arrangements, along with a contractual agreement, can be made with the school band instructors.

Band instruction is offered to all students free of charge beginning in the 5th grade. Those students who choose to participate in the band are grouped by like instruments and one 30 minute small group lesson is given to each student once per week at no cost. The lesson groups range from two to eight students on like instruments and/or unlike instruments with similar abilities. Some individual lessons are given to advanced students based on availability of time. Group lessons are 30 minutes and individual lessons are 20 minutes.

The students are asked to purchase a lesson book ([ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS 2000](#) - Book 1) for their lesson and home practice. Practicing at home is essential for their progress.

THE SCHEDULE

Once the lesson schedule has been determined, please do not hesitate to contact your band instructor if you have scheduling concerns.

THE REHEARSAL

The beginning band members are joined together for their large group rehearsal once a week. Please refer to your calendar for dates of performances.

THE CONCERTS

The fifth grade bands will perform concerts in the spring. Please refer to your school calendar for these dates. This is so parents, friends, and other relatives have the opportunity to hear their music and observe their progress.



Music should be fun and will continue to get better and better.



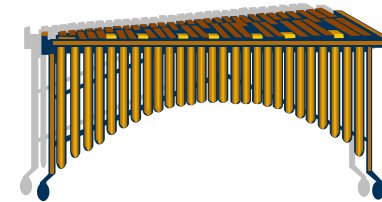
Brass

- To form lips correctly, say the word "tip", but don't explode the "p" sound at the end of the word. Hold this position with your lips and then buzz.
- Brass players need fast air for good tone in the beginning and it also helps your lips to buzz.
- Instead of using the term "tighter lips" for high notes, think "hard lips" for high notes and "soft lips" for low notes.



Percussion

- Make a "piece of pie" shape on their drum to help with correct stick position.
- ALL percussion instruments are equally important.



Tips for Beginning Instrumentalists And Parents

Flute

- For the idea of a correct embouchure, pretend to cool off a bowl of soup by blowing on your hand.
- Young flutists should pretend that they have a “drawstring” in their lips ... pull the cord for high notes and release it for low notes



Oboe

- Keep reeds in a well ventilated case—not the tubes that they come in.
- To get the correct amount of reed in your mouth, place the reed in the middle of your bottom lip and then roll in. This will help you have the same placement and not too much reed in your mouth.



Clarinet/Saxophone

- Many players bunch the lower lip, putting either too much in the mouth, not enough in the mouth, or not pulling corners back enough to adequately stretch the lip. To help get the correct embouchure, pretend as if you are putting chap stick on your lower lip.
- For achieving a flat chin on the clarinet, think of drinking through a straw.
- It is okay to squeak once in a while. If you never squeak, you may not be taking enough mouthpiece or using enough air to make a good tone.



Practice Makes Permanent



Where to Practice

Establish a place that is free from distraction. Invest in a music stand for ease in practice. Playing an instrument is about learning to listen accurately to what you are doing. Practice at the same time and in the same place every day, if possible. (i.e., “Oops, it’s time to practice. THEN you can watch your show.”)

When to Practice

Everyday is the ideal. A regular pattern is far superior to sporadic, impulsive occurrences. However, something is better than nothing. A time slot that fits the family schedule should be arranged.

How to Practice

Ask your child to tell you about the music they are playing. Verbalizing this will help to organize and clarify what has been done at school. Ask your child to play for you. There is nothing like the praise from a beloved parent. Be patient with them and yourself.

What to Practice

Have your child set goals for each week or each practice session, concentrating on tone quality, new rhythms, articulations (tonguing), etc. Be sure that your child is practicing by first warming up, then the assignment for the week, and end with something fun.

Remember, there is no substitute for individual practice. Enjoy what you hear.



Sixth Grade Band

THE LESSONS

Band lessons are available to all fifth and sixth grade students. During the first two weeks of the first trimester, all interested and new to the district sixth grade students try out the woodwind and brass mouthpieces to determine their best physical adaptation. The results of the above "try-out," as well as the student's personal interest and the need for balanced instrumentation, are used to guide the student toward the appropriate instrument choice.

Thirty-minute lessons are given once a week. The lesson groups range from two to eight students on like instruments and/or unlike instruments with similar abilities. Some individual lessons are given to advanced students based on availability of time. Group lessons are 30 minutes and individual lessons are 20 minutes. Students progress at their own pace in the ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS 2000 lesson book. Practicing is essential to make progress.

THE REHEARSALS

Sixth grade band continues to offer large group rehearsals. The WDMCSD has three Sixth Grade Bands. Rehearsals are before school every Tuesday and Thursday morning starting in September. Students need to provide their own transportation to the rehearsals—car pooling is encouraged. Bus transportation is provided to return students to their home school. The three sixth grade bands are:

NORTHSIDE – consists of band students from *Clive*, *Crestview*, *Crossroads* and *Hillside* and rehearses in the gym at Crestview.

SOUTHSIDE – consists of band students from *Fairmeadows* and *Western Hills* and rehearses in the gymnasium at Western Hills.

WESTSIDE – consists of band students from *Jordan Creek* and *Westridge* and rehearses in the Community Room at Westridge.

THE SCHEDULE

Once the lesson schedule has been determined, please do not hesitate to contact your band instructor if you have scheduling concerns.



THE CONCERTS

The Sixth Grade Bands will present several concerts during the year so that parents, friends, and other relatives have the opportunity to hear their music and observe their progress. These concerts are usually in December and April. You will receive a calendar at the beginning of the school year that will include the specific dates for the band that your son/daughter participates.

Sixth Grade Band

SOLO CONTEST

The West Des Moines Band Department will host a solo and ensemble contest. Performing a solo or an ensemble in front of a judge should be a positive experience. We would like to strongly encourage all second year players to participate either in a solo or in a small group. This experience provides potential for growth.

Instrumentalists will receive a medal with a different ribbon color depending on the rating. The ratings are I+ - highly superior, I - excellent, II - good, and III - fair.



HONOR BAND

Auditions for placement in the All-District Honor Band will be held in January. Sixth graders are then selected from their own band to be a member of the All-District Sixth Grade Honor Band. Students will represent all eight elementary buildings in the West Des Moines School District. Members of the band are chosen by the following criteria:

- Playing ability
- Attendance at lessons and rehearsals
- Seating within their sixth grade band
- Self improvement during the course of the year

Our performance will also include the sixth grade Honor Orchestra, Honor Choir, and Honor Bell Choir. The program will be in May in the Valley High School Auditorium.

