

SPRING LAKE FIFTH GRADE BAND – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: My child does not know how to play an instrument. Can they still be in band?

A: YES! Students are not expected to have any previous musical experience before entering band class. We will teach them all of the basics and then begin instruction on the instrument selected.

Q: What instruments do you start?

A: We start Flute, Clarinet, Trumpet, Trombone and Percussion. We look at moving select students to Oboe, Bassoon, Alto, Tenor and Baritone Sax, Bass Clarinet, French Horn, Euphonium and Tuba during the 6th grade year. Spring Lake does not have an orchestra program due to the smaller size of the school. Guitarists, Pianists and Bassists are needed for jazz band starting in 7th grade but we recommend that they study those instruments privately while learning a band instrument during the school day. We may be open to starting one or two electric bass players this year. If your child is interested, please contact us.

Q: How much does it cost to be in band?

A: There is no fee for band, but you will need an instrument and book. Cost will vary depending on the instrument selected. We will have Meyer Music available at our parent meeting so that you can ask questions and/or reserve an instrument. Some parents would rather buy a used instrument and you can feel free to contact us for advice – if it's used or from somewhere other than our approved vendors, do not buy an instrument without consulting with us. Also, do not let cost be a factor in your child being in band. If finances are an issue, please send us an email and we will work with you.

Q: How much should my child practice during the school year?

A: We recommend that each student practice regularly but it doesn't need to be more than 2-3 times per week for 15-20 minutes each time. Often students never practice at home. They are the ones who tend to fall behind. A little bit goes a long way!

Q: If my child does not sign up for band in 5th grade, can they sign up in 6th grade?

A: No. Beginning band classes are offered at the 5th grade level. The 6th grade and middle school bands are intermediate and advanced levels.

Q: Can my child change instruments in the middle of the year?

A: No. Changing instruments is not recommended. If a student is really having difficulty the director will address this situation with the family and help make a decision that is best for that child's musical development.

Q: How are students graded in beginning band?

A: Students receive a participation grade but playing tests will take place to monitor the student's progress and know how we can best help them.

Q: When do band classes meet?

A: Beginning band classes meet every day for 50 minutes during the school day at 11:10am. Students come every other day.

Q: If my child doesn't like it, can he/she quit?

A: All students should commit for the entire fifth grade year as it is a class. We want them to experience both concerts and learn commitment and sticking with things even if there is a tough moment. Sometimes students want to "throw in the towel" in the middle of the year. Not only is that a poor life skill, but it sets a bad precedent and encourages others who may be struggling to try to opt out. After fifth grade they have the choice to not continue on. We will advise at that time whether continuing or not is best for your child.

Q: Is there any commitment outside of the school day?

A: Very little. There are two evening concerts and some personal practice.

Q: If my child continues with band after 5th grade, will there be any conflicts with athletics?

A: No. Students are able to participate in many activities throughout their entire band career. Everything band related is during the school day. There are minimal evening rehearsals for a few months in high school but we work around sport schedules. About 85% of the high school band also plays on a sports team.

Q: If my child is only interested in drums, can he or she just play drums?

A: First off, "playing drums" may be very different than what he or she is expecting. If your child is selected as a percussionist, he or she will be learning to play *dozens* of percussion instruments - everything from snare drum and bass drum to mallet instruments like marimba and xylophone. Because many students want to play drums, we require some prerequisites. If a student is already actively studying percussion and demonstrates proficiency, they will be strongly considered. Every other student under consideration must display exceptional rhythmic ability and be able to *read the notes of the piano keyboard*. Students who have studied piano will be considered first. If your child doesn't start on percussion but shows great work ethic and ability on their current instrument, the option may be open in the future.

Q: If my child wants to get an instrument this summer, can he or she start playing?

A: We'd prefer if all students wait until the fall to get fitted. Once an instrument is chosen in the fall, we prefer that the instrument stay in the case until the student can receive instruction in order to prevent costly repairs and the formation of bad habits. If a child wants to take lessons from a music teacher over the summer, please contact us for advice.