

August 19, 2009

Dear Sixth Grade Teacher,

This packet is designed to answer some of the more commonly asked questions about our program. We would also like to share some of the better ideas we have seen in buildings around the district for dealing with students who choose not to participate in band or orchestra.

Instrumental teachers will be introducing themselves and the program to your students sometime during the first few days of school. They will give your students lots of information and handouts over the next few weeks. Our goal is to include as many students as possible in the program so recruiting activities are very necessary.

It is helpful if you can place a little more emphasis on orchestra to help balance class sizes since many students are not as familiar with string instruments. Also remind students about parent night. Instrumental teachers will be giving you or your students letters to go home, but it never hurts to have additional reminders.

**Thanks for all of your help. Your support is greatly appreciated!**

Your instrumental teachers are in many schools, but you can always leave a message in their box or call the music department at 742-0150.

Have a great year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Hauser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Frank Hauser  
Music Supervisor

## **Instrumental Music Program Information**

The sixth grade instrumental music program is your students' first elective class. Instrumental teachers encourage all students to try an instrument since most middle and high schools do not offer beginning instrumental classes. Students cannot be *required* to participate.

## **Instrumental Music Schedule**

Orchestra and band classes meet three times a week for 45 minutes. Orchestra and band are separate classes because the two types of instruments must be taught using different notes and techniques for the first few years. The music department office (an instrumental teacher's "home base") is located next to Orion school on Elmendorf AFB (742-0150). Some instrumental teachers have seven schools. Their schedules involve a great deal of travel, and some travel times are very tight. In many cases, instrumental teachers will not get to your school more than a few minutes before class and will need to leave within a few minutes after class.

## **Start Date**

Instrumental classes begin on Tuesday, August 25 this year. Prior to August 25, instrumental teachers will be doing presentations at schools. Each teacher will visit their assigned schools as well as some others where their assistance is needed.

## **Introductory Presentation**

Introductory presentations vary somewhat among teachers. However, you can expect that your instrumental teacher will cover the program set up, expectations, requirements (such as practice), and the district instrumental parent night.

These initial demonstrations may not be at your assigned class time. Please stay with your students during the presentation. Not only does it help with behavior, but it also enables you to answer some of the many questions that may arise later.

## **Contract/Registration Deadline**

A registration slip, signed by both the student and a parent or guardian, is required for enrollment in band or orchestra. The last day for students to register for band or orchestra is September 18. Once registered, we expect students (and parents) to commit to one year. We strongly discourage drop-outs.

## **Instruments - School District**

The district has a very limited number of instruments, and they are intended for students with financial need. **Please do not tell your class that we will give them an instrument for \$40.** We don't have enough instruments. We encourage students to rent, buy or borrow. This gives students a greater sense of ownership, encourages more practice and usually ensures a better quality instrument. (Easier to play=better sound=more practice=faster learning= more fun!) Then we try to help the students who can't afford to rent or purchase an instrument. If you know of a student who needs help, **please** let your band or orchestra teacher know. We have a series of steps in place for students to work through if they need a school district instrument.

## **Deadline for obtaining Instruments**

Please let students know that we will have several days of class before they will need an instrument. They do **not** need to rush to purchase an instrument. Instrumental teachers will start with in-class demonstrations in order to assist students with their final selections. The parent night will allow parents to hear the instruments, learn about the program and check on prices. The deadline for having instruments and supplies is generally close to the end of the first quarter, although most students will want them when classes begin playing (this year the deadline is October 2<sup>nd</sup>).

## **Instruments - Buses**

### allowed on the bus

violin            alto saxophone  
viola             trumpet/cornet  
flute              baby baritone  
clarinet          percussion kits

### not allowed

cello  
bass  
french horn  
full size baritone  
tuba or sousaphone  
trombone  
tenor saxophone

## **Instruments - Storage in classroom**

Most instruments are in hard cases and can be stacked together closely (as long as they will not fall or be bumped around in a rough manner). Cellos and basses are in soft cases and need to be stored on their sides in an area where they will not be bumped (under a display or computer table or in a closet). Students should take instruments home each night for practice.

## **Instrument Choices**

Students may select from the following instruments:

Orchestra:

violin, viola, cello, bass

Band:

flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, baritone, and percussion

Guitar and piano are not taught in orchestra or band.

There are a few less common instruments that may also be taught, but students will need to talk to the instrumental teacher about requirements for these instruments.

## **Planning Time**

Only one of the three orchestra/band classes is considered planning time for you. Since some students do not participate in the program, most teachers pool their remaining students. This means that in a school with two sixth grade teachers, you would actually get an extra planning session every other week. In schools with only one sixth grade teacher, you will need to find an alternate activity for your students once a week. (For example, some teachers have students help in the library or have students work as reading tutors in a first grade class.) Please see the attached sheet for ideas teachers have used in the past for non-participating students.

## **Classroom Teaching During Band and Orchestra**

Direct instruction of core curriculum should not take place during the band and orchestra period. Any classroom instruction during that time should be limited to extra curricular instruction.

## **Attendance at Band/Orchestra**

All students who have signed up should attend band/orchestra every time the class meets. Students who forget their instrument still need to attend class. Students should also not be kept out of instrumental classes as a punishment or to finish class work without first talking to the instrumental teacher. It helps with attendance if you let the instrumental teacher know when a student is in the office or at the nurse. Instrumental teachers are expected to begin class at the assigned time. Please send your students so they will arrive on time but not early. Since in most buildings, orchestra and band students come from two or more 6th grade classes, if one class is late it disrupts the lesson. Instrumental music teachers should also release their classes on time.

## **Report Cards**

Band/orchestra grades will be completed on Zangle and will show up on the student's report card.

## **Cancellations**

If your class is going on a field trip or attending an assembly during your instrumental music time, please let the teachers know in advance or call the Music Department at 742-0150. The Music Department staff will attempt to get a message to the teachers involved. Occasionally throughout the year, instrumental music teachers will need to cancel class. Usually this only occurs at concert times.

## **End of Year**

The last day for band and orchestra classes this year is May 17, 2010. If you miss planning time, your principal can call the music department for assistance. Instrumental teachers spend the remaining time collecting, transporting, cleaning, repairing, re-shelving and inventorying instruments. Band/orchestra grades will be in your school early during the last week of school.

## **Student Information**

Please share important student information with the instrumental teachers. **If a student will be moving, we need to know (especially if they have a school instrument).** It is also helpful to know if students have special needs, health problems such as severe allergies, behavior plans, temporary or long term problems out of school, etc.

## **Ideas for Non Orchestra or Band Students**

The following list contains activities that have been used by sixth grade teachers in the past. If you have ideas to add, please let the music department know. We will include your ideas to next year's list.

Sustained silent reading

Individual or small-group tutoring

Research on music topics (can be presented to band/orchestra students)

Computer Activities

Explore music software, develop keyboarding skills, math enrichment, etc.

Newspaper production

Oral reading by teacher or students

Cross age tutoring or reading buddies (6th graders go to K-1 classes)

Library (use library or help librarian)  
Newspaper (or Scholastic News) presentations and discussions  
Art activities  
Read biographies of famous musicians  
Listen to music  
Science or Social Studies games  
Social Studies projects that are not a part of the regular class

**Band and orchestra students should not be required to make-up classroom activities that are conducted during band and orchestra.**