

Welcome to the  
Brandon Middle School Band!

Parents:

This information packet answers the most commonly asked questions about beginning band and about obtaining an instrument for your child. Please look over these materials and feel free to email us if you have any questions

We are EXTREMELY excited about the potential in your child. We want to help you get started off smoothly so you and your child can enjoy many years of a great band experience!

Sincerely,

The Brandon Band Directors

# The Brandon Middle School Beginning Band Program Overview

Here are the answers to the most frequently asked questions about beginning band.

## **1. When does band meet?**

Each sixth grade beginning band class will meet during the school day as a regularly scheduled class, as will all other academic classes. Your child will meet his or her band class on either "A" days or "B" days but not both.

## **2. How are the classes arranged or divided?**

Beginning band instruction is set up in "homogeneous" classes (like instruments).

- Beginning flute Class (Ms. Ross)
- Beginning Clarinet/Saxophone Classes (Mrs. Green)
- Beginning French Horn/Trombone Class (Mr. Cagle)
- Beginning Trumpet (Mr. Cagle)
- Beginning Percussion (Mr. Austin)

## **3. Will there be any after school rehearsals?**

There are no after school rehearsals for 6<sup>th</sup> grade band.

## **4. Will the 6th grade beginner band perform any concerts?**

Yes, the beginner band will perform two evening concerts, one at the end of each semester. Every band student is required to participate in both of these concerts. The dates for both concerts will be scheduled at the very beginning of the school year. In addition to these concerts the students will be required to perform at band night in the fall. At band night, all band students (grades 6-12) will perform prior to the start of one home varsity football game. Any performance dates will be published months in advance.

## **5. Does band conflict with participating in athletics, cheerleading or other school activities?**

NO! Most of our band students participate in many other extra curricular things. There is not a conflict of classes. Band meets during the school day and is curricular. We work closely with the coaches and sponsors to avoid any conflicts of schedule. Band does not meet during 6th grade athletics or choir periods.

## **6. Are there homework assignments for band?**

For normal progress, all beginning band students are required to practice at home for at least 20 minutes, five days a week. We strongly encourage equally distributed practice time throughout each week in order to promote musical success. It is VERY important that good practice habits are developed early!

## **7. Can a student wait and enroll in band in the 7th grade?**

Due to scheduling restrictions, it is very difficult. A student cannot enroll in 7th grade band without having first been in the 6th grade beginning band or received the proper instruction from a trained professional that would allow he or she to keep up with the entire class. Band instruction and learning is progressive each year. Starting band late would be like building a house without a proper foundation. Your best chance for success is to start band now!

## **8. How do I get an instrument for my child?**

After tonight's testing, we will send home a letter with your child's instrument selection. This letter will also include the date for another meeting where Mississippi Music Company will be available to discuss an instrument purchase for you. If there's any chance you'll lease-purchase an instrument from them, please bring a down payment of \$60.00 to reserve your instrument. If your child is selected for French Horn, clarinet or saxophone, bring \$65.00. They will help arrange the purchase of your child's instrument that evening. Band is affordable to many because of the flexible rental/purchase plans available. You are not required to close a deal with the representative that night. It is important, however, that you make arrangements as soon as possible for your child's instrument and maintenance kit. This will insure that your child will have an instrument when school starts in August. Feel free to take a contract home and discuss it. If you choose to complete a contract that night, you will be assured that an instrument has been ordered and will arrive for your child the first day of school. All instruments and maintenance kits will be delivered to Brandon Middle School during the summer, in an effort to keep anxious students from attempting to assemble their instrument before they have been taught! This prevents any mishaps before the student has a chance to play his or her instrument. The Band directors will then be able to properly put instruments through an inventory system before school begins.

## **9. Are there school instruments available for loan?**

No, all 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are required to purchase a band instrument

## **10. Are there other fees associated with band besides the purchase of an instrument?**

Yes, each year all band students are assessed an activity fee. This fee varies from year to year depending on the needs of the students. All 6<sup>th</sup> grade band members must pay a fee of \$35.00. This covers a band book, and t-shirt. It also helps out with normal operational expenses of the band.

## **Percussion vs. Drums**

Brandon Middle School has a percussion class. If your child is interested in "playing drums" or learning drum set, this may not be exactly what you are looking for. Percussion includes: snare drum, keyboard percussion (i.e. cymbals, bass drum, triangle, etc.) Every percussionist will be expected to learn all of these instruments competently.

### **Drum set at home?**

Having a drum set at home does not guarantee you a spot in the percussion class.

### **What is the audition procedure?**

Each student will start band on 1 of the 5 basic wind instruments (flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, or trombone.) Everyone will have the opportunity to be tested for the percussion class in late November. Students selected for percussion will begin participation after the Christmas Holidays when school resumes in January. Each student will perform a series of rhythm and coordination tests. This will include foot/hand coordination, hand/finger dexterity, rhythmic imitation, natural stick control, timing skills, and a natural sense of pulse. It has been our experience that students who possessed these necessary traits were successful in the class. Students who had a difficult time demonstrating these skills struggled in the class; even those who worked "really hard" and "really wanted it". We want your child to be successful in band and enjoy their band experience; we do our best to place students where their physical attributes lend them to be.

### **What if I do not make percussion? Can I try out later?**

Percussion class testing is only done once in November of 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. Likewise, all of the other instruments are tested once at the instrument fair at the end of the student's 5<sup>th</sup> grade school year. Remember that band is similar to other academic classes in that the students are learning new material each year and building on what they have learned the previous year. If a student started over on new instruments each year then he or she would not progress and learn the skills required for participating in high school and/or college band.

### **If I don't make the percussion class, will I have any other opportunities to learn percussion?**

Students who do not make the percussion class are encouraged to remain in band on his or her wind instrument. If the student really has a passion for music and a desire to learn percussion then when he or she enters into the high school band they can learn some basic percussion skills by participating in the indoor percussion ensemble or by participating in varsity band during the concert season.

### **Piano/Drum experience?**

Having had piano lessons will definitely help you in being selected for the percussion class. Having had drum lessons will probably help you in the audition process, but neither piano or drum lessons will guarantee you a spot in the percussion class.

### **Percussion Ratio:**

We cannot have a band composed of just drummers. We allow a maximum of 10% of the overall band to be placed on percussion. There are only so many percussion parts on any given piece of music. If we don't limit the percussion class, there would be many students who did not get to perform in all the songs and would miss out on a great band experience.

## Obtaining An Instrument

### 1. What is the music store that represents the Brandon Middle School Band Program?

**Mississippi Music, 1001 Sara Lane, Flowood, Ms (601) 922-1200.** For your convenience, representatives from Mississippi Music are here to provide you with information for securing an instrument and maintenance kit. In addition to this, Mississippi Music:

- A. Comes to the junior high school regularly to service their customers.
- B. Offers maintenance service and repairs during the rental period
- C. Picks up instruments needing repair from the school and takes the instrument to the repair shop, and returns the instrument back to the school.
- D. Has its own professionally staffed, completely equipped repair shop
- E. Has no agreement with the school or with any band director other than the understanding that they will come to the school regularly to provide efficient service to their customers.
- F. Makes the instrument available to you on a rental-purchase agreement.

### 2. What are my purchasing options?

There are two options:

- a. The first option is a rental-purchase plan. Since most parents are unsure whether the student is committed to playing a musical instrument, they are reluctant to purchase one. The rental agreement allows you to rent an instrument with the base rental applying toward a purchase. If you are hesitant to make a commitment to the purchase of an instrument at this time, we highly recommend that you rent. When you are confident of your child's success, you can purchase the instrument.
- b. The second option is a cash purchase. Some parents are already confident of their child's success and would prefer to pay in full. For those who desire to purchase an instrument, it is less expensive to pay in full because there are no finance charges.

### 3. Why should I enter into a rental-purchase agreement?

- a. The plan is designed to give your child the opportunity to begin in band with only a small initial investment.
- b. Your child can have the advantages of a brand new instrument. Students experience pride of ownership, freedom of error due to poor equipment, and the opportunity to be the best player he/she can be by having the best available instrument for their age level.
- c. The students have the instrument and mouthpiece recommended by the band director.
- d. The instrument can be returned to the music company at any time without further financial obligation.
- e. The instrument is covered by a maintenance agreement. Depending on the Careful-ness of the student, instruments need periodic maintenance and repair. The maintenance agreement would cover the full cost of these trips to the repair shop.

#### **4. May I purchase an instrument from another music store?**

Yes! You may purchase from another music store but PLEASE use extreme caution and consider the following:

a. There are other brands of instruments available for less money; however, they may be of inferior quality of workmanship and materials. An inferior instrument very often insures that your child will NOT be successful in band. **Always consult one of the band directors before purchasing an instrument that is not on the recommended list of instruments.** Purchasing a quality instrument is vital to the success of your child in band.

b. The store you deal with may not have a reputable repair shop and may not be able to service the instrument competently and in a timely manner. Furthermore, this store will not be able to pick up and deliver back to the school an instrument that needs repair.

#### **5. May I purchase a used instrument?**

Yes, but care must be taken not to purchase an instrument whose condition would be a stumbling block to your child. **It is important to consult one of the band directors concerning the condition of the instrument before you buy it.** You are encouraged to check with Mississippi Music concerning the availability of good used instruments. Their used instruments will have been run through their repair shop and will be guaranteed to be in good playing condition and in a good sanitary condition. If you decide to look for a used instrument, we would strongly urge you purchase the brand and model on our recommended list of instruments along with the recommended mouthpiece and maintenance kit for that instrument.

#### **6. May I purchase an instrument over the internet or a catalog?**

Yes, but you must purchase the brand and model of instrument on our recommended list of instruments, along with the recommended mouthpiece and maintenance kit for that instrument. Many times, purchasing an instrument online or from a catalog will be less expensive; however, a cautionary note must be interjected. Please be aware that it is difficult to know the dependability of internet and catalog dealers. We have had some instances where these companies misrepresented themselves and the child suffered. While these companies may offer great prices—beware of the quality of the product and what, if any, service plan they offer.

**\*IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE  
THEN IT PROBABLY IS\***

## 5. What happens when school starts?

When school starts, your child will go to their scheduled band period on “A” or “B” day. The first week or so will be spent learning basics of reading music and rhythm. We will also be collecting fees for band supplies. Once we feel the students are ready, we will begin using their instruments daily. This is usually the second week of school. The BMS Recommended List of Beginner Instruments is on the next page—please purchase these or equivalent Instruments. **Remember, if you do not buy from a full-service music store, please check with the band directors before purchasing.**

**Instruments purchased from Mississippi Music will come with the correct mouthpieces, etc; otherwise they must be purchased. If you purchase from MS Music, you DO NOT NEED to purchase these items separately:**

If you are unable to reserve your child’s instrument at our next meeting, then please visit Mississippi Music Company at their Flowood location early this summer (or other reputable Music dealer).

**Please contact your child’s band director if you have ANY questions or concerns:**

Flute:	Mrs. Ross	leighann.ross@rcsd.ms
Clarinet/saxophone:	Mrs. Green	mgreen@rcsd.ms
Trombone/Trumpet/French Horn:	Mr. Cagle	tim.cagle@rcsd.ms
Percussion:	Mr. Austin	chad.austin@rcsd.ms

