

WETSEL MIDDLE SCHOOL BEGINNING BAND

Dear 5th Graders,

You have probably received paperwork about elective choices at Wetsel Middle School. This letter is to tell you a bit about our Band program, and how it works.

My name is Mrs. Strickler, and I am the band director at WMS. I have been teaching there for 11 years. I love teaching music and helping students learn to play an instrument from the very beginning level. In band, we work hard and we have a lot of fun playing together as a team. I know many of you sing in chorus at WYES and love music. I can't wait to see what you can do in band.

Learning to play an instrument is something you can carry with you for your whole life. You will learn the skills you need to play in the award winning MCHS Marching Mountaineers, and our Madison Jazz Band. Many of our former students have gone on to play in marching bands in college like JMU, UVA, LU, and VT! Some even received scholarships to do so! Some are now teaching music, playing in community bands for fun, and providing therapy through music.

Band is a class, so we rehearse together during school hours. We do two concerts each year for our parents, and sometimes take a trip or two! In 7th and 8th grade we go to compete at King's Dominion or Busch Gardens.

It's best to get started in 6th grade, so that you will be able to build your skills from the beginning at the same time as all of your friends. Though we *sometimes* offer a beginning 7th grade band (based on interest), we don't always. So, if you think you want to try band, you should sign up in 6th grade. You can always switch to another elective later if you decide it's not for you.

Please read the FAQ on the back of this paper, and watch the videos about each instrument that I've posted on the Wetsel Band website. (Address below!) Sometime around the time that school starts again, we will do an Instrument Selection Night where you can meet the instruments and select the one that you like the best. We will give you information about getting an instrument at that time. Some of our students rent or buy their own instruments, and some use school instruments. The cost of an instrument and materials *should not* keep you from doing band. There are many options, and I work hard to make sure we provide any assistance you may need!

When you choose your electives, please sign up for band! See you in class next year!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Strickler

astrickler@madisonschools.k12.va.us

<https://sites.google.com/madisonschools.k12.va.us/wmsband/5th-graders>

BAND FAQ

Q: What instruments can I choose from?

A: Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone, Trumpet, French Horn, Trombone, Baritone, Tuba, or Percussion. We will help you find the instrument that is most natural for you, and helps to balance our band's sound.

Q: How do I decide which instrument to play, and how can I get one?

A: Watch the videos on the band website and start thinking about what you like. Wait to be notified about an Instrument Selection Night around the time school starts. When you come that night, bring a parent. We will give out information and answer questions about securing a quality instrument for you!

Q: What if I can't afford to take band? How much does it cost?

A: There are several options for obtaining a quality instrument. We have a few school owned instruments on a need basis for a lower rental fee. The local music stores have great "starter" rental deals that make playing an instrument more affordable. Some instruments are more expensive than others, and some require reeds that need to be replaced regularly. Talk to Mrs. Strickler at Instrument Selection Night. We also have a uniform rental fee of \$10 that will be due in the mid-fall. We offer some fundraising options, and financial help is available.

Q: If I don't sign up in 6th grade, can I sign up in 7th?

A: It's best to get started in 6th grade so you can get ahead and learn alongside the majority of your peers. However, we will run a 7th grade beginning band on years where there is enough interest. Things can change with the schedule year to year, so it's best to sign up now.

Q: I just want to play drums. Can I do that?

A: Percussion is the term we use to describe the group of instruments that includes snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, xylophone, bells, tambourines, and others. Students who play these instruments must demonstrate a strong sense of rhythm. If you choose to play percussion please understand that this is not playing drum set (though we do try it!) You must learn to read music and play concert percussion instruments.

Q: I play sports. Won't that conflict with band?

A: Participating in multiple activities requires balance, organization, and good communication. It is not often that beginning band and sports conflict. Our class meets during the school day. We have two evening concerts in the year (December and April).

WHY CHOOSE BAND?

Here are some quotes from Wetsel Band Students:

"The concerts help you become more confident."

"Band makes you learn how to work together with other people."

"Playing your instrument is fun!"

"In band, you get to be yourself."

"Band was the best decision I ever made."

"You learn new things every day in band."

"When you work hard, you can learn cool new ways to play."

"You make friends you may not have met otherwise."



Studying instrumental music helps students to grow in the following areas:

Teamwork

Self-expression

Coordination

Memory skills

Self-confidence

Goal-setting

Problem solving

Sense of accomplishment and pride

