

April 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am excited to share the opportunity for current 4th grade students to enroll in Beginning Band at AMS. On March 11, a demonstration of available instruments was held for all 4th grade students and a sign-up letter given to each student to bring home.

If your child wishes to try band, please indicate that preference on the online AMS Electives Course Selection Form.

What does it mean to join band?

Being in band means being part of something bigger than yourself. It allows for limitless self-expression while performing alone but requires teamwork and cooperation when playing together.

Beginning Band is fun, challenging, and engaging regardless of a students' perceived skill or talent. We start in 5th grade (no experience necessary) and continue to refine and build skills each year after.

Band is a commitment that requires frequent practice at home and attendance at concerts and performances outside of the school day. Band is a graded class.

When does the band meet?

Currently, all of the grade levels bands meet during the "Specialist" periods. There is a 6-day rotation for specialists and each band meets on two of the 6 days. The 5th, 6th and 7th grades meet in smaller groups while the 8th grade meets as a full band.

Which instruments are available?

Lessons are offered only on the following instruments:

*Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone, Trumpet, Trombone or
Bell Kit/Practice Pad (please read the section on Percussion!)*

Because we wish to create a balanced instrumentation and strive to perform music as composers intend, we limit the choices to those above. Please think carefully before making a choice. At this time, stringed instruments are not offered at the Middle School level.

What will my student need to participate in band?

- Instrument (Owned or Rented)
- Method Book (Sound Innovations for Concert Band, Book 1)
- Appropriate reeds of good quality and adequate quantity (saxophone and clarinet)
- A pencil
- Percussionists need a Bell Kit and Practice Pad with Case, xylophone mallets and drum sticks

Mark all your materials with your name – your instrument must have a name tag at all times!

Instruments

Many parents/guardians choose to rent instruments from various area music vendors. A trial period is typically available so students can see if band is for them or perhaps another instrument would be a better fit. *This year we will again partner with Ellis Music.* Ellis is committed to providing quality instruments at a fair price with excellent service. Information about rentals will be provided at the beginning of the school year.

If you choose to purchase an instrument instead of renting, *please contact me first!* Unfortunately, there are many “deals” to be had that can be “too good to be true.” A high-quality beginner instrument may cost a little more up front but will last longer, play better, hold its’ value, and can easily be repaired. Students have a much better chance for success when their instrument works well. Great instruments are available at nearly every price point...*please contact me if you would like help in your search.*

SPECIAL NOTE FOR FUTURE PERCUSSION STUDENTS:

Beginning percussionists will be playing both **snare drum** and **bells (xylophone)**. Whether you choose to purchase or rent, the kit **must** include a set of bells for home practice. Rental kits from Ellis will include a practice pad in place of a snare drum. A practice pad will provide the necessary response for the drumsticks without added noise. Additionally, the snare drums included with beginner kits tend not to be of quality.

Our focus in band is learning to read music! This is no different in the percussion section than for any other instrument – they will be reading notes on the staff as much as playing a drum/practice pad.

Please note that the school will not be providing instruction on Drum Set (as you might see in a rock band.) We will focus on reading music on the snare drum and bells.

****Percussion classes have sometimes been quite large and in fact, the opportunities for dozens of percussionists just do not exist in higher grades. Sometimes, the section has been split and only half of the students play on any given song. Although I encourage all students to play music, many students would be better advised to learn a wind instrument or pursue drum set playing with one of the many local private teachers.*

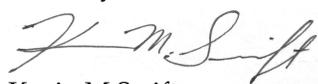
Next steps

I very much look forward to working with your students in band next year!

Please fill complete the online AMS Electives Course Selection Form as soon as possible. Watch the AMS website for more information about instrument rentals in the fall.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time: kswift@sprise.com

Sincerely,



Kevin M Swift
Director of Bands