

Merrimack Middle School Band Handbook



Mrs. Levine
2019-2020

Welcome!

... and welcome back to our 8th graders! So happy you've decided to be a part of the Merrimack Middle School Band! My name is Mrs. Levine and I am thrilled that you are going to be with us this year. 8th graders - I'm so glad you are back with us; and 7th graders - I can't wait to get to know you all!

This handbook includes some very important information. You will find information on everything from our **performing groups and concert dress to our attendance policy, grading system, and festival dates**. You will need to know about all of this stuff! Please read this handbook very carefully (with your parents) and keep it in your band folder for questions you may have later. Please return all necessary forms and have all required supplies by the assigned due dates.

Ultimately, our success depends upon every student being committed and giving his or her best every day. As with any team sport, every student matters. Everyone must agree to participate in a cooperative, positive manner.

Our philosophy - we believe that Middle school is a time for students to explore and experience different things. Our band program is set up so that anyone who plays a wind or percussion instrument can be a part of our group. Band is the ultimate team sport! Everybody counts - nobody "sits on the bench!" We have a good time, but we work hard and there is an expectation for growth and achievement (which is where most of the "fun" happens!). Home practice is a critical element in helping students to stay on track and progress, whatever their skill level is. Band is considered an academic subject, in that it is graded and attendance is required, just like other classes.

For periodic updates on events, assignments, or music news, go to the district website (sau26.org) - follow directions to register and sign in, then **register for E-Alerts** from my webpage. Please see the insert in your child's band folder for more detailed instructions. You will receive immediate email notification whenever news and information is posted!

Also, please get acquainted with Powerschool Learning! You may need to download the app for your phone! Also, please explore how to record yourself playing - All evaluations will need to be recorded at home and submitted/uploaded through PSL!

Please feel free to contact me any time regarding questions, thoughts, or concerns you may have. It's going to be a great year, and again, welcome!

Mrs. Holly Levine
Instrumental Music Director
Merrimack Middle School
603-424-6289 ext. 3310
holly.levine@sau26.org

**Due Friday, Sept. 20:
Statement of Consent, all Supplies, Permission Slip, Home Practice Form**

Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education." - **Plato**

PERFORMING ENSEMBLES

Concert Band

The Concert Band is made up of 7th and 8th grade students who have played in band for at least 1 year and/or display an appropriate level of skill development. Through the month of September, we will rehearse every morning, beginning at 7:00 (**or as soon as you are able to get to school**). See the schedule below! We are doing this so we have time to prepare for our first performance with the MHS Band on Sept. 27th. Beginning in October, Wednesdays will become “open practice” days. Students should report to band immediately upon arrival at school on any band day.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00-7:27	7:00-8:05	7:00-7:27 Sept. = full band Oct-June = Open Practice	7:00-7:27	7:30-8:05

Open Practice Days:

- Extra help
- Individual practice time
- NHBDA, District Band, Solo/Ensemble Prep
- Sectionals
- Other musical opportunities

Time spent practicing in the music room during “Open Practice” mornings and/or after school can be counted on practice logs!

Band is a graded academic class. Please see: Rehearsal/Concert Attendance Policies, and Concert Band Grading System.

Jazz Band

The MMS Jazz Band is an exciting group that will perform several times throughout the year. The group offers students the chance to play different types of music (jazz, blues, Latin, rock). Standard instrumentation includes alto sax, tenor sax, bari sax, trumpet, clarinet, trombone, guitar, bass, keyboards, and drum set. Students must be members of the Concert Band (except for guitar, bass, and keyboard players). Jazz Band will rehearse one afternoon per week (day TBD). It is considered an academic class and members will receive a separate grade on their grade card. As such, attendance is mandatory.

Performing Groups - General

Mrs. Levine will determine part assignments. Part assignments may fluctuate over the course of the year based on student growth and/or specific musical/individual needs. Part assignments are made with the understanding that strong students are needed on all parts. Therefore, the level of a student’s ability cannot be determined from the part he/she is assigned.

PRIVATE LESSONS

Private lessons are not required for participation in band but are highly encouraged and have been shown to bolster and accelerate the musical learning process. Students at the middle school level typically respond very well to one-on-one instruction that caters to a student’s individual needs. Unlike the small groups that will meet during music class time, private lessons can continue through the year and are truly individualized. Students of all skill levels can benefit greatly from private instruction. Please see Mrs. Levine for help in finding a qualified teacher in the area.

“**Music** is your own experience, your own thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn.” - **Charlie Parker**

ATTENDANCE POLICY - REHEARSALS

Band rehearsals and sectionals are academic classes and are mandatory for band students. Students who are in band should not participate in other activities that occur during rehearsal/FLEX time. With the exception of an excused absence/tardy from school, failure to report to a band rehearsal/sectional without previous communication will be unexcused and will result in a "0" for that day's grade. Unexcused school tardies are considered unexcused absences.

On rehearsal mornings, students should come directly to the band room when they arrive at school. They should set up, find their seats, and begin warming up. Students are not allowed to go to team areas before band. Doors to the band room will be open by 6:50 every morning. Students may have periodic sectionals during the morning band time. If your child rides a bus that arrives after 7:00, please work to arrange alternate transportation so your child can be on time for rehearsal. Students who are on time will value the most from this important support time. Students will receive a grade for their attendance. There is no grade penalty for students who arrive on a bus that comes after 7:00. Just be sure to come directly to the band room upon arrival!

ATTENDANCE POLICY - CONCERTS

Concerts and performances are an integral part of the music-learning process. Choosing to participate in band means accepting the responsibilities of rehearsal and concert attendance. There will be 3 required evening concerts during the school year and one required weekend event. These events are part of the course requirements and students will receive a grade. This grade is based on attendance, punctuality, concert dress (as stated in this handbook), effort, and behavior. Students are expected to stay for the entire concert.

We ask that all participating students and parents check the performance dates as soon as they are announced and make every effort to arrange their schedules accordingly. Please do not make other plans on these dates. Outside-of-school activities such as (but not limited to) youth sports leagues, clubs, parties, or even private music lessons should not take precedence over a graded school subject. If transportation is a problem, please plan ahead with a neighbor or friend for alternative ways to get your child to the concert.

In compliance with school rules, if a student is absent from school the day of the performance, he/she is not allowed to attend the concert. In the event of an emergency, the parent should contact Mrs. Levine as soon as possible and/or send in a note the following school day. Any student who must miss a concert, for any reason, will be required to complete an alternative assignment. Provided the assignment is well-done and completed on time, their performance grade will not be penalized. Most importantly, please plan ahead and communicate in a timely fashion with Mrs. Levine. Usually, there are ways to work around the conflict.

If after school activities are cancelled on the day of a concert/performance, we will utilize the snow date that is built into the schedule. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from evening concerts. Transportation to most state festivals will be provided by the school.

CONCERT DRESS

We are a team! It is important that we present ourselves as such. When we perform, we represent not only ourselves, but a larger whole - the Music Department, MMS, and our community. It is the first impression our audience will have of our group and we want to look sharp!

Concert dress requirements are:

Boys: white button-down shirt (tucked in) with collar, black pants, black socks, black shoes, tie

Girls: white shirt, black skirt (preferably) or black pants, black shoes

Please, no jeans or sneakers

No other colors

All school dress code policies apply

If you have any difficulties obtaining any of these items, please let Mrs. Levine know as soon as possible (not the day before the concert!) so that we may assist you. It is extremely important that all students adhere to the dress code.

"Play the music, not the instrument." - **Unknown**

CONCERT BAND GRADING SYSTEM

Daily Participation/Supplies = 20%

Daily participation grades will be based on: sectional/rehearsal attendance, having required supplies, and demonstrating appropriate/productive behavior. Students are expected to be at all rehearsals/sectionals. Students should not participate in other FLEX or before-school activities unless receiving prior approval. Unexcused absences will result in a "0" for that day.

Performance = 20%

Students are expected to attend all required concerts during the year. Students are expected to arrive on time, have all necessary supplies, follow the concert dress code, behave appropriately, and stay through the entire concert. If a student must miss a concert for any reason, the student will be expected to complete a makeup assignment.

Evaluations = 60%

Each quarter, students will be evaluated at least one time. These evaluations will be submitted digitally through Powerschool Learning. In addition, students may be given written quizzes or other assignments that will count toward the evaluation grade. Evaluation material may be pulled from current band literature, scales, or other developmentally appropriate material.

See boxes below!

Practice/Assignments

While home practice is not counted toward a grade, it is **a critical and necessary part of musical development**. Students will be responsible for completing "Band Assignments" and Evaluations and will be expected to spend the amount of time at home necessary to achieve proficiency.

Much research has shown that a regular practice routine is the most effective.

Students should target 20 minutes/5 days a week – with a mindful musical goal each practice session.

This is much more effective than 100 minutes/1 night, or just playing through songs without thoughtful direction.

Practice is a critical element for all students – those who may be struggling, those who are on track and can start focusing on deeper musical details, and those who master the material easily. Students who have the band literature mastered, are expected to see Mrs. Levine for something new and different! A student who does not continue to grow musically (regardless of skill level) can easily become stagnant and lose interest.

Students will be expected to turn in weekly signed Practice Logs documenting the time spent at home working on the assignment or other relevant material. These logs will not be graded directly, but will be used to track student progress and development and any need for intervention or enrichment opportunities.

Evaluations

- Evaluations are worth 60% of the final band grade.
- Evaluations will be submitted digitally through PSL. Students will need to learn how to record themselves on a phone, iPad, or other digital device. Please figure out how to do audio recordings only and avoid video recordings. Some video files are too big and they won't send.
- I have information available regarding how to record on the following: iPhone, Android, Window's Phone, Mac, and PC. Please let me know if you'd like some information!
- It is important that evaluations be submitted on time.
- Evaluation feedback will be provided digitally through a scoring rubric in PSL.
- Students are expected to view the rubric/feedback and send a reply message through PSL letting me know that they saw it. This reply step will be worth 5/30 points on their evaluation grade. Students should think about the comments and continue to make progress in noted areas. Students are then encouraged to retake evaluations for a potentially higher grade!
- If any student would rather do a playing evaluation "in person" for any reason, it is the student's responsibility to see me to schedule a time before the due date! "In Person" evaluations are perfectly fine, of course!

"Music washes away from the soul, the dust of everyday life." - **Red Auerbach**

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

Required Daily Supplies

- instrument (in good working order!)
- pencil
- ¼"-1/2" wide black band binder with all band music (in plastic sleeves)
- 15-20 plastic sheet protectors
- technique book
 - 7th Grade: Standard of Excellence, Book 2 (Pearson; Kjos)
 - 8th Grade: Standard of Excellence, Book 3 (Pearson; Kjos) (AND Standard of Excellence – Book 2 - from last year)
- Flip Folder and Lyre – for MHS Football Game (Percussion – NO lyre)
- Instrument cases - clearly labeled with name and phone number; drum sticks labeled with name

Additional Required Supplies

- **Flutes** – cleaning rod, small clean cloth
- **Clarinets/Saxophones** – cleaning swab, cork grease, mouthpiece cover, and a supply of good reeds to last you for several months (a box of 10 should get you through the year if you take care of them). AT LEAST 3 GOOD REEDS in your case at all times.
- **Saxophones** – neck strap, end cap for top of body of sax, items above
- **Bassoons/Oboes** – reed case, cork grease, small cup for soaking reed, AT LEAST 2 GOOD REEDS in your case at all times.
- **Trumpets/Euphoniums/Tubas** – valve oil, slide oil for tuning slides
- **Trombones** – slide cream, a small spray water bottle (like a travel-sized hairspray bottle) OR slide oil; slide grease
- **French Horns** – rotary valve oil, slide grease for tuning slides
- **Percussion** – 1 pair “Vic Firth SD1 General” drumsticks (or other good-quality “5B” drumstick). No extra skinny/fat sticks!

All supplies must be purchased on your own (supplies will not be available through the school). Please let me know if you have trouble acquiring these items. Students will be checked regularly on these items.

Recommended (but not required) supplies

- **All Woodwinds** – mouthpiece cleaning brush
- **All Brass** – mouthpiece cleaning brush
- **Clarinets** – thumbcase

INSTRUMENT REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

Whether the instrument belongs to the student or the school, it is expected that the student will take caution and care with his/her instrument. If there is a problem, please let Mrs. Levine know immediately. Some problems can be managed right away, others need to be taken to a repair shop. Unless you have experience in the area, please do not attempt to fix things on your own!

Woodwind - Whenever a key ceases to work properly, or it appears that something has become bent or a spring is out of place, do not attempt to fix it yourself. Bring it to Mrs. Levine immediately. She will be able to determine if it is something she can fix herself or if it must be sent to a professional instrument repair technician. Cork grease (clarinets/saxophones/double reeds) should be used as necessary to keep corks from drying out and cracking. Clarinet and saxophone mouthpieces should be scrubbed out regularly using warm water and a mouthpiece brush or toothbrush to keep it clean and germ-free. Reeds should never be left on the instrument. Woodwind instruments should NEVER be submerged in water. This will ruin pads and corks. All woodwinds should regularly run their cleaning swab through their instrument to dry it out and keep it clean.

Brass - All too often, mouthpieces become lodged in the instrument as a result of dirt buildup or the instrument getting dropped or bumped. If this occurs, NEVER try to twist the mouthpiece out – this can cause a significant amount of damage if not done properly. And definitely, NO wrenches or pliers! See Mrs. Levine immediately so that a mouthpiece remover tool can be used to dislodge the mouthpiece properly. Valves and slides should be lubricated regularly. Instruments should be polished regularly with a soft clean cloth. Mouthpieces should be cleaned regularly with warm soapy water and a mouthpiece brush.

Percussion - As drumheads are used and subjected to changes in humidity, they will lose the desired tension. A loose drumhead will have a dead “thud” type of sound to it, while a drumhead that is too tight will produce a sharp ringing or pinging tone. If you think your drumhead needs adjustment, do not attempt to adjust it on your own, even if you have your own drum key. They can break if not adjusted properly. See Mrs. Levine so that she can show you how to properly adjust the tension of the drumhead.

“**Music** is the universal language of mankind.” - **Longfellow**

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CLASS

Rather than taking “General Music,” band students will take “Instrumental Music Class” for one quarter. This class is a small-group lesson class and allows band students to focus on the details and skills of his/her particular instrument. Students receive more individualized, personal instruction, targeting the specific musical needs of individual students, in contrast to full band rehearsals which focus on the large ensemble experience.

Students will be graded regularly on effort, participation, skill development, and having all necessary supplies. Students will have regular playing and/or written quizzes. Students will be expected to work on assigned literature at home and are expected to come to class with that music prepared. Written homework may be assigned.

FESTIVALS

Solo and Ensemble Festival (Saturday, Feb. 8, 2020)

This event is **optional** for students. This event gives individual students a way to challenge themselves musically. Students prepare a special piece of music and perform for an adjudicator. Students are evaluated and receive a short clinic and written comments by the adjudicator. The purpose of this type of event is to provide students with a musical challenge and offer them positive and constructive feedback that they can use to further their musical skills.

NHMEA Large Group Festival (Saturday, March 14, 2020) – Required for all band members!

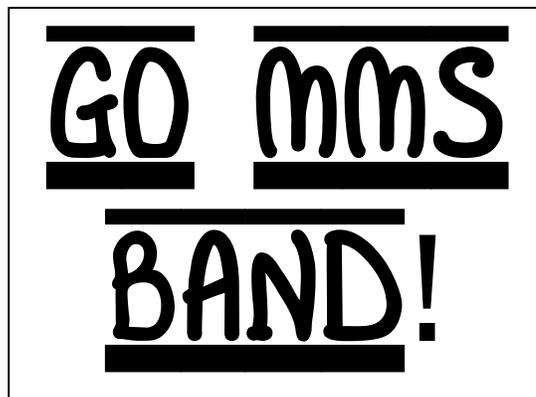
This is a **required** event for all band members. The Large Group Festival provides an opportunity for our band to perform as a group for state adjudicators. After the performance, students receive a short clinic, digitally recorded comments, and a “grade” from each of the adjudicators. This is not a competition (1st place, 2nd place, etc.). It evaluates each group individually. Bands receive a final overall rating based upon their prepared performance and sight-reading.

NHBDA Middle-Level Honor Band Festival (Friday, March 27, 2020)

This is an **optional** event for students. This Honor Band is made up of exceptional musicians from across the state of New Hampshire. Student selection is based on a recorded audition. Mrs. Levine will invite students to audition for this festival.

South Central District Honor Band Festival (Saturday, May 16, 2020)

This is an **optional** event for students. This Honor Band is made up of exceptional musicians from the South Central New Hampshire region. Mrs. Levine will nominate outstanding students from our band for participation in the Festival. Only some of these students will be accepted, however.



“**Jazz** will endure just as long as people hear it through their feet instead of their brains.” - **John Philip Sousa**