

SPARTA MIDDLE SCHOOL
BAND HANDBOOK
2019-2020



Whitney Brainard--Middle School Band Director

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6th Grade Band Course Description:

Band instruction is first introduced in the sixth grade. Students will learn to read music and the proper technique for playing their particular instrument without any prior knowledge needed. Sixth grade band students participate in several performances throughout the school year, including winter and spring concerts. Because this is a performance-based class, this is a yearlong commitment.

Units of Study:

1st semester: Introduction of fundamental concepts using **Book One** of the “**Measures of Success**” method. Emphasis is placed on posture, breathing, hand position, tone production, instrument care, note and rhythm reading, and basic terminology (which will include things like notation symbols and dynamics). Sheet music will be introduced in preparation for the Winter Concert and students will be instructed in proper concert and stage etiquette and the importance of teamwork and responsibility to the group.

2nd semester: Building on the concepts learned during the first semester, emphasis will be placed on working with scales, keys and key signatures, as well as more complex rhythms and time signatures and expanding the range of notes and terminology. Solo repertoire is introduced. Students will have another performance opportunity with a review of performance responsibilities.

Goals and Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Play major scales and arpeggios in the keys of concert F, Bb, Eb, and Ab Major and the Bb chromatic scale.
- Read rhythms using note and rest values from whole notes to eighth notes including dotted quarters and eighths.
- Produce a characteristic tone for their instrument.
- Demonstrate proper posture, breathing and hand position for their instrument.
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and notation (such as repeats, accents, accidentals, etc...).
- Demonstrate proper care of their instrument.
- Successfully perform their part in public performances.

7th Grade Band Course Description:

Band instruction in the seventh grade is built upon the fundamentals learned in the sixth grade. Students entering seventh grade band will need to have either successfully completed sixth grade band, or demonstrate for the instructor that the exit outcomes from sixth grade band have been met. Students participate in several performances throughout the school year, including the Homecoming Parade, Winter Concert, Pre-Festival Concert, MSBOA Festival Performance, Spring Concert, and the 8th Grade Recognition Ceremony. These students will also have an opportunity to audition for the MSBOA All State Band, which will perform at the Michigan Music Education In-Service Conference in Grand Rapids, and also to attend Solo and Ensemble festival in December. Because this is a performance-based class, we ask for a yearlong commitment.

Units of Study:

1st Semester: Development of fundamental concepts using the method book “**Measures of Success, Book 2.**” Emphasis is placed on characteristic tone quality, expanded range development, chromatics, tuning, rhythm recognition, blend, balance, intermediate technique skills, solo literature, and various musical styles. Marching technique will be refined in preparation for the Homecoming Parade. Concepts emphasized will include the proper marching style, rank and file alignment,

and proper instrument carriage. Students will memorize music for the parade. Also, Solo and Ensemble preparation will be introduced.

2nd Semester: Building on the concepts learned during the first semester, emphasis will be placed on working with intermediate Jr. High literature. Precise playing and a greater understanding of individual musicianship and responsibility are developed.

Goals and Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Play major scales and arpeggios in the keys of concert Bb, Eb, F, Ab, C, g minor, and c minor.
- Read rhythms using note and rest values from whole notes through sixteenth notes including dotted rhythms.
- Time Signatures include 4/4, 3/4, cut time, and 6/8 time.
- Proper posture, breathing, tone quality, and hand position for their instrument are reinforced.
- Able to successfully perform intermediate-level middle school band repertoire, demonstrating the proper use of dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and notation (such as repeats, accents, accidentals, etc...).

8th Grade Band Course Description:

Band instruction in the eighth grade is built upon the fundamentals learned in the sixth and seventh grades. Students entering eighth grade band will need to have either successfully completed seventh grade band or demonstrate for the instructor that the exit outcomes from seventh grade band have been met. Students participate in several performances throughout the school year, including the Homecoming Parade, Winter Concert, Pre-Festival Concert, MSBOA Festival Performance, and Spring Concert. These students will also have an opportunity to audition for the MSBOA All State Band, which will perform at the Michigan Music Education In-Service Conference in Grand Rapids, and to attend Solo and Ensemble festival in December. Because this is a performance-based class, we ask for a yearlong commitment.

Units of Study:

1st Semester: Further development and refinement of fundamental concepts. Emphasis is placed on characteristic tone quality, expanded range development, chromatics, tuning, rhythm recognition, blend, balance, intermediate technique skills, solo literature, and various musical styles. Marching technique will be refined in preparation for the Homecoming Parade. Concepts emphasized will include the proper marching style, rank and file alignment, and proper instrument carriage. Students will memorize music for the parade.

2nd Semester: Building on the concepts learned during the first semester, emphasis will be placed on working with advanced Jr. High literature. Precise playing and a greater understanding of individual musicianship and responsibility are developed.

Goals and Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Play scales and arpeggios in all major and minor keys.
- Read rhythms using note and rest values from whole notes through sixteenth notes including dotted rhythms.
- Time Signatures include 4/4, 3/4, cut time, and 6/8 time.
- Proper posture, breathing, tone quality, and hand position for their instrument are reinforced.
- Successfully perform advanced-level middle school band repertoire, demonstrating the proper use of dynamics, articulation, phrasing, and notation (such as repeats, accents, accidentals, etc...).
- Continue on to High School Band without significant gaps in musical knowledge or ability.

SMS Bands Grading Policy

10%: Weekly Practice Assignments

Students are graded on turning in weekly practice journals and other assignments. This is a weekly practice assignment, to be completed at home. Practice journals are due each Tuesday, and must be completed and turned in via Google Form on Schoology (students without internet at home may use their seminar time to do this). At-home practice is vital to the success of your child in band! **Late journals** must be submitted via paper (can be found in the band room), and will be counted for partial credit only. This category also includes any formative assessments done during class.

30% Rehearsal Skills

Students are graded on coming to class with all materials everyday (instrument, music/book/folder, pencil, reeds, mouthpiece) and demonstrating understanding of good rehearsal skills by following classroom rehearsal expectations.

60% Performance

Students are graded on playing and written tests, and on concert performances. Students MAY retake all playing assessments (please note that retakes do not affect chair order), but must schedule a time to do so outside of the normal band class hour. For concerts - students are graded on attendance, punctuality, being in uniform, having all materials, following instructions, and demonstration of proper audience and stage etiquette.

What are Rehearsal Skills?

A very important part of middle school band is learning how to properly rehearse. The general flow of rehearsal is: band plays, director cuts off and makes corrections, teaches, or helps students, band plays again. If the teaching between the playing is interrupted, the band cannot progress to a higher level of playing. If a student comes to class without their proper materials, there is no way they can show good rehearsal skills because they cannot fully participate in the rehearsal. **Coming to class unprepared is the biggest reason students lose points on their band grade!** Repeated lack of preparedness will result in RTC intervention, per building procedure.

Rehearsal Expectations

1. BE NICE: This means be positive, let others hear the speaker, and never use mean words.
2. TRY! Never give up. Be ready to play. Mark your music as asked. We will never give up on you!
3. BE PREPARED DAILY: Bring your instrument, book, sheet music/folder, pencil, reeds (woodwinds), sticks (percussion), mouthpiece (brass), and brain! ☺
4. RESPECT THE PROCESS:
 - Please, no blaring or intentional barnyard noises.
 - Immediately get instrument ready upon entering the room.
 - Always be ready to play when the baton is up.
 - Only touch items that YOU own (or that are signed out to you).
 - Please dispose of gum. Food should be finished in the hallway. Water is okay, but be careful around instruments.
 - Control your voice. Please, no yelling at anyone.
 - Allow the director to teach after the cutoff.
 - Please do not use electronic devices during class. They should be away and out of sight.

-Do your best to not interrupt rehearsal. This means: use the bathroom during passing time (the pass is for emergencies), use your filter instead of blurting out, take care of reed/music/instrument issues before or after class and not during instructional time

Classroom Procedures

1. Students should enter the room and immediately get their instrument ready and go to their seats.
2. Any instrument or reed issues should be addressed before or after class, and not during instructional time (unless both band directors are in the room).
3. Instruments **MUST** be stored in their assigned lockers or in the storage room. Students may also store instruments in their own school lockers if they wish. Padlocks **MUST** be locked, even during class. Students are responsible for missing instruments taken out of unlocked lockers. **Instruments must not be left in the middle of the hallway, as this violates the building fire code.**
4. If your sheet music is lost: Please ask another member in your section to borrow their music, and pin it on the copy board at the front of the room. Check back the next day for your copies. If you are the only person in your section and you are prone to misplacing your music, you may want to make some extra copies on your own when it is handed out. Figure out a system that works for you!

Performances/Attendance Policy

Unlike most other class absences, which affect only the individual involved, **an absence from band affects the entire ensemble**. Public performances are the culmination of many weeks and sometimes months of preparations. The reputation of the group, the music department and the school is often a reflection of such performances. **It is required that every student be in attendance for all scheduled performances**. If you realize there is an **unavoidable** conflict (death in the family, extreme sickness) with one of the scheduled performances, please let one of the directors know as soon as possible. **COMMUNICATION IS EVERYTHING**. Please make every attempt to keep these concert dates open for your child. Unexcused absences from a public performance, especially those without parent contact, will result in lowering the grade for the marking period involved. Excused absences generally are given only for illness or family emergency. Students who have an excused absence from a performance may be given a make-up assignment, per director discretion on a performance-by-performance basis.

We encourage our band students to participate in sports! **Upon joining a sports team, students should immediately check their sports schedule for conflicts with band concerts**. If there is a conflict with a sporting event on the evening of a concert, students should communicate this to the directors as soon as possible. The directors and coaches will then come together to provide a solution for the student.

Ms. Brainard must be contacted at least two weeks in advance for known conflicts and as soon as possible for sudden illness related absences. An absence is unlikely to be excused if this procedure is not followed, and will result in a grade of zero.

Concert Uniform

- White, long-sleeved dress shirt with collar
- Black uniform sweater vest (provided by school, 7th and 8th only)
 - Long Black Dress Pants (no leggings or capris, please)
 - Black Socks and Black Shoes

The goal of a uniform is for the band to look like a team without individuals drawing attention. We hope our home audience and our music judges will be able to recognize our uniformity when we are together on stage. Your child IS welcome to steal the show with their amazing sound as long as they do it in their uniform. ☺

- Boys and Girls: Black Socks and ALL Black Dress Shoes
 - Style is up to you. Just wear something you are comfortable walking in. If you are not comfortable in heels, a high stage is not the place to try them out. ☺ Any dress shoe that is all black will work.
- Students should avoid colored jewelry or colored undershirts that can be seen.
- Ties look awesome but they are not part of this uniform for boys or girls. For the sake of keeping the color white from EVERYONE on the top, please keep your cool ties at home for concert band performances. The same goes for accessories. We want ONLY white on top (in addition to the vest for 7th/8th graders). Please do not wear black sweaters or scarves.

The first time the concert uniform is required is at our December concert. Goodwill and Salvation Army are great places to pick-up the required clothing items for a lower cost.

For 7th and 8th Grade: Because part of our grade at MSBOA Festival is on our uniformity on stage, Ms. Brainard will be doing a uniform check at our Pre-Festival concert.

In the event of extreme warm weather (especially during our spring concert) Ms. Brainard will communicate to the band if they can wear short sleeves. For 8th Grade Recognition, the 7th Grade Band generally wears dress clothes instead of their uniform. For the

If you cannot afford a piece of the uniform please let Ms. Brainard know far in advance. We have families donate uniform parts for this purpose.

If you have items to donate to families who need assistance, please send the clothing in with your child. We are grateful for band hand-me-downs!

Uniform Exceptions:

Homecoming Parade (7th and 8th Grade only): Students may wear ANY blue or Sparta spirit gear! Sports jerseys are encouraged. In the event of rain or cold, any jacket is fine--our first priority is comfort.

8th Grade Recognition (7th Grade Band only): Students may wear any dress clothes--think Sunday best! No jeans or t-shirts, please.

Spring Concert (all bands): In the event of hot weather, students may wear short sleeves under their uniform sweater.

EXTRA OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND MEMBERS!

MSBOA DISTRICT 7 Honors Band (7th and 8th grade)

The annual honors band will be held on March 24th this year. Selection to be in the honors band will be based on your chair placement and your solo and ensemble performance, and also whether you can attend the sectional night on March 21st.

Music Boosters (All Grades)

Parents: if you have a child in band, you are a Music Booster. You do not have to "join" to become a member. The boosters do a tremendous amount of good for our band and choir programs. They have kept the activities going during hard economic times. Meetings are every third Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm at the HS band room.

Solo and Ensemble (7th and 8th grade)

Solo and Ensemble Festival is an event put on by MSBOA in early December. Students may choose to participate by either playing a solo piece (most must have piano accompaniment) or by playing in an ensemble such as a duet, trio, quartet, etc. Although not required, it is strongly recommended for the musical growth of the individual. It is a great opportunity to get feedback from someone who is an expert on your instrument!

Students will be responsible for entry fees (around \$10.00). The Sparta Music Boosters will provide payment for piano accompaniments at these events (\$25.00 provided). **If an event is cancelled by a student dropping out after an accompanist has been assigned, the payment becomes the responsibility of the student.**

MSBOA All-State Program (7th and 8th Grade)

Students must prepare an announced etude, a series of scales and sight-read during each 10 minute recorded audition. Each audition is submitted using only an identification number with no reference to the student or school. The auditions are evaluated by an adjudicator and placed in order. The required number of instruments are selected to fill each section. An average of over 2,000 students audition each year for the 400 seats in our four ensembles.

In January the students assemble for two and a half days of rehearsal with nationally recognized conductors. A concert is held on the Saturday of the Michigan Music Conference. 2012 grad Adam Ronning made it into the All-State Band! Who will be next?

Chicago Trip (7th and 8th Grade)

In the spring, 7th and 8th grade band students will have the opportunity to go on an overnight trip to Chicago! Possible stops include: The Museum of Science and Industry, Navy Pier, The Bean, Gino's Pizza, The Shedd Aquarium, and more! The next SMS Band Chicago trip will take place this year, in May 2020.

What can you do as a parent?

1. Encourage your child to practice. This is "band homework". Help develop a **routine of practice** by setting aside a specific time each evening for practice. Remind your child to fill out and turn in their practice journal each week.
2. Provide a quiet, comfortable place to practice without distractions.
3. Take a minute to verify that your email address is up to date with the school. Most of our information comes home via email--staying informed is very important!
4. Show an interest in your child's music study. Encourage him/her to play for you and other people.
5. Whenever possible, go to concerts, musical events, and buy recordings that feature your child's instrument. A recording makes a great gift!
6. Attend your child's band concerts and discuss proper concert behavior with your child. A schedule of events is included in this handout. Mark your calendar and try to keep those dates clear.
7. Consider joining the Sparta Music Boosters or help with one of the fundraisers or chaperone a trip.

Thank you for trusting us with your child's musical education! If you ever need anything, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am here to help.

Sincerely,



Whitney Brainard
Sparta Middle School
Band and Choir

Sparta Middle School Music Performance Calendar 2019-20

Friday September 27: Homecoming Parade (7th and 8th Bands) 5:00 PM (report to MS Band Room at 4:30)
Monday, October 28: Fall Concert (7th and 8th Grade Bands), 7:00 PM
Tuesday, October 29: Choir & Marching Band Concert (8th Grade Choir) 7:30 PM
Tuesday, December 10: Holiday Concert (6-8 Bands, 8th Choir) 6th @ 6:30 PM, 7th and 8th @ 7:30 PM
Monday, February 24: Pre-Festival Concert (7th and 8th Bands) 7:00 PM
Between February 28-March-9: TBD MSBOA District Festival (7th and 8th Bands)
Mid-March: Coffee House Concert-Date TBD, depending on HS Basketball Playoff Schedule (Required for 8th Choir, optional for band students)
Tuesday, May 12: Combined 8th Grade Band and HS Band Concert 7:00 PM
Thursday, May 14: Spring Choir/Jazz Band Concert (8th Grade Choir) 7:00 PM
Tuesday, May 19: Middle School Spring Concert (6th and 7th Bands) 7:00 PM
Wednesday, May 20: 8th Grade Recognition (7th Grade Band performs) 7:00 PM

*Concerts take place in the Sparta High School auditorium, and call time is generally 30 minutes before the performance in the HS Band Room (unless told otherwise). **All performances are required.***

Students are able to access the Sparta Middle School Band Handbook and most other class information via Schoology. Much of our important information can also be found at www.spartabands.org.

Please DETACH the bottom portion and turn in by Friday, Sept. 6th. This for a grade! Keep the calendar above and put it on your refrigerator :)

“I have received, read, and agree to follow the policies set forth in the 2019-20 Sparta Middle School Band Handbook, and I have put all of the concert dates in my family calendar. I will do my best to avoid conflicts with these dates.”

Student Name Printed _____ Grade _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____