

Greenwich High School Music Department - Frequently Asked Questions

What are “three-block” classes and “six-block” classes?

Although there are eight periods or “blocks” in the GHS schedule, only six of those blocks will meet on a given day while two “drop”. The year is divided into a series of eight-day cycle. Over the course of an eight-day cycle, each block will meet six times and will drop twice. Classes that meet all six times in an eight-day cycle are called “six-block classes”. Some introductory courses meet only three times in an eight-day cycle and are called “three-block classes”. Three-block classes can be paired together or combined with sem skills, science labs or gym classes in order to maximize the number of different courses each student can take in any one semester.

Are there any “three-block” music classes at GHS?

Yes. Although all of the major performing groups are six-block classes, there are some three-block general music classes including Intro to Music Theory, Intro to Electronic Music, Guitar, and Beginning Band.

How many electives can a freshman take?

Freshmen can take as many as two six-block elective courses, although certain scheduling obstacles can result in room for only one six-block elective course.

What large performing groups are available to freshmen?

Concert Choir, Concert Band, Concert Orchestra, and Percussion Ensemble.

Can a freshman be in both Concert Choir and Concert Band or in both Concert Choir and Concert Orchestra?

Yes. In fact, many students sing and play an instrument during each of the four years of their high school career. Parents will need to work closely with their child’s GHS Guidance Counselor to ensure that all desired music classes appear on their child’s class schedule.

Can a freshman play sports and be in Concert Choir, Concert Band or Concert Orchestra? Do sports and music ever conflict?

The majority of GHS music students participate in sports every year. On occasion, a concert may conflict with a sporting event but we have an excellent rela-

tionship with the Athletic Director and very successful track record of working out conflicts so that all students can fully participate in both activities.

Does my child need to have any prior singing experience to be in Concert Choir?

No. Any student with the ability to match a pitch with their voice can be successful in Concert Choir.

Does my child need to have prior playing experience to be in Concert Band or Concert Orchestra?

Yes. Students should have some ability to play a band or string instrument. However, students wishing to start learning a wind instrument can enroll in Beginning Band.

Can a freshman be in Symphony Band, Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Madrigals, Witchmen, or Chamber Singers?

No. These auditioned ensembles are comprised of 10th-12th graders who have had one year in Concert Band, Concert Choir or Concert Orchestra.

Can a freshman be in Jazz Lab, Jazz Ensemble or String Ensemble?

Yes. Auditions for these groups will be held after the start of the school year.

If my child is in Concert Choir, will there be any required commitments outside of the school day, such as before/after school rehearsals?

Other than four evening concerts each year, there are no commitments outside the school day for students in Concert Choir.

If my child is in Concert Band or Orchestra, will there be any required commitments outside of the school day, such as before/after school rehearsals?

There are four evening concerts each year. There is one before school dress rehearsal before each concert. Students in Concert Band will also attend one before school sectional per week.

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Can a freshman be in Marching Band?

Yes. At GHS, Marching Band is a club activity that meets outside the school day; usually one night a week in addition to home and playoff football games and at least one parade. There is an optional Marching Band camp at the end of August. Students wishing to participate should ask their current band teacher how to register. Students do not need to enroll in a GHS band class to participate in Marching Band.

Can a freshman get honors credit for Concert Band, Concert Choir or Concert Orchestra?

No. Freshmen are not eligible for honors credit in any music class.

How can my child maximize his/her chances of getting into a Select Choir?

Auditions for GHS Select Choirs are highly competitive and are based primarily on a student's ability to read music. Students wishing to improve their music reading should take Introduction to Music Theory, which is designed to aid inexperienced and developing musicians in becoming fluent music readers.

Can a freshman audition for the Connecticut Western Region or All-State Band, Chorus, Jazz Band or Orchestra?

Yes. Students will receive information at the start of the school year.

Do you have to take private lessons to be in a GHS music group?

No, but they are strongly recommended for any student wishing to maximize their musical development.

Do band and orchestra students have to own/rent their own instrument?

Yes, but the school owns a number of larger instruments such as tuba, bass clarinet, cello, double bass, etc. available for student use.

My child is a pianist. Can s/he be involved in music at GHS?

Although piano instruction is not offered at GHS, pianists will benefit greatly from singing in a choir, playing a band or string instrument, and/or taking either

Introduction to Music Theory or Introduction to Electronic Music in their freshman year. In future years, every serious pianist should strongly consider taking Advanced Placement Music Theory (grades 10-12). Also, each of our jazz bands needs one or more pianists. Students interested in learning jazz piano should see the band director.

What is Electronic Music (EMusic)?

Students learn about music through composition by playing music on a piano keyboard and recording onto a computer. Students have a hands-on experience with both music and technology. An introductory video for the full EMusic program is available at: <https://youtu.be/UWh2GWrkWJo>

Do I need to know how to read music to take EMusic?

No experience of any kind is required to take Introduction to Electronic Music. Students interested in learning how to read music should take Introduction to Music Theory.

Can a student skip Introduction to Electronic Music?

No. Skipping Intro to EMusic is not in the student's best interest regardless of their past experience with music or technology. After Intro, students may be placed in either EMusic 1 or EMusic 2 with the permission of the instructor.

Do I need to have any special equipment at home for EMusic?

No. All the work for EMusic is done in class.

Can I be in Concert Choir, Concert Band or Orchestra and still take EMusic?

Yes. Ninth graders can take up to two six-block electives. It may not be possible to schedule certain combinations of courses -- it all depends on each student's chosen academic program. It is NOT recommended that students drop a performing ensemble in order to take EMusic at any point in their high school career. Furthermore, any student hoping to be a Music Technology or Music Business major in college should sing in a GHS chorus if they don't already play an instrument or do not yet feel comfortable singing.