

Special Note to Parents of Students New to Jazz at Highland

Mr. Swartzloff's jazz band performs at each elementary school in the spring. This, among other factors, creates a lot of enthusiasm among students to become a part of the jazz program at Highland. In the past, some students have been frustrated by the audition music and/or placement into the jazz bands at Highland. This note has been written to help you and your budding young jazzer better understand the process. It is written as "frequently asked questions". On the back of this note is a detailed description of the jazz program at Highland.

Q. How many jazz bands are there at Highland?

A. Two. "Jazz 1" is the more advanced and "Jazz 2" is the less advanced.

Q. What are the Auditions?

A. These are placement auditions for saxophones, trumpets, trombones, guitar, piano, bass, and drums. The audition results will be used to assign students to the various jazz bands and to assign parts (first, second, etc.). There will be a review session (optional) approximately one or two weeks before the audition. The auditions will occur in September.

Q. Is anyone "cut" from participation?

A. Yes, it is possible for students who audition to not be placed into a jazz band. There are two possible reasons for this. First, to balance the sound in each band, there are limited numbers of each instrument that can be used. For example, up to two pianists, bassists, guitarists, and drummers can be assigned to each jazz band. Second, a student may not be musically ready to perform in a jazz band, and would be unlikely to have a positive musical experience playing in a group above their playing ability. In either case, we would encourage students to keep working and audition again the next year.

Q. The music is difficult. Do I have to audition?

A. The audition music is difficult, especially for sixth graders. Even the "easy" version of the audition music for saxophones, trumpets, and trombones assumes skills covered by the end of the 6th grade band curriculum at Highland. The audition music for guitar, piano, bass, and drums assumes that students are taking private lessons. We do encourage all students to audition so that they will be familiar with the audition process. Students may even just "sit in" on the auditions. This will help them the next year.

Q. What is the #1 thing I can do to help my student have a chance at making Jazz 1 in the future?

A. Sign them up for private lessons. Most students in Jazz 1 this year have been taking private lessons for several years. Ask the private teacher if he/she is willing to teach swing style and jazz improvisation as part of the private lessons. Bring this year's audition material as an example of what to strive towards. Please contact either Mr. Swartzloff or Mrs. Bollinger for private teacher contact info.

On the back of this note is a description of the two Jazz Bands at Highland School.

Highland Middle School Jazz Bands

Jazz 1

Teacher -- Mr. Swartzloff

Level -- More advanced jazz band of two

Size of Band -- 2 alto saxophones, 2 tenor saxophones, 1 baritone saxophone, 4/5 trombones, 4/5 trumpets, up to 2 pianists, bassists, and drummers. (Some years there is also guitar player.)

Audition Required -- Yes

Assumptions -- It is assumed that every student in the group will start the year with a strong understanding of swing style and that every student will already have had some experience improvising jazz solos.

Improvisation Goals -- Every student in the group will become comfortable improvising jazz solos. Every student in the group will play at least one improvised solo in performance during the year.

Concert Schedule -- January - "Winter Jazz Night", LHS Jazz Festival. April - Highland Open House & Tour of Elementary Schools.

Jazz 2

Teacher -- Mrs. Bollinger

Level -- Less advanced jazz band of two

Size of Band -- 2-4 alto saxophones, 2 tenor saxophones, 1 baritone saxophone, 4-6 trombones, 5-7 trumpets, up to 2 pianists, bassists, and drummers. (Some years there are 1 or 2 guitar players.)

Audition Required -- Yes

Assumptions -- Very little is assumed for students entering this group. Students will have shown in their audition that they are ready for the music this group will perform.

Improvisation Goals -- Students will learn the basics of jazz improvisation and opportunities will be given to play improvised solos in performance.

Concert Schedule -- January - "Winter Jazz Night". April -- Highland Open House.