

The Instrumental Music Program--at a glance

The Instrumental Music Program of the Oakland Public Schools is comprised of two areas--the band program and the strings program. The following is an overview of both programs:

Table of Strings and Band Programs:

<u>Strings</u>	<u>Band</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to students beginning in fourth grade. • Students may choose from the <u>violin, viola, and cello</u> at the elementary level*. In middle school, students also have the option to study the string bass. • The performing ensemble for the strings program is the orchestra. <p>*When completing the sign up form, students are to select the two instruments that interest them the most- <i>of those listed</i>. They will be assigned to <u>one</u> of their selections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to students beginning in fifth grade. • Students may choose from the <u>flute, clarinet, oboe, alto saxophone, French horn, trombone, baritone, and percussion instruments</u> at the elementary level*. In middle school, students also have the option to study bassoon, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, and tuba. • The performing ensemble is the band. <p>*When completing the sign up form, students are to select the two instruments that interest them the most- <i>of those listed</i>. They will be assigned to <u>one</u> of their selections.</p>

- The focal point of each area is the ensemble - the band and the orchestra. Elementary band and orchestra begin rehearsals for the Spring Concert mid-year, while middle school ensembles rehearse from September through June in preparation for multiple performances, including their Winter and Spring Concerts.
- *With ensembles as a focal point, it is important to remember that each group needs to have a balance of instruments. **In order for your child to have the best and most authentic band or orchestra experience, he or she needs to play in a group that is comprised of its characteristic instruments.** This is why your child is asked to select two instruments that interest him or her the most. Your child may be assigned to either of the instruments selected. For those students interested in percussion, there is a limit of four registrants per school. Slots are filled on a first come, first served basis. Percussion forms must be returned*

directly to the elementary band teacher, who will note the order in which they are received.

The following information will help you decide if participating in the instrumental music program is right for your child. Please feel free to contact Ms. Marcia Marino, District Instrumental Music Coordinator, at (201) 337-6106 if you have any questions not addressed here.

Instrumental Music Lessons

Elementary

- Instrumental music lessons are offered as a pullout program. Students attend lessons during the regular school day, with their lesson time scheduled to have minimal impact on the core academic areas of reading, language arts and math.
- Lesson groups may have a set time each week, or rotate throughout the day.
- Students are expected to complete whatever academic work is missed, regardless of subject missed.

Please know that schedules are created collaboratively with input from both faculty and the building principal.

Middle School

- Lessons continue as a pullout program, with the lessons scheduled on a rotating basis.
- Because of greater flexibility in scheduling at the middle school, students are generally not pulled from any academic area more frequently than once every six weeks.

In both elementary and middle school, students are arranged into small groups for their lessons, with like instruments grouped together when possible.

Elementary Band and Orchestra

- The elementary level ensembles, band and orchestra, rehearse during the children's recess time, beginning at mid-year.
- Ensemble starting dates are generally determined by the overall readiness of the students.
- In order to participate in these ensembles, students must attain a certain level of proficiency. Having this level of proficiency will allow all students to make a positive contribution to the ensemble. Areas of proficiency include the ability to

perform from notation, use of the bow (strings), and appropriate tone production.

- *Specific proficiency guidelines have been established by your child's instrumental music instructor and will be distributed at the beginning of the school year.*

Middle School Band and Orchestra

Middle school band and orchestra rehearsals are scheduled by the directors of those ensembles. As days and times vary from year to year, rehearsal schedules for these groups will be provided to participating students at the beginning of each school year.

Program Expectations

Participation in the instrumental music program requires commitment. This commitment is illustrated by what is asked of the students, as outlined below:

- **Students are encouraged to participate for the entire school year and to continue enrollment in the program thereafter.** Fulfilling a year-long commitment to playing an instrument provides your child with, surprisingly, approximately twenty hours of instructional time. ***Although much is accomplished in this short time, it is far too early to decide to discontinue the study of an instrument based on such a short amount of time on task.*** The following are just a few of the benefits of continued participation:
 - **Fulfillment of Potential**
 - **Growth and development in attitude and skill**
 - **Perseverance**
 - **Mindset that learning is a life-long activity**
- Students are expected to practice regularly.
- Students are expected to bring the instrument, lesson book, music folder, a pencil, and any other materials designated by the teacher (i.e. agenda, practice log) to school for the weekly lesson.
- Students are expected to follow the lesson schedule and to attend the lessons prepared with the above-mentioned materials.

Points About Practice

- **Practice is an integral part of participation in the instrumental music program.** At-home practice is a crucial ingredient to success on any instrument. Practicing between lessons will allow your child to:
 - **Develop the physical strength and stamina needed to enjoy playing**
 - **Hone their critical thinking and problem-solving skills**
 - **Make connections between concepts they have learned**

- **See the relationship between music, math, science and language**
- Students in the instrumental music program, regardless of instrument, are expected to practice *a minimum of three to five times per week. Daily practice is ideal.*
- The benefits listed above increase with the amount of frequency your child practices. ***A child that is able to understand the concepts, play comfortably and be meaningfully engaged with the learning process is one who will enjoy participation in instrumental music.***
- Occasionally, fourth grade students who are participating in the strings program become concerned about practicing recorder for their general music classes. In many instances, concepts covered in both recorder and strings will be complementary. Based on the practice guidelines listed above, students participating in strings should be able to fulfill their recorder requirement without difficulty.

Evaluation

- Each marking period you will receive a progress report indicating the growth your child has demonstrated for that quarter of the school year. The purpose of these progress reports is to provide you with feedback that can be used to assist your child in his or her preparation for lessons. Even if you are not “musically inclined,” reminders from you about topics mentioned in the progress report can help your child remember which areas to address during practice sessions.
- Within each lesson, your child will learn how to self-assess. A vital component of instrumental music instruction is teaching students to listen to themselves play and self-correct as needed.
- The process of self-assessment, while requiring focus and an age-appropriate level of maturity, is what allows your child to build the skills and proficiencies needed to participate in the performing ensemble. Your child’s instrumental music teacher will guide this process using a variety of strategies.

Instrumental Music--Is it the right activity for my child?

As a parent or guardian, you can best answer this question. Now that you have a complete overview of the instrumental music program, your decision will be an informed one. Before signing your child up for participation in the instrumental music program, please consider the following:

- The number of pullouts in which your child already participates. Can your child add another one without feeling overwhelmed?
- The number of after-school activities in which your child is involved: Will your child have adequate time for these activities, homework, and practice?

- Your child's level of patience and tolerance for frustration. As the old saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day." *Learning an instrument takes time, attention, and practice.*
- Your child's level of commitment and interest. Does your child want to participate in instrumental music because he or she genuinely wants to learn his or her chosen instrument, because his or her friends are signing up, or because it is the instrument available to your child at this time? *Students who have the most positive experience are those who have a genuine desire to play the instrument they have selected.*
- Your support. Encouragement, praise, providing your child with a quiet, well-lighted place to practice, and an instrument that is in good-working order will allow your child to achieve at his or her full potential.

On behalf of the music faculty of the Oakland Public Schools, we welcome your child's participation in the unique experience that is instrumental music. Learning a musical instrument engages the intellect, the senses, and the heart, while participating in a performing ensemble fosters teamwork and shared goals. We hope that you will join us in "making music together."