

# The Laing Middle School Band Program

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Dear Future Laing Students and Parents:

Greetings from Laing Middle School of Science and Technology! My name is Adam Vernon-Young and I am the Band Director at Laing Middle School. I would like to personally extend an invitation to your student to join our award-winning program next year. In addition to learning how to play a musical instrument, they will also be part of one of the best bands in the state of South Carolina.

**If you are interested in joining the Band program at Laing** and have not done so, then it is not too late! Enclosed with this letter is a brochure that will provide you with information about our program, some of our accomplishments, and how to register to be a part of the Laing Band.

**If you already have joined the Laing Band program**, then you will be getting more information on upcoming dates and procedures this summer. You can also call the school or visit the front office and they can make sure that you are signed up!

We hope that you decide to join us this year in learning a skill that will last a lifetime! Below are the answers to some frequently asked questions that many parents and students have about joining the band. Please feel free to email me or call the front office with any questions that you may have. If you decide to join, then we will look forward to seeing you on your first day of being part of a tradition of excellence and music here at Laing!

Be sure to fill out our [Interest Form](#) to receive all future updates!

Musically Yours,

Adam Vernon-Young  
Director of Bands

Justin Clarkson  
Assistant Director of Bands

## **Media Links**

2024 Laing Band Teaser:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4guD\\_DWMDr4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4guD_DWMDr4)

Laing Band Promotional:

<https://youtu.be/0qIbp3qC0Mo>

Laing Band Website:

<https://laingmsband.membershiptoolkit.com/home>

Laing Band Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Laing-Middle-School-Band-Program-106222824406687/>

Laing Band Interest Form: <https://www.bepartofthemusic.org/group/index.php?id=8250>

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What instruments are in the Band?**

Anything that you have to blow air into (also known as 'wind instruments') such as the flute, trumpet, french horn, etc. as well as percussion. Percussion consists of more than just drums; you must also learn how to play a variety of different instruments including the timpani, chimes, and xylophone (which is laid out just like a piano). There are also opportunities for students who play things like guitar, bass, piano, etc to play in our after-school Jazz Band.

In 6th grade, beginning Band students start the year on one of "The Big Four" (Flute, Clarinet, Trumpet, Trombone/Euphonium). As we move through the year, students will have the opportunity to try-out other instruments, like percussion, tuba, saxophone, french horn, etc. By the end of their 6th grade year, there will be 13 different types of instruments playing on stage together!

### **When does the Band rehearse?**

The band meets every school day during one of the students' Related Arts periods. There will be occasional rehearsals before or after school just before concerts/performances, but the vast majority of rehearsals happen just during the kids' daily Band class.

### **I have never played an instrument before or read music. Will I still be able to join Band?**

Absolutely! No prior experience is necessary. Most students entering the band program in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade start at the ground level with no experience, so that is where we start with everyone. If you can already read music or play an instrument, then you will just have a little bit of a head start.

### **I play sports and/or do other after school activities. Can I still participate in Band?**

Yes, and you should! Talented kids are usually talented in multiple areas, and they should be given every outlet and opportunity to see success. Especially the first year in Band, there are very few commitments outside of our normal class meeting time and practicing at home. For those other occurrences, we will send out a calendar for the entire year on the first week of school so you can see everything that we'll be doing, and plan accordingly. As long as you communicate what your needs are, we are happy to work with you on anything schedule related.

We have a few days at the beginning of the year when we meet after school to help us get started, as well as 2-3 after school rehearsals before our winter and spring concerts. 6th graders perform at least 3 concerts throughout the course of the year, and our concerts are always fun events where friends and family can come and celebrate their hard work and accomplishments.

### **Can I still do Band if I am in orchestra or chorus?**

Absolutely! Students would be in band during one related arts class period and chorus or orchestra during the other. We have students who participate in multiple performing arts successfully all the time. Much of the knowledge and skills are even shared between the different classes!

### **How long will it be before I can play my instrument?**

It's a bit of a complicated answer, but generally I explain it like this- When someone first decides to become a pilot, the first step is certainly not to just hand them an airplane and hope for the best. There's a bit of background information and knowledge required before you can expect them to even attempt to fly successfully. Band works in much the same way. We will spend the first few weeks of class learning the basics of reading music, counting rhythms, and learning instrument basics so that when the instruments do arrive, they can focus their attention primarily on playing.

On the first day that we all play our instruments together, it's going to sound very...interesting :). Over the next three months, however, we will gradually learn more and more about how to make a good sound, reading rhythms, and playing together as a group. By Winter Break, you will have played a concert with recognizable music—and you will sound great doing it!

### **Do you go on any trips during the year?**

Yes, we take a trip to Carowinds in the spring. We play at their annual music festival and find some time to go on the rides, too. Our 7th and 8th graders take an annual trip to either Disney World or Universal Studios in Orlando, FL.

### **How will I know what instrument I will play?**

We will have a Spring Mouthpiece Fitting Night on May 9th. During that event, professional musicians will come to Laing and students will be able to play all of the instruments we offer. *EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT SURE ABOUT BAND FOR NEXT YEAR, YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME AND SEE WHAT YOU THINK!*

From there, we look at instruments on which we think you would be highly successful, and that you would enjoy playing. For example, if you tested incredibly well on trombone, but the thought of playing trombone is completely unappealing to you, then we won't make you play it. On the other hand, if you always wanted to play the flute, but the tester determines that you would have a very difficult time learning it, then we will look for something else that works for you.

This event will be followed a few days later by First Steps Day in the Fall, an event where professional musicians give an introduction to each section on how to start playing (and properly caring for) your instrument.

### **Speaking of instruments, how will I get one?**

We are partnered with Music and Arts, which gives a discount on most instruments to beginning band students. We have some instruments that can/will need to be rented from the school, but the majority of students will be renting through Music and Arts.

### **Is there a limit on how many kids can join?**

Not at all! We had nearly 200 kids in the whole program this past year. We want as many students participating as possible. As I always tell the kids, the bigger we are, the better we can be, and the more fun we can have! We welcome you to encourage anyone who might also be interested to join.

### **How much is all this going to cost?**

Prices of instruments and where you rent your instrument from depends on what you play, but expenses are something we can always be flexible about if a student wants to be a part of the Band. If they rent an instrument from the school, we can often waive the fee.

We also have a band fee of \$200 that covers costs that the county does not pay for such as music, clinicians, festival fees, uniforms, books, materials, etc. This is due in installments and can also be offset by fundraising and scholarships for students whose families are in financial need. That fee can also be reduced or waived if needed.

***A student will never be denied the opportunity to be in Band due to finances.***

### **I might not do band this year. Can I sign up in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade?**

In most cases, the answer is no. Band is a very sequentially structured class; things that are learned in 6<sup>th</sup> grade are built upon in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. If you want to join the band program, this is the year to start and see if you like it.

### **I still have some questions. Where can I get more information?**

If you are still unsure about joining and want more information, you may contact us at [laingmsband@gmail.com](mailto:laingmsband@gmail.com).

### **I am convinced! How do I sign up?**

Great! Be sure to fill out our [INTEREST FORM](#) and come to our **Mouthpiece Fitting Night on Thursday May 9th from 4:00-6:00 in the Laing Cafeteria!**

## Meet the Directors



### **Adam Vernon-Young - Director of Bands**

Adam Vernon-Young is the Director of Bands Laing Middle School in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. Prior to becoming the head director at Laing in 2022, he served as an Assistant Director at both Laing and Cario Middle School since the 2019 school year. Adam received his Master of Arts in Teaching degree from the University of South Carolina, where he also previously received his Bachelors in Music Theory, as well as an Undergraduate Performance Certificate in Bass Trombone.

Under his leadership, the program at Laing has seen consistent growth over the past four years. Students from Laing regularly place highly in Region and All-State honor clinics, and earn Superior ratings at State Concert Performance Assessment and Solo and Ensemble. The Bands of Laing have performed most recently at the Charleston Music Festival, Carowinds Festival of Music, and the SCBDA Junior State Concert Festival. In 2024 the Laing Symphonic Band was

invited to perform as a featured ensemble at the South Carolina Music Educators Conference in Columbia, SC.

During his time at Carolina, Mr. Vernon-Young accumulated numerous performance and teaching credits, including playing with the USC Wind Ensemble, conducting one of the University Bands, and serving as a Graduate Assistant for two seasons with the University's Marching Band. Other performance credits include being a finalist at the American Trombone Workshop National Solo Competition, and two years marching baritone with World Class Drum and Bugle Corps, Carolina Crown.

Mr. Vernon-Young is a regular instructor, consultant, adjudicator and guest conductor with various groups across the Southeast, working with high school marching and concert programs, as well as University ensembles. In addition to his duties at Laing Middle School, he serves on the staff of the Bands of Wando High School, assisting with their fall marching season. His professional affiliations include the National Association for Music Education, and both alumni and honorary membership in the Kappa Kappa Psi, National Honorary Band Fraternity. He resides in Charleston, SC with his wife Natalie, and their cat Leopold.



### **Justin Clarkson - Assistant Director of Bands**

Dr. Justin Clarkson is a native of Columbia, South Carolina and a graduate from Irmo High School. He then attended Louisiana State University to pursue a Bachelor of Music degree in 2008, Dr. Clarkson moved to New York City to work towards a Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music where he studied with members of the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera. After graduating in 2010, Dr. Clarkson then went on to complete a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Stony Brook University under the guidance of Alan Baer and Michael Powell.

Dr. Clarkson is no stranger to Mount Pleasant as he has been serving as Brass Coordinator for the award-winning Bands of Wando since 2014. In addition to his private lesson studio and other teaching responsibilities he is also Principal Tubist for the North Charleston Pops!, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, and Mount Pleasant Symphony. He has also performed with the Savannah Philharmonic, Albany Symphony, and the Hilton Head Symphony.

Prior to joining the Laing Band program Dr. Clarkson served as Adjunct Professor of Low Brass and Brass Methods at Charleston Southern University and Adjunct Professor of Tuba/Euphonium at the College of Charleston.

Dr. Clarkson was also a member of the World Champion Cavalier Drum and Bugle Corps in 2006.

He currently resides in Moncks Corner, South Carolina with his wife, music educator and soprano, Katherine Matthews Clarkson and their son Henry.