

MS Music Lab — Grades 7–8

Course Syllabus & Family Handbook — 2026–27

Trout Lake School · Mr. Tony Fuentes

Email: t.fuentes@tlschool.net Room: 155 – Music Room

Welcome to Music Lab

Music Lab is a hands-on, band-based music class open to every 7th and 8th grader, regardless of prior musical experience. Students form small bands, learn live instruments together, and build toward real performances across the year. This starts with a first cover song, then a deeper performance-ready arrangement, then an original 12-bar blues verse, and finishing with an original song your band writes, rehearses, and records in BandLab.

Course Overview — Year at a Glance

The year is organized into four quarters, each building toward its own performance touchpoint.

Quarter	Focus	Signature Event
Q1 — Live Band Foundations & Rhythm	Bands form and name themselves, roles are assigned starting with rhythm, and every band learns drum & rhythm foundations and rehearses a first cover song — all on real instruments. Around Week 7, class transitions into BandLab: same musical skills, new tool.	Informal In-Class Band Share
Q2 — Band Time Deepens, Performance-Ready Covers	Guitar and ukulele chords are taught just-in-time for each band's own song, alongside section-by-section rehearsal technique, a First Amendment/protest-music lesson, and full multi-instrument band arrangements.	Winter Concert — Dec 10
Q3 — Groove Deep-Dive & Blues Songwriting	A deep dive into rhythm and groove analysis, a guest musician visit, and each band writing, setting, and performing an original 12-bar blues verse.	Spring Concert — Mar 16
Q4 — Song Seeds, Independent Project & Send-Off	Bands write, rehearse, and record an original song in BandLab; each student then completes a 3-week independent BandLab project before a year-end celebration.	Year-End Song Share

What Students Need

- No personal instrument or purchase is required — instruments are provided and assigned in class.
- Chromebooks are issued school-wide and used for BandLab as well as accessing Google Classroom.
- Folder for keeping handouts and sheet music.
- Notebook or composition book for reflections and writing assignments
- Pencils, highlighters, and pens for writing, reviewing, and musical notation.
- Earbuds that are compatible with their school-issued Chromebook for listening assignments

Classroom Expectations

These are the standing expectations for every class period this year:

- Arrive on time — a note from the office is needed if a student is late.
- Devices stay away, bell to bell — personal electronics (phones, smartwatches, earbuds/headphones, tablets, and gaming devices) are powered off or in airplane mode and stored away for the whole school day, not just this classroom, per the Trout Lake Student Handbook.
- Check email and Google Classroom — students are expected to read their email fully and check Google Classroom regularly.
- Respect classmates and equipment — treat the people and the instruments in this room with care.

Instruments Are Tools, Not Toys.

They stay silent until the cue — every single day. Instruments are expensive, shared, and fragile, and this expectation is what makes it possible for a room full of new musicians to work together.

Mistakes Are Part of Learning Music.

We practice a growth mindset here — no student is expected to sound like a professional on day one. Every musician you admire started exactly where you are right now, and this class is graded on effort, thinking, and growth, not raw talent.

How Grades Work

The academic grade is made up of five categories:

Category	Weight	What it measures
Performance Assessments	30%	Band and ensemble performances scored on tone, pitch accuracy, rhythm/timing, and technique appropriate to each student's role — including the Winter Concert, Spring Concert, and in-class performance touchpoints.
Applied Projects & Composition	30%	BandLab projects, the original blues verse, the Q4 original song, and cover-song arranging work — scored on structure, musical craft, and use of the concepts taught that unit.
Musical Discourse & Reflection	15%	The quality of a student's contributions to daily discussion, peer feedback, and written reflection — scored on musical substance, never on attendance. See the rubric below.
Music Literacy & Aural Skills	15%	Vocabulary checks, listening and ear-training work, and analysis of the songs and grooves studied in class.
Formative Skill Checks	10%	Short, low-stakes rehearsal or technique checks used to guide instruction ahead of a performance or project deadline.

Total: 100% of the course grade.

How Individual Grades Are Determined

This class is not graded on talent or perfection — it's graded on effort, thinking, and growth. A student who has never touched an instrument before Day 1 can absolutely earn an "A" by consistently exceeding what's asked of them, at their own level.

Every project, performance, and assessment is scored using the same scale:

A — Exceeds Expectations: goes beyond what was asked — extra polish, a creative risk, helping bandmates succeed, or tackling something harder than required.

B — Meets All Expectations: every required part of the project is complete and done to the standard asked. This is a strong, successful project.

C — Approaching Expectations: most requirements are met, but a few elements are missing or need more work to be complete.

D — Beginning Expectations: the project was attempted, but several required elements are missing or incomplete.

F — No Evidence: not submitted, or no real attempt was made.

Musical Discourse & Reflection — Scoring Rubric

This category is scored on the musical substance of what a student contributes to class discussion and reflection. It is not based on whether they were present, spoke first, or spoke often. However, an absent student may earn a low score here for lack of evidence, the same as on any assessment with no submission. A make-up option is provided for excused absences.

Level	Evidence of musical engagement
A-level — Exceeds	Uses vocabulary/concepts from the unit accurately; gives specific, actionable feedback to bandmates; connects comments to a rehearsal or learning goal; builds on another student's idea.
B-level — Meets	Uses vocabulary/concepts correctly; offers relevant feedback or reflection connected to that day's content.
C-level — Approaching	Contributes, but comments are vague, off-topic, or don't use content-specific language.
D/F-level — Beginning	No exit-ticket or discussion contribution submitted, or the contribution shows no engagement with that day's content.

Performance & Event Calendar

Event	When	Notes
Informal In-Class Band Share	End of Q1 (in class)	Low-stakes, in-class-only share of one section of each band's first cover song.
Guest Musician Visit	Quarter 3	A pilot visit from a musician who can speak to rhythm, groove, or blues — date announced once confirmed.
Winter Concert	December 10	Required evening performance
Blues Verse Share	Quarter 3 (in class)	Each band performs its original 12-bar blues verse for the class.
Spring Concert	March 16	Required evening performance
Year-End Song Share	End of Q4 (in class) — date TBD	Required — students bring a song that means something to them, and each band shares its independent BandLab project.

Assignment Deadlines and Make-Up Work

An absent student may earn a low score for lack of evidence — it is never a direct deduction for the absence itself. Make-up work and late submissions are accepted for excused absences as follows:

- **Musical Discourse & Reflection:** A student with an excused absence may submit make-up evidence (a written response to that day's prompt, or a written reflection on a rehearsal recording) within two school days of returning.
- **Winter and Spring Concerts:** Attendance at the two required concerts is treated as part of that specific assessment — a missed required performance affects only the grade for that event, not a general deduction. A student with an excused absence completes an alternate demonstration (such as a recorded run-through of their part) within one week of returning.
- **Other Assignments:** For all other assignment deadlines missed due to an excused absence, the assignment must be submitted within one week of returning.

For unexcused absences, there is no make-up or late submission opportunity.

Communication

Google Classroom is the primary hub for daily posts, assignments, and updates — an invitation to join our class's Google Classroom will be sent to each student; please accept it as soon as it arrives. Questions or concerns are always welcome by email or through Google Classroom. Please reach out anytime.

NOTE: This course aligns with Washington State's 2017 Arts K–12 Learning Standards for Music (Grades 5–8 core) across all four artistic processes — Creating, Performing, Responding, and Connecting. Grading follows OSPI's Student Learning and Grading Guidance (April 21, 2020).

Acknowledgement – MS 7-8 Music Lab

Please review this syllabus together and sign below to confirm that you've read and discussed the course expectations and grading policy. Return this page to Mr. Fuentes by Tuesday, September 8, 2026.

Student Name (printed)

Student Signature

Date

Parent / Guardian Name (printed)

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date

Questions or comments for Mr. Fuentes:
