



WHITEWATER MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND HANDBOOK 2023 - 2024

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www.wmsbands.org

Welcome

Dear WMS Wildcat Band Members and Parents:

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have decided to make band and the world of music a part of your middle school experience! This handbook is basically designed to familiarize you all with the policies and procedures for all three core bands here at Whitewater Middle School. Please be sure to read this entire handbook thoroughly. Both students and parent/guardians must complete and sign the acknowledgement form after familiarizing yourselves with the information within.

We are presented with an awesome opportunity to achieve excellence and make this a premiere band program not only in Fayette County but in the state of Georgia. We must all – students, myself, and parents – work to see that this year will realize its full potential. If we work as a team, the sky is the limit for the WMS band program!

Also, please understand that if we want this program to build it will be a team effort, I will need plenty of parent volunteers to help out!!! We will discuss the various areas where help will be needed at a band parent meeting that will be scheduled before the end of September.

Looking forward to an exciting year!

Steven Charity
Band Director
Whitewater Middle School

Statement of Long-Term Goals and Philosophies

Band was a very special experience for me as a young person. It gave me a group of friends to associate with and provided an activity in which I could excel. My band directors were some of the most influential people in my life. I still see them frequently. I counsel with them, ask them questions and learn from them today just as I did many years ago as a student in their classes.

The band program at WMS is designed to be an educational and rewarding experience for all students and is guided by the following principles:

- I. Students involved in the band program should develop a sense of teamwork and an understanding that cooperation is the best ways to achieve our goals.**
Respect is a character trait that is thoroughly stressed in the band program. All members of the band program must respect one another in order to develop teamwork. Students are expected to be encouraging towards other students, honest towards one another and the director, and trusting of those around them.
- II. The band program should provide each student with reasonable challenges suitable to the student's level and designed to help them grow.**
Challenges will be presented to the students by the director at all times. The students should strive to accomplish these challenges to help themselves grow as musicians.
- III. The band program should foster and expect a high level of dedication from each member of the ensemble.**
Students are expected to make a commitment to the ensemble. Beyond that, all students will be expected to fulfill their obligations and work to achieve both personal goals and the goals set forth for the ensemble.
- IV. The students should develop an appreciation for their achievement, as well as for the achievement of other groups with the same ideals.**
Upon completing any event, the students should be able to reflect on the experience with a sense of accomplishment. It is important to appreciate the efforts put forth by all members of the band program and of other organizations. WMS bands are focused on a desire for excellence in all that they do.
- V. The students will strive to perform music of a high caliber at a Superior level.**
The student is expected to do their best at everything they attempt. Challenging music will be performed by each band and each student must do their part to play the music to the best of their ability.

Course Descriptions and Objectives

Beginning Band

Beginning band will offer and introduce to students an opportunity to express themselves musically by way of a musical instrument. In this course the student will grow musically both individually and in a performance group setting while learning elements of proper playing techniques, music reading and musical performance.

All WMS band students will develop skills of various instrumental techniques including but not limited to breathing, embouchure, intonation, rhythmic and tonal awareness, articulations, style and sight-reading. Students will also develop skills relating to music reading and recognition of various musical elements through rehearsal, repetition and performance. Over time, students will also begin to develop an awareness of technique relating to aesthetic sensitivity of music.

Classroom Rules and Requirements

1. **ABSOLUTELY NO** food, gum, or drinks in the band room. Food or drink brought into the band room will be confiscated and thrown away.
2. Be on time for class! Tardiness will not be accepted and will be dealt with in accordance with school policy.
3. **RICO REEDS ARE NOT ALLOWED!** Clarinet students should purchase Vandoren or Mitchell Lurie reeds. Saxophone students should purchase Vandoren or La Voz. All woodwind players must have at least three(3) reeds in their case. Improper equipment will result in a reduction of the student's daily participation grade.
4. Percussionists should have the proper sticks and mallets required for class. In addition all percussionist will need a bell kit and practice pad to practice at home.
5. Students are expected to use the restroom and to get water prior to coming to band class.
6. Respect the band room. Put trash in the proper receptacles. Clean up the area around you after each rehearsal.
7. Stay off of the percussion equipment if you are not a percussionist! Percussion equipment is expensive and not easily replaced.

Violation of any of the above rules will result in a reduction of the student's daily grade!

Any student caught abusing or misusing school property will be reprimanded and fined for damages.

Rehearsal Procedures

1. Each student will have 5 minutes before the time class starts. In this time, the student is to get their instrument and other materials needed for class. They are to setup, warm up, and are to be ready to go when the director gives the downbeat. Any student not in their seat ready to play will be considered tardy.
2. Each student is expected to participate in every band rehearsal. Refer to the "Participation" section of this syllabus to understand the student's role on band class.
3. The student is responsible for having his or her own music and instrument (which is to be in good, working condition). The student is also responsible for having the proper accessories for their instrument (valve oil, cork grease, slide grease, slide oil, polishing cloth, reeds, etc.).
4. Disorderly conduct will not be tolerated during rehearsals. If you need to talk about something regarding the music, do so without causing a disruption.
5. Books from other classes are not to be brought to your seat. Homework is for home, not for band class.
6. A pencil should be kept in your folder or on your stand at all times to make notes in the music. **USE IT! :)**
7. No one leaves the room until the director dismisses the class.

Participation Policy

As with any performance ensemble, participation is one of the most important aspects of the band program. Without 100% contribution from every member of the band, the program never reaches its full potential, and it will ultimately struggle to survive. Participation is defined as the following:

- 100% attendance at all rehearsals and performances.
- A commitment to excellence in the band program, taking every effort to help the group strive to be its best.
- A positive attitude about the band program and its goals.
- Supporting the leadership in the band or providing the leadership necessary for success.
- Having all parts prepared for class, including taking time for individual practice of these parts.
- Making a positive contribution on a daily basis.

Everyone is expected to live up to these standards. Failure to do so not only results in the reduction of your grade, but also affects the overall attitude and morale of the band. In order to achieve success, these standards must be upheld in the highest regard.

But What If...

*** "My Braces Are Bothering Me"**

Many students have braces or will soon be getting braces. I know that these can sometimes be painful- especially if the orthodontist tightens them during the morning and you have band class that afternoon. I will work with individual students on this. Generally, if your mouth is hurting...really hurting- I will allow you to sit out for the day. If it becomes evident that you are taking advantage of the situation, I will require you to play or lose points from your grade.

*** "I Forgot My Instrument"**

If you forget to bring your horn to school, participation points will be deducted and you will be assigned an essay to write on a famous composer or the origination of your instrument. (250 words minimum, must be handwritten and signed by parent/guardian)

*** "My Instrument Is In The Shop"**

Occasionally it will be necessary for students to take their horns to a repair shop. If your horn is in the shop, you must bring a note from home stating that fact. You have one week to have a horn repaired. A longer period of time is unacceptable and should be discussed with me.

*** "I Don't Feel Good"**

If you are well enough to be at school, you are well enough to play.

*** "I Was Out Sick"**

In-class participation cannot be made-up. However if the class has a playing grade or a theory quiz, or any other kind of test or assignment, you will be required to make-up the work. You have two days from the day of your absence to make-up missing assignments or tests. You should find out from your section leader or myself what was covered during your absence.

WMS Band Student Expectations...

There are many benefits that a student will experience as a member of the band. The intense concentration and training required to perform in band is the same kind of training that produces success in any field. Band develops coordination, organization, teamwork, and mental discipline. Bands invariably have a high percentage of the school's top-ranking students. Scholarship and musicianship go hand in hand.

With the cooperation of every student, parent and teacher, we can expect many enjoyable experiences affording musical growth, accomplishment, appreciation, and recreation. With these goals in mind, we can develop the pride and respect necessary for the continued success of the Whitewater Middle School Band program .

Attendance:

- Absence affects performance and the success of performance-oriented activities such as band depends upon full participation. Each student's participation affects the groups outcome, and each student plays a valuable role in this process.
- Attendance guidelines have been developed to support the learning process for both the student and the group. Attendance is related to both self-discipline and learning. If a student is not in rehearsal, he or she has missed that participatory portion of his or her educational experience and that experience cannot be made up.
- A calendar of events is published in advance for your planning students and their families are requested to plan appropriately when scheduling appointments, etc. so that rehearsals and performances are not missed.
- Excused absences will only be granted for certain unforeseen conflicts. Excused absences include a death in the family, illness, an important religious observance, and potentially some other circumstances.
- A performance is the culmination of weeks and/or months of learning. Because concerts are the final step in the educational process, it is essential that students fully participate in all performances and after-school rehearsals. Full participation in the concert will result in the student receiving full credit. In the event that a student misses a concert, he or she has missed an educational experience that cannot be replaced or made up. However, an alternate assignment is available for students who must miss their performance. This assignment is available, upon request, from the director and is due two days following the performance.

Behavior:

Students are expected to demonstrate positive and cooperative behavior when associated with the bands of Whitewater Middle School. When you're wearing WMS colors or shirts, you are representing your school. Inappropriate or offensive behavior or language will not be tolerated. We represent ourselves, each other, and the school. We strive to represent the best and high standards and traditions.

The greatest single factor that will determine the success of any individual organization is attitude. The kind of person you are is an individual choice and how we feel about something, which involves attitude, is one of the few actual independent choices that we have in life. It takes intense dedication to reach goals. Students should learn to discipline themselves to daily practice on fundamentals. The right attitude must be present along with sincerity, concentration, and dedication as the basic foundation.

Performing groups by nature require cooperation by all members to be successful. A system of progressive consequences has been developed to deal with offenses that are in nature a nuisance rather than a serious problem.

Housekeeping:

Our band room is the place where we rehearse and spend a lot of time. Let's please maintain our room and keep it clean and tidy. Whenever we rehearse/perform anywhere else we will leave the space we used in better condition than when we found it.

Food, drink, and gum are NOT permitted in the band room.

Students are responsible for materials issue to them and are expected to replace lost items. All forms and permission slips must be turned in on time.

Practice / Homework

In order to cut down on the number of extra rehearsals, students should practice a **minimum** of 20 minutes every night on their music. This means every student must take his or her instrument home on a regular basis and not leave it at school overnight. **Students who consistently leave their instruments at school overnight may have their grade reduced!** Some students will be given special consideration as the need arises. Every effort will be made to see that students who have large school instruments will have an instrument at home and one at school.

STUDENTS MUST PRACTICE A MINIMUM OF 100 MINUTES PER WEEK!!! Parents, let's work as a team to ensure that your son or daughter is not taking your hard earned money spent on their instrument for granted. Please be a part of your child's practice sessions and encourage them! Have them perform periodic solo performances for you to enjoy! :)

Private Lessons

While private lessons prove to be beneficial for all musicians, students who play Oboe, Bassoon and French Horn must seek private lessons to help them progress due to the complexity of the instrument. While the director always strives to give as much individual attention to each student, the time constraints and the size of the band often limit the reach of the director to each individual student as often as needed. The success of every outstanding band program depends on the quality of the players as well as the determination of the band students to give that extra effort. Top school band programs across the nation typically have large numbers of students studying privately. A private teacher has the opportunity to cover some of the finer points that will be covered in a class setting. Students interested in studying privately should contact the director or any local music store to obtain a list of reputable private instructors. We will have several private lesson teachers available for after-school lessons each Wednesday at Whitewater MS. More information will be sent home regarding this opportunity.

Grades

Grading Policy:

- Each playing test counts as one test grade. Every student has the chance in the course of a nine weeks to improve the grade that they receive on that test. For example, if a student receives a low score on a scale test, they are given the opportunity to improve this grade for the remainder of the nine weeks. It is the student's responsibility to arrange make-ups with the director.
- Each written test counts as one test grade. Making up missed tests will be handled in accordance with the school policy on make-up work.
- Each extra rehearsal outside of class time counts as one test grade. There are no make-ups for a missed rehearsal. A missed rehearsal will result in an "F" for that rehearsal unless given a note in advance at which point an essay will be given to make up the grade.
- Each performance counts as two test grades. There are no make-ups for a missed performance. A missed performance will result in an "F" for that performance unless given a note in advance at which point an essay will be given to make up the grade.
- Each student has a daily participation grade. The daily grade average counts as two test grades for the nine weeks. The guidelines outlined in the "Participation" section of this syllabus will be followed in determining this grade.

Formative (Preparation/Contribution to Class) – 60%

Summative (Performances /Tests) – 40%

Grading is based upon two simple factors in a band setting: participation and work. Participation is based on a student's involvement in the classroom and overall contribution. Does the student attempt to answer questions? Is the student being responsible and paying close attention? These questions are just a few of which factor into the participation grade. The greater emphasis of the grade deals with a student's work in and out of the classroom. Is the student trying in class? Is the student practicing at home? This is vital to both the success of the student and program as a whole.

In addition to these factors, the students may have performance tests in class or in sectionals. These tests may consist of an exercise, scales, or music being studied in class. These tests may or may not be graded.

Finally, attendance at concerts and required rehearsals is factored into a student's grade. If a student misses a required event, their grade will be lowered unless the student has notified the band director prior to the event and has been excused. ***Additionally, students who are habitually absent from afterschool rehearsals and have not provided a letter of excuse from a parent or guardian will not be permitted to perform at in-school concerts nor field trips.***

Please note that students in the WMS band program do not receive a grade on perfection. What is most desired is a student who works hard, is dedicated, shows improvement, and has made positive contributions to our band program.

Band Calendar

All dates pertaining to our band program can be found on our band calendar which can be accessed through our WMS band website.

Please visit: <https://www.wmsbands.org/calendar.html>

Materials and Supplies

Provided:

- Sheet music. (students are responsible for keeping up with their music once handed out)
- Instruments for certain sections. (students are responsible for damages)
- Method Book(s)
- A 1-inch plain black binder and with page protectors for music

Student Provides:

- Instrument and other supplementary materials (mutes, reeds, valve oil, cork grease, stick/mallet bag, etc.) *This should be obtained from any local music store*
- Wire music stand for at home practice
- Metronome/Tuner or App
- A sharpened pencil, required every day in class.

The student/parent will be notified of any other materials that will need to be purchased throughout the course of the academic year.

Concert Attire

6th Grade Band: Whitewater Band Polo Shirt (provided), Black slacks, Black Socks, Black Dress Shoes

7th and 7th Grade Band: Formal attire (included in the band fee) Students must wear black dress shoes

ABSOLUTELY NO JEAN MATERIAL NOR SNEAKERS SHOULD BE WORN AT CONCERTS!!!

IMPORTANT: Parents, refer to the calendar for our concert dates and be sure that your child's concert attire has been located, fits properly and washed several days prior to the performance. We would like to avoid "day of the performance mishaps" by taking care of any concert attire issues in advance of the concert. Students will be not perform without proper attire!

WMS “Band-Aids”

There are many opportunities (and needs) for parental support in a program such as this. First and foremost, it is very important that you encourage your child in their efforts. Make it a point to attend concerts to show your support – not only for your child, but for all of the children who work hard to make this program possible. In addition, anytime we take a field trip anywhere, we have a need of chaperones. Parents are always welcome on our trips. On certain occasions we will need parents to help with fundraising, concert setup, equipment transport, etc. If you have particular areas of expertise, please indicate your interest on the attached form and return it with the acknowledgment form.

Parental support is an extremely important element to our program. We only have a few meetings a year. Although they are kept short, they are extremely beneficial. Notifications will be sent home in advance of meetings throughout the school year. As a parent of a student in the band program, you are automatically a part of a new family. The Whitewater Middle School Band is an organization comprised of students as well as parents, corporate members, and alumni who desire to make a difference in the lives of the active students in the Whitewater Middle School Band program. Help us get to know you by filling out the information on the following page.

Important Beginning Band Information

- During the first few days of school we will demonstrate all of the band instruments during class time.
- After the demonstrations the students will be selected for an instrument based on the following criteria:
 - a. The student gives us a list of 3 instruments they would like to play in priority order.
 - b. The student is given the opportunity to “try out” those instruments to see which one they are able to produce the best initial sound on.
- The reason for the band instrument fitting process is that we must consider balance to control instrumentation for not only the middle school but also the high school as well. The band is made up of all the instruments in proper proportion. I guarantee you that a band consisting of fifteen percussionists, two trombones and a flute will not sound the best. Balancing the band will help the ensemble achieve the best sound possible. We do our best to place each child on the instrument that we feel is best for them, though we like to tell students not to be disappointed if they do not get placed with their first instrument choice.

August 14-18: Ms. Jackson, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Swindle and I will meet with each child and allow them to try out the three instruments that they indicate on their sheet during their scheduled band class time.

August 21: Students will be notified of their instrument selection and correspondence will be sent home.

August 24: **Mandatory** Beginning Band meeting for parents and students at 6:30p.m. in the Whitewater Middle School cafeteria. Local music stores will be here for you to rent instruments that night to take home! :)

Saturday, August 26: Beginning Band Kick Off Day! 9:00 – Noon (Brass/Perc.) and 12:00 - 3:00 (Woodwinds) in the WMS Band Room. Students will learn from specialists on their instrument how to assemble and make first pitch on instrument. While not required, this will be **extremely** beneficial in the establishing of a good technique and tone on their instrument. Time will depend on the instrument.

Monday, August 28: First day with instruments at school. Please be sure that your child's instrument has an instrument tag on it before sending it to school on the first day! This tag should include their name and contact info. It is a great idea to also jot down the brand and serial number as well for your records at home.

September 15: Band fees due to Mr. Charity. Preferred method of payment is via the band website (www.wmsbands.org)

Band Fees

Band Pack Fee - \$125

Preferred method of payment is via the band website (www.wmsbands.org)

What's included:

1. WMS Band Polo – to be worn at performances
2. Formal Attire for 7th and 8th Grade Students
3. WMS Band T-Shirt
4. Band Binder and Sheet Protectors
5. Music Fee (for ordering music for class and concerts)
6. Method Books
7. Sight Reading Factory Subscription
8. Sectional Coaching Fee for the school year

Donation:

Because WMS Band Parents manage WMS football game concessions, we ask that each student also donate one or more of the following cases of Coca-Cola products: Dasani Water, Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Sprite. ***SOFT DRINKS MUST BE CANS, NO BOTTLES.*** We will also accept donations of small bags of chips or candy that is individually bagged ie. Skittles, ring pops, air heads etc.

**Please write your child's name on the donations.

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Please follow this link to review our list of private lesson instructors in the area...

[WMS PRIVATE LESSON LIST](#)

Whitewater Middle School Band Handbook Acknowledgement Form

**[CLICK HERE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU HAVE READ
THIS HANDBOOK](#)**