

CCSD66 Beginning Band Handbook

A guide to assist parents in getting your child started in the instrumental music program.

Welcome to the District 66 Band program and thank you for investing in your child's future.

VISION

Music is universal, cultural, and individual. It is a basic component in the complete intellectual development of students of all ages. Instruction in music provides opportunities for self-expression, creativity and aesthetic awareness through active participation, performance and critical listening. The goal of this musical training is to help students achieve a personal level of understanding, appreciation, and passion for music.

MISSION

Throughout the band program we attempt to develop the musical skills necessary to recreate meaningful music and listen critically to both ourselves and others as they perform. The study of music helps produce informed, responsible and productive citizens by promoting self-reflection, social understanding and cultural acceptance. Music helps to engage higher-level thinking skills, expand creativity, fosters positive character development in the areas of perseverance, responsibility, determination and willingness to accept challenges.

BENEFITS

The benefits of a musical education are numerous. Not only do children get the pleasure of an artistic and creative endeavor, studies have shown that music education can help improve a child's performance in school, SAT verbal and math scores, and their spatial reasoning abilities.¹⁻² Music and arts education can also help your child with life skills, such as: working in teams, communication, self-esteem, creative thinking, imagination and invention.³

Thank you,
Mr. Brian Ohlsen
Director, Prairieview Beginning Band

1. Frances Rauscher, Ph.D., Gordon Shaw, Ph.D., University of California, Irvine

2. Profiles of SAT and Achievement Test Takers, The College Board, compiled by the MENC, 1995

3. U.S. Department of Labor Report, 1991

CHOOSING THE RIGHT INSTRUMENT

All band instruments are demonstrated to your children at the end of 3rd grade. In the fall of their 4th grade year, they have a chance to try the instrument(s) they are most interested in. We then make a recommendation on instrument choice for specific reasons, those being: 1) the ability to physically play the instrument, 2) the results of the instruments they tried, and 3) the necessity of maintaining a proper instrument balance in the band. For example, a successful band cannot have 30 flutes, 45 percussionists, 20 saxophones and 2 clarinets.

GROUP LESSONS

Group band lessons with like instruments of 4-6 students are given during the school day at Prairieview. They have one 30-minute lesson per week. A rotating schedule is used so the students do not miss the same class every week. A study-buddy system is used to help students keep track of any missed class work. Every band student is responsible to know when their scheduled lesson time is, and to bring their instruments and all materials to school on their lesson day.

BEGINNING BAND FULL REHEARSALS

Beginning Band students start morning rehearsals in November to learn how to play as a full ensemble. They are split up into two separate groups, one on Monday and one on Friday. Students will need to arrive at school at 7:00 am. Rehearsals begin promptly at 7:10 and conclude at 7:50 am. Parents and students will be notified of the group they are placed in later this year. The bands are combined in May and play together at the annual spring concert.

COST FACTORS

Your child will need an instrument, supplies and the TRADITIONS OF EXCELLENCE Book 1 for their instrument. Instrument info follows this page.

If you do not own one, a collapsible, portable music stand for practice at home is needed.

Additional costs will occur for accessories like reeds, oil, cork grease, etc... These items can be purchased at school from your director or from your local music dealer.

PRACTICE

Early stages of practice are in shorter increments. By the middle of their first year, beginners should practice for an average of 60-80 minutes per week, spread out over 3-5 days. A quiet place to practice, with a music stand and chair for proper posture, is needed to insure success. Finding a scheduled time has also shown to be beneficial in establishing a practice routine. **Your interest and positive reinforcement at home is necessary to make your child become a fine, young musician.**

EVALUATION

Each student is evaluated from his or her very first lesson, but no letter grades are issued for Beginning Band. Home practice charts will be tracked on a weekly basis throughout the year. Students will fill out their weekly assignments and practice times on these charts, which you will be asked to sign. Every group lesson will be assessed and documented and starting second trimester, progress reports will be sent home. For the third trimester, a progress report along with a recommendation for the following year will be sent. Attendance at early morning rehearsals, group lessons and our performance is expected. Non-attendance makes it difficult for a child to progress at a steady rate.

Please feel free to contact us at any time about your child's progress. Communication is important for this program to run smoothly. We are looking forward to teaching your children. Thank you for your cooperation with the band program.

Be involved. Show support. Provide structure.

Many parents who do not have a musical background feel they can't help their child in their new endeavor, but your guidance and involvement is essential. These guidelines are designed to help you in giving your child the best support possible.

SmartMusic.com is a subscription-based, interactive music learning software program that gives your child visual and auditory feedback. We use this in our lessons and rehearsals from 4th-8th grades.

Schedule Practice Times-Music achievement requires effort over a period of time. Help by:

- Scheduling a consistent, daily time for practice
- Providing a quiet place in which to practice, complete with a chair and stand.
- Remaining nearby during practice times as often as possible.
- Praising your child's efforts and achievements.

Provide Private Lessons-They are not required, but private music lessons, taught by an expert on your child's instrument are highly recommended. They are good for both the student who needs extra help and the students who want to advance more rapidly. Information is available for many private teachers.

What to do as they develop:

- Try to get your child to make a minimum two-year commitment to his/her musical studies.
- Make sure your child's instrument is always in good working order.
- Encourage your child to play for family and friends.
- Expose your child to a wide variety of music, including concerts and recitals.
- Allow your child to play many types of music, not just pieces from the lesson book.

What Not To Do:

- Don't use practice as a punishment.
- Don't start your child on an instrument that's in poor working order or condition.
- Don't compare your child's playing to others. Everyone develops at a different rate.
- Don't make fun of mistakes or less than perfect playing.

If you see your child losing interest in their music studies, don't panic!

- Patience, patience, patience! This is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Discuss the situation with your child to determine why their interest is declining. Many times it may have nothing to do with music. Playing a musical instrument can be challenging at times and will require some effort.
- Talk to your child's band director and/or private teacher about renewing their enthusiasm.
- Encourage your child to stick with it for the agreed period of time. If children know they don't have a parental "out" they are much more likely to stay on track.

Instrument Overview

INSTRUMENTS

Your child must have an instrument that is in good, working order to participate in the band program. Only certain instruments are provided by the school due to the cost factor. The basic instruments, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone, Trumpet, French horn, Trombone, Euphonium (Baritone), and Xylo/Percussion kits, need to be obtained in one of the following ways:

Rental Plan of New Instruments-Most instruments are acquired by renting (to own) for a given time period. We work with *Quinlan and Fabish Music Company* in Burr Ridge. They offer high quality, affordable, student-line instruments. Their site can be accessed here:

The rental program is valuable because you are not forced to invest in an instrument until you know what your child's commitment level will be. A representative from Quinlan and Fabish will explain the rental program to you at your scheduled band conference.

Used Instruments-Your child may play on a used instrument, but it must be in good, working condition. We need to check all used instruments at your scheduled conference time, before lessons begin to determine if repair work is necessary.

Full Purchase of New Instruments-We do **NOT** recommend this, but if you do, we **STRONGLY** suggest that you purchase an insurance plan, also called a maintenance and replacement plan, for the instrument. You should be able to purchase this plan through the dealer in which you bought the instrument. This will protect you from any "accidents" that may (will) happen and is well worth the small investment. The plan will also cover regular maintenance that will need to be done.

Our main concern is that your child has good instrument to start on. No matter where you obtain the instrument, its quality is the key to success for your beginning musician. Fighting the instrument to produce a sound can prove to be frustrating and discouraging to the student.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Although Quinlan and Fabish will be presenting information regarding instrument rental during the band conferences, this is not an endorsement of them by the school district as the only source for music instrument purchase or rental. For example, BandSource in Downers Grove has an excellent reputation for high-quality instruments and great customer service.

Other music stores outside our immediate area may have rental programs and carry different brands of instruments to purchase. However, be **VERY** cautious before renting or purchasing an instrument.

Questions you should ask your music instrument dealer:

- Can I rent the instrument until I pay it off?
- How much of my rental fee is applied to the purchase of the instrument?
- Can the instrument be returned after a trial period without penalty?
- Do you have an on-site repair facility?
- Do you supply a loaner instrument in the event my instrument needs repair?
- Can I purchase an extended maintenance plan once I get to the end of my original contract?
- Will you repair an instrument that was not purchased at your store?
- Do I have to bring my instrument in to the store or will someone from your company pick it up from my child's school when it needs repair?

Any good dealer will have an answer for these questions. Quinlan and Fabish has been serving our community for many years and has proven to be a very reliable, fair, and competitive dealer. The school district wants all interested boys and girls to participate in the instrumental music program. We want them playing the instrument best suited for them. Remember, only high quality instruments can help assure their success in the program.

Where you buy or rent is your decision. Our concern is that you are informed in your decision-making process and that you get the greatest value and service for your dollar.

If I choose to purchase an instrument on my own, which brand of instrument is best for my child?
 Beginners do NOT need a professional grade instrument; they need a quality BEGINNER instrument. Remember you get what you pay for! Some instruments, though they look nice and shiny like others, are not made to last. We recommend certain brands of instruments over others due to our past experience, knowing they will function properly from the start.

Name brand instruments we recommend:

Selmer	Vincent Bach	Yamaha	King
Jupiter	Conn (Brass)	Gemienhart (flutes)	Armstrong flutes (some models)

Your best option is to discuss the instrument and brand with your director if you are not sure.

Are there instruments we should *not* purchase?

Not all instruments are created equal. In fact, there are many poorly made instruments. Stores that specialize in selling toys, clothing and food are probably not the best option for the purchase of a musical instrument. If the price of an instrument seems too good to be true, find out why. There are reasons that some instruments cost more than others. Please let us help you with this process.

Are there any additional costs in owning an instrument?

Yes. All instruments require certain accessories to play or to keep them playing. Woodwind instruments will require reeds to play. Reeds vary in price depending on the instrument. Brass instruments need slide cream, grease, and/or valve oil. Cleaning brushes and swabs will be needed to help keep the instrument working properly. Many of these accessories come with the instrument when purchased new and will need to be replaced as needed.

What happens if the instrument breaks?

All instruments will need to be repaired or serviced for one reason or another. If you are renting from Quinlan and Fabish, they will pick up your instrument at school and drop it off at school since they service our district on a weekly basis. They can also provide you with a loaner instrument if needed until your instrument is repaired. All instruments should go in at least once a year for cleaning and maintenance.

Can my child switch instruments after they have started on the one they originally chose?

We discourage students switching instruments during the first year because it is just not enough time to determine if a child will be successful or not. This decision would be made after a conference with the band director.

What happens when the school year ends?

Keep playing the instrument! We have a summer band program that runs for three weeks right after the regular school year. Your rental agreement goes year round and students should continue to practice during the summer months and on our breaks. If you return the instrument, all equity you've built up in your payments will go away.

What happens when I finish my rental agreement?

When your agreement is up, you should request to purchase a maintenance / replacement contract to continue to receive the same service benefits as you were getting during your rental period.

Do I need to have the insurance as part of my rental agreement?

Yes, you should. Kids are kids and accidents will happen. They do every year. Protect yourself in the event that your child's instrument is damaged beyond repair.

How long will the instrument last? Will I ever need to purchase a new one?

Like their clothes, many students may find themselves growing out of their instrument in a few years. Depending on the instrument, the player's ability will determine when it is time to step up to an intermediate or professional model instrument. The instruments you purchase now are designed to give the students a good start. Some students progress to a point where the instrument hinders their musical production and it is then time to upgrade to a higher quality instrument. This does not usually happen for a couple of years. Your band director will let you know if you should consider an upgrade and when that can be done. We can also assist you in deciding the best upgrade for you.

Is it safe to purchase an instrument off the Internet?

Unless you know exactly what you are buying and whom you are buying from, the short answer is "no". There are many ways to buy instruments online, but you are not going to receive any service with your purchase. You need now is a place that will provide service for you and your child's instrument. An instrument that doesn't work is frustrating for your child, and dealing with an unknown music dealer is frustrating for a parent. Please use caution if you choose to go in this direction. Feel free to ask us for assistance.

Does my child need to take private lessons?

Private lessons are not mandatory but encouraged. It is no secret that some of our most successful students study privately. We have a staff of private instructors that teach after school at Lakeview on various days. We have instructors for most instruments and can provide other recommendations for instructors in the area.

Please Remember:

Purchasing a musical instrument is an investment. You must think about it as if you were buying a car. Would you go out and look for the cheapest car you could find or are you going to look for something that will be dependable for years to come? Do not let price dictate the investment you make.

Mr. Ohlsen and Mr. Tedeschi have many years of experience of dealing with musical instruments, rentals, purchases, and repairs. Please do not hesitate to consult us when making your decisions.

We are excited about starting your child in the instrumental music program. We feel that we have a quality program that will provide your child with an experience that they will enjoy. We hope that music will become a part of their life for years to come.

Like research-based articles? There are many highlighting the benefits of arts education.

National Organization
For Music Education



Music for All
Advocacy & Info



Children's Music
Workshop



IL Music Educators
Association

