

INTRO TO BEGINNING BAND

The process of choosing the correct instrument for band is very fun and overwhelming. But, it is very important to listen to the advice of the Band Director when it is time to decide.

***After the evaluations are complete, Mr. Summers will send home a form that has ALL the info about the instrument your student will be playing and ALL the supplies that will be needed for band.**

There are many factors that must be addressed that can aid in the placement of the student and their instrument:

**The child's physical characteristics: teeth, lips, braces, overbites, teeth structures, mouth shapes, hand size, finger length, and overall physical stature.*

**How musically suited each child is to a particular instrument: can they identify certain sounds, pitches, and musical phrases that are suited to certain instruments. With percussion- can the student already read basic music and taken private music lessons.*

**The need for balanced instrumentation: Band is a team concept and just like a football team with a few players at each position, the band needs a certain number of players on each instrument. Please be flexible if your child is asked to play an instrument that fits them and is a need in this band.*

**The interest of the child: this is important to me! But, as the Band Director, it is important that I find the instrument that fit them the best and that they would like to play. Children highly motivated to learn a particular instrument are likely to succeed. Your child may also need to be encouraged to practice. Many children are not able to schedule practice time and stick to it on their own- they do need your help! All Beginning Band students are required to practice outside of school every day for 30 minutes.*

- ➔ Hopefully, these suggestions will help you and your child understand how, and why, the Band Director selects the instrument for you. The Band Director can be of assistance to you and your child weighing the criteria and choosing an instrument with which they can be SUCCESSFUL!

*Meet the Band Instruments *

Note: the term embouchure is defined by the correct formation of the mouth to produce a positive tone on a wind instrument. This word will be used throughout this handout.

Oboe –The oboe is a very beautiful sounding instrument! Because of its unique sound, only 1-2 oboe players are need- the reason: so that they can blend with each other correctly when performing music. The oboe can be a challenging instrument to learn; but, with practice and hopefully private lessons with a professional oboe teacher- the student can be awesome! ☺

Flute - No braces! The flute is one of the most popular instruments for beginners. Students are able to play pleasant little melodies within the first few weeks. The competition is very intense, and only the better ones stick it out. I recommend that only the children who are highly motivated and really want to play the flute start on this instrument. If a child has small hands, the flute might be a better choice. A child with an overbite usually makes an excellent flute player. The child with even teeth and lips that are firm usually will be successful. The child cannot have a “cupid’s tip” on the top lip. The child’s left arm must be long enough to reach across the body in order to hold to flute in proper playing position. Before the final decision is made, the child will be tested with the flute’s head joint in order to check for embouchure and the production of a good tone. Only 6-7 flute players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Clarinet - Clarinet is the ‘default’ instrument when the other instruments do not fit. The clarinet is also a popular instrument for beginners. The clarinet takes more patience. It is more difficult to produce a pleasing tone when starting out, but with consistent practice the tone can be refined. The hard part about playing clarinet is covering the holes. If a student has very small hands, the clarinet may not be a wise choice. The reason for this is that the fingers must be able to cover all the holes properly or you will not get a good sound. Most of the time, you will only get airy sounds or squeaks. Students with different mouth, lip, and teeth formations can be successful. Only 12-15 clarinet players are needed in each Beginning Band class. **Bass Clarinet** – same info as clarinet except this instrument should be played by a student that feels the clarinet is too small for them. ☺ Only 1-2 bass clarinet players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Alto Sax -Since the introduction of the Sax to numerous rock bands, this has become a popular instrument to kids. Of all the band instruments available, this instrument has the highest drop out level. If the child is dedicated, the success rate is quick and beneficial. The competition in the alto sax section is very difficult because the Band Director will only choose the top 5-6 students for the top bands next year. Because of the higher cost of the saxophone, I recommend that before starting, you talk to your child about the strong commitment he or she has to make before choosing this instrument. The physical qualifications are the same as clarinet. Only 5-6 alto sax players are needed in each Beginning Band class. **Tenor Sax** - same info as alto sax except this instrument should be played by a student that feels the alto sax is too small for them. ☺ Only 1-2 tenor sax players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Note: One lucky saxophone student may be asked to move to the Baritone Sax if they show advanced musical skills! ☺

→ **→Please consider the following requirements when choosing a brass instrument / If any one of these four requirements is not met, performance on a brass instrument will be difficult, if not impossible:**

- Proper lower and upper jaw alignment
- Straight teeth / no braces for trumpet or French horn
- Lip formation allows for lip vibration
- Adequate muscular development of the lips

Trumpet - No braces! The success rate is very high. You might have to add an extra room on your house when your child practices, but believe me it gets better with time (just kidding!). The child should have these qualities: no braces, thin lips (bigger lips will require a bigger mouthpiece), no “cupid’s tip” on the top lip, and meet the above requirements. A mouthpiece test is required. Only 7-8 trumpet players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

French Horn - No braces! It is an instrument that adds considerable beauty to the band and requires players with above average musical talent. If you have a good ear and want to play a major role in contributing to the band, French horn is for you. The parent must be willing to let their child take private lessons with a professional. The French Horn is an instrument that requires special care and attention that can only come through private lessons. The child should have these qualities: no braces, thin lips (bigger lips will require a bigger mouthpiece), no “cupid’s tip” on the top lip, and meet the above requirements. A mouthpiece test is required. Only 3-4 french horn players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Trombone - The Trombone takes time and patience to learn but is one of the most fun instruments to play. It looks harder to play than it actually is. Lots of Trombones are needed!!! The success rate is high because of the constant need in all the bands. The student needs to have long arms and a good ear and meet the above requirements. A mouthpiece test is required. Only 7-8 trombone players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Baritone/Euphonium (not offered some years)- The Baritone is a fun instrument to play since it has many melodic parts in band music. It requires a strong desire and has a high success rate. Students who like trombone but have shorter arms can be successful on baritone. The student must meet the above requirements. A mouthpiece test is required. Only 2-3 baritone players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Tuba -Tuba is the most important instrument in any band. The Tuba is the heart of the band. It requires a strong desire and has a high success rate. Some of our most successful graduates play the Tuba. Because of the high cost of this instrument, it will be provided by the school. The student must meet the above requirements. A mouthpiece test is required. **ANYONE CAN PLAY TUBA!** Mr. Summers’ tuba players have gone on to be some of the best in the State. Only 2-3 tuba players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

Percussion – I am only offering the few percussion positions to students who can already read basic music and has taken piano or percussion lessons from a private teacher. WHY --- Because the music written for percussion is based on piano music. Also, the percussion player is required to learn more music and instruments than any other band student. Plus, the students selected to be a percussion player will be using very expensive equipment and proper care is mandatory. Students who have taken private lessons tend to be more responsible, and that is needed in the Oakleaf Band. The modern Band does not have drummers, but percussionists. They will be trained on bells, xylophones, chimes, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, auxiliary percussion, and possibly the marching Drumline. Students who begin on percussion are asked to purchase (rent at first) a set of bells and a snare drum practice pad with the appropriate sticks and mallets. If your child meets these requirements, please see the Band Director immediately. Only 5-6 percussion players are needed in each Beginning Band class.

I hope that this information has been helpful. These requirements are not meant to offend, but inform you of the way my band program works. I have found that the band is most successful when these guidelines are followed. Please do not hesitate to speak with me privately if there are any questions. The band website is a GREAT source for all your band needs: www.oakleafband.com

After the evaluations are complete the first week of school, Mr. Summers will send home a form that has ALL the info about the instrument your student will be playing and ALL the supplies that will be needed for band. There will be a list of Music Stores that you can contact to make arrangements to get everything you need.

BE VERY CAREFUL AND DO NOT PURCHASE BAND INSTRUMENTS AT CERTAIN STORES THAT ARE NOT MUSIC STORES---THOSE INSTRUMENTS ARE CLOSER TO BEING A TOY AND NOT A LEGIT BAND INSTRUMENT.

If you have any questions, contact me --- I WANT TO HELP YOU! ☺

M. Summers

Bachelor of Music Education

Master of Arts in Teaching Instrumental Music Education

National Board Certified Teacher

Florida Bandmasters Association Adjudicator

Band Director- OakLeaf Jr. High School

904-336-5775 x65816

www.oakleafband.com

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