



JENISON

bands  
JENISON, MI

Dear Fifth Grade Students and Parents,

This is the time of year for you to consider enrolling in the Beginning Band program. There are many factors to discuss and evaluate before signing up. We hope this pamphlet will help you answer some questions that you may have.

On a day in April, we will spend a few minutes with every fifth grader in the Jenison Public Schools. During this brief meeting, each child will have the opportunity to play a couple instruments, and we, as teachers, will check teeth, lips, arm and finger length. We will then recommend the instrument for which each child is best suited. If you were thinking about playing saxophone, please read our saxophone policy printed later in this booklet. Those wishing to play percussion should also take note of the section on percussion.

When you make the decision to join band, you are requested to drop in to one of two sign-up meetings which should only require a half hour or less of your time. **The sign up meetings will be held on Tuesday, May 1 from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM or Thursday, May 3 from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM.** The sign up meetings will be held in the Junior High Cafeteria, which is near the front of the Junior High.

During both meetings, a representative from Meyer Music will be present. Most Beginning Band members choose Meyer Music's rental-purchase plan. Under the plan, students receive a new or like-new instrument for which all repairs are free during the rental period. Definitely consider the used, like-new instrument for overall savings. Monthly payments are addressed later in this booklet. Meyer Music will require the down payment at the sign-up meeting to reserve the instrument that will be delivered to you in August. We prefer that the instrument not be in the student's hands until we show them how to assemble it and create the proper sound with the right mouth formation. If purchasing an instrument will be impossible for your family, please call us before May 1 so that we can try to find a solution for your student.

This year, Beginning Band will have a band orientation on a day **the week before school starts.** Typically this day has been on the last Monday in August, but we need to keep the date **TBA** because we do not have a calendar set for the district yet. As soon as we have a calendar set from the district, we will give that information! Students will meet at the high school band room for this orientation, which is located next to the High School Pool Entrance. If you are on a family vacation on this date, it is not the end of the world; your child will still be able to start band on the first day of band class in the fall. By having this band orientation before school officially begins, we are able to show students where they will have class, how they will get off the bus, and learn the basic technique to assemble and play their instruments. This helps make the first day of band during the school year a rewarding experience for students and directors alike. Please be sure to mark this important date on your calendar.

Once school starts in the fall, the sixth grade band students will meet once a week in their elementary school building at approximately 2:00 in the afternoon. The band students will also meet three times per week at 8:00 in the morning in the High School band room. Although the 8:00 a.m. class may mean students have to wake up earlier to go to school, we have had good experiences with this time slot with our sixth grade students. We work with our transportation department to ensure that band students who ride the secondary school buses have a good experience. You will be informed of details pertaining to the 8:00 band sessions and transportation, if your child needs it, before the school year begins.

Band is a fun and rewarding experience, particularly if a student is willing to work hard to learn his or her instrument. As teachers, we know such effort is worthwhile, because of the many success stories we have seen come out of our band program. We are proud to offer you the opportunity to join the exceptionally strong tradition of the Jenison Band Program. If we can assist you by answering any questions you might have about this letter or our program, we would be pleased to do so. You may reach us at the following numbers and/or email addresses. Otherwise, we look forward to greeting you at the sign-up meetings on May 1 or May 3!

Mrs. Gembis	667-3239	<a href="mailto:agembis@jpsonline.org">agembis@jpsonline.org</a>
Mr. Palma	667-3239	<a href="mailto:mpalma@jpsonline.org">mpalma@jpsonline.org</a>
Mr. Zamborsky	667-3369	<a href="mailto:dzambors@jpsonline.org">dzambors@jpsonline.org</a>

## MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BAND

### WHAT BENEFITS ARE IN STORE FOR STUDENTS IF THEY TAKE BAND?

1. They learn to read music notation.
2. They learn a new form of communication and expression.
3. Students can develop an appreciation of music that lasts throughout life.
4. They learn a team attitude (rather than a "by myself attitude") by working together toward common goals.
5. Students can improve their self images by mastering a new skill.
6. They can form lasting friendships with other band members as a result of being part of our band "family."
7. Students can improve their reading skills.
8. Band helps develop self-discipline and confidence.
9. It helps develop eye-hand coordination and finger dexterity.
10. It helps students develop good posture and breathing habits.
11. Most importantly...making music is fun and rewarding!

### WHEN DOES BEGINNING BAND START?

The summer band orientation is **TBA, but typically the Monday before school starts** at the High School Band Room (Next to the HS Pool entrance). As soon as we have the calendar for next year, we will share this date with you!

<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Time</u>
Clarinets, Trumpet	8:00-10:00
Low Brass, Percussion, Flute	10:00-12:00

### IS IT TRUE THAT SOME INSTRUMENTS ARE MORE DIFFICULT THAN OTHERS?

All instruments have their own particular difficulties but certain instruments require a very good sense of pitch or a great sense of rhythm. Therefore musical aptitude has some bearing on which instrument your child will perform the best. A test has been given to all fifth graders to guide us in their musical aptitude. It is only one factor we look at and use.

### WE HAVE UNCLE CHARLIE'S TRUMPET IN OUR ATTIC AND WE WERE WONDERING IF OUR CHILD COULD PLAY IT.

The answer depends on many factors. First of all, can the child physically play the trumpet? Trumpet players often have straight teeth and rather thin lips. If these characteristics are not present, the trumpet could be difficult to master. Secondly, is the instrument in good working condition? When an instrument has not been used for several years, quite often the valves and slides are frozen on brass instruments and the pads will need to be replaced on woodwind instruments. If this is the instrument your child ends up selecting you will want to bring it to a local music shop, such as Meyer or Marshall to get it in good playing condition.

### WHAT INSTRUMENT SHOULD MY CHILD PLAY?

Each child is fitted for an instrument in April to determine the instrument that is best suited for that child. When we fit the students, their teeth, lips, length of arms and fingers, their musical aptitude test results, and their instrument desires are taken into consideration. This recommendation is not absolute, but it gives the student and their parents a good idea of the instrument that might offer the most successful experience.

### SAXOPHONE POLICY

Yes, we need saxophone players, but we need only 6-9 every year. In the past at least 25-30 students wanted to begin on saxophone. If we were to let all 25-30 take saxophone, we would suffer a disaster in regards to the balance of proper band instrumentation. The popularity of saxophone probably stems from its use in jazz bands and rock groups. Because we can only have a limited number of saxophone players, the following policy will be maintained this spring when the 5th graders sign up for band. Students wishing to play saxophone should start by playing clarinet and indicate to us that they would like to be considered for a switch to saxophone during the 6th grade year. This group of saxophone candidates will be evaluated throughout the school year with regards to attitude, attendance and playing ability. A playing audition on the clarinet will be necessary to determine which students will be allowed to switch to saxophone part way through the 6th grade year.

We regret the fact that we have to maintain this policy, but we feel it is the most fair to all those involved. Many schools have adopted similar policies because of the same situation. Keep in mind that if you are renting a clarinet, the money that you have put towards the clarinet will be applied to the saxophone, so you will not be throwing away money on renting the clarinet!

## **PERCUSSION POLICY**

Percussion is also an extremely popular instrument choice among 6th Graders. Of course, only a limited number can be taken in this area as well or it would be very easy to cover up the entire band. Also, as students get older, we only have so many drums and mallet instruments for students to play. Scores from the rhythm section of the music aptitude test, their ability to play back rhythms with Mr. Palma or Mr. Zamborsky, and/or their background with private piano lessons will be used to determine which students are eligible to play percussion.

## **WHAT KIND OF COMMITMENT WILL BAND REQUIRE?**

Learning a band instrument is an endeavor that requires commitment. 15 to 20 minutes 3-5 times per week should be set aside for practice. This might mean giving up a little TV or other devices. Obviously, the more time that students practice, the more successful they will become. The Beginning Band will perform three concerts in the sixth grade school year. One at the end of October, the beginning of February, and in May

There are a few limited financial commitments associated with participation in band as well, depending on their instrument choice. Clarinets will require the purchase of reeds at times, which we sell \$2 per reed. Brass players will want to purchase oil and grease to keep their instrument clean. The cost of these items is minimal, but they are important purchases. Additionally, students will need to purchase a band book at the start of the school year for about \$10. They will use this book for all of 6th grade and part of 7th. Private lessons are highly encouraged for band students at every level of the program, but are not required. All Band students from grades 7-12 have many opportunities to participate in various fundraisers each year. Students (and their families) who actively participate in these opportunities can greatly reduce or even eliminate band expenses by accumulating "credits" in their personal band account.

## **WILL SPORTS CONFLICT WITH MEMBERSHIP IN THE BAND?**

Sports do not pose a conflict with band, and the overwhelming majority of our students are involved in sports. It is our desire to see well-rounded individuals graduating from our school. Every effort is made to avoid conflicts with other school activities, although with the many options students have in Jenison, there are inevitably a few conflicts. However, we find that whenever conflicts arise, we are able to work them out quite easily. Many of our band members are involved in all of the junior high and high school sports. Even varsity football players can participate in the marching band during the fall in competitions and parades. We find that many band students are also involved in other activities, and they learn to budget time well enough to be a part of many groups.

## **WHAT SHOULD I (AS A PARENT) DO IF MY CHILD TAKES BAND?**

Verbal encouragement is very important. Take time to listen to your child practice and encourage your child with positive statements as much as possible. The following things are easy to check and correct:

1. Make sure he/she has a desk type chair (with no arms) to promote good posture while playing.
2. Make sure that he/she has some sort of a music stand. (These will be available for purchase in the fall)
3. Make sure that he/she holds his/her instrument properly and taps his/her foot

One of the worst things a parent can say to a young band member is, "I never had band in school so you are on your own". Even if you have not had musical training, the beginning book is very easy to understand. You may see helpful hints in the book that your child may have overlooked in his or her eagerness to begin playing. You can easily learn the basic concepts just by following the book.

## **WHY DO WE SEE MORE CLARINETS IN THE BAND THAN ANY OTHER INSTRUMENT?**

To have the proper sound balance among the different instruments, the proper ratio of instruments is vital. We try very hard to form this balance even in the 6th grade. Part way through 6th grade, our clarinet section will have some students move to saxophone, bass clarinet, etc. Still keeping physical characteristics of the student in mind, we try to fill quotas in all areas. Everyone must understand that we cannot have a band of all flutes or saxophones or drums.

## **HOW MANY CONCERTS WILL MY CHILD HAVE?**

During the 6th grade year, your child will have three concerts. The reason we have so few programs is because we spend the majority of time teaching and mastering the basic skills.

## **CAN MY CHILD TAKE BAND FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND SEE IF HE/SHE LIKES IT OR NOT?**

Usually, if someone enters an activity with an "I'll try it and see" attitude, he or she will drop out with the first encounter of difficulty. Yes, there will be some difficult times. Playing an instrument is a skill that takes time to develop and students will most likely experience a time when they feel that it is too hard, too frustrating, or too much work. If a student can get through this stage, he or she will probably be a band student for the long haul. It is important that you realize that taking band is a full year commitment. It will sometimes take a child a year to fully understand and feel comfortable with the concepts that are taught in beginning band.

## WHAT KIND OF FINANCIAL COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED FOR AN INSTRUMENT?

You have three options:

1. We recommend the use of the Rent-Purchase Plan that is offered by Meyer Music. You can select a new or like-new instrument and repairs are free during the rental period. The first monthly payment will be due when signing up so that an instrument is reserved for your student. After that payments will begin in October.

Instrument(s)	Monthly Payment
Flute/ Trumpet/ Trombone/ Percussion Kit	\$27.00
Clarinet	\$40.00
French Horn/Oboe	\$45.00
Baritone	\$55.00

*\*There are a couple instruments, such as the tuba, bassoon, and several french horns and baritones that are provided by the school because of the high cost. Please contact us if finances are standing in the way of your child participating in band. We may have other instruments that are donated to us for your child to use.*

2. You may purchase a new instrument outright.

3. You may purchase a used instrument, but please have a qualified repairman (Meyer or Marshall Music Companies do a great job at this) check it out to see that it is in good playing condition.

## ONCE MY CHILD IS IN BAND, ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS?

Those students who play a reed instrument will be required to provide their own reeds, typically \$2. If the reed players buy their reeds through the directors, we will make sure they are using the proper brand and strength of reed. A reed guard is required to protect and prolong the life of your reeds. The brass players are responsible for supplying their own valve oil, slide grease, and slide cream. Cleaning brushes and tools are also recommended to help keep your instrument in good working order. At the beginning of 6th grade we sell a cleaning kit that includes brushes, oil, grease, etc. The cleaning kit cost is \$11-13, depending on the instrument. Students will need to purchase their own band method books each year, usually at a cost of about \$10.00.

## WHAT KIND OF SCHEDULE WILL MY CHILD HAVE IF HE/SHE TAKES BAND? CAN THEY ALSO TAKE TRANS MATH?

During the 6th grade year your child will have band three times per week at the High School Band Room from 8:00 to 8:40. Much of this time will be spent in like-instrument groups. For example, the clarinets will have their own class while the flutes will be in their own class. On Friday, all the band students will meet together so they can experience a full band rehearsal. If you live outside the 1.2 mile radius of the High School, your child can be bussed to the High School on the secondary bus run, or you may drop them off. After band, all students will then be bussed back to their elementary buildings to start their regular classes. If your child has qualified for trans math, he/she will have math from 9:00 to 10:00 at the Junior High and then be bussed back to his/her elementary. One additional band period will take place once a week at each elementary building at 2:00 in the afternoon. The total will be four rehearsals per week. This schedule and approach for Beginning Band gives our students a great start so they will be able to master the basic fundamentals and get on to performing some meaningful music even in 6th grade. Below is the **tentative** schedule for a typical week next year.

<u>Monday 8-8:40</u>	<u>Tues 8-8:40</u>	<u>Wed 8-8:40</u>	<u>Thurs 8-8:40</u>	<u>Fri 8-8:40</u>
Clarinet, Percussion	Horn, Trombone,	Clarinet, Percussion	Horn, Trombone,	Full Band
Flute, Oboe	Baritone, Tuba,	Flute, Oboe	Baritone, Tuba,	All Students
	Trumpet		Trumpet	

## CAN I PARTICIPATE IN BAND, ORCHESTRA, AND CHOIR?

**Yes!!!** We have numerous students who participate in all 3 activities in 6th grade. If your child selects the clarinet in band, but already plays the violin and sings in the honors choir, we find that their involvement in each of these programs just makes them a stronger all-around musician. For example, the schedule for a clarinet and violin player that goes to Pinewood would work as follows on the next page:

Mon 8-8:40  
Band

Mon 2-2:50  
Orchestra  
(at Pinewood)

Tues 8-8:40  
Orchestra

Wed 8-8:40  
Band

Thur 8-8:40  
Orchestra

Fri 8-8:40  
Band

Of course, all honors choir rehearsals take place after school. Once your child enters junior high, they will need to select two music programs only.

### **DOES JENISON HAVE A GOOD BAND PROGRAM? IS IT WORTH MY CHILD'S TIME TO BECOME INVOLVED?**

We have a very strong band program that is still improving. Our Junior High and High School bands continue to receive superior ratings at band festivals. Our Marching Band is highly respected throughout the state and even at the national level. We are proud to let our bands travel and represent our school and community. Being a part of an excellent band can be a very rewarding experience.

### **CAN MY CHILD TAKE TWO MUSIC CLASSES IN JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL?**

Through some creative scheduling, our administration makes it possible for students to be involved in both band and choir or band and orchestra in both junior high and high school. We want to provide this opportunity for the students who have an interest in the performing arts. We have found that the skills learned in one music class will enhance the other, and the result is usually a student who is not only an excellent musician, but also an outstanding student academically.

### **HOW DO WE ENROLL OUR CHILD IN BAND?**

If you would like your child to be part of the band program, you must initiate his or her membership. Please attend one of the sign up meetings held at the Junior High on **May 1 from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM or May 3 from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM**. If you have any questions regarding band please call Mrs. Gembis or Mr. Palma at the Junior High School (667-3239). You may also find it easier to email us at [agembis@jpsonline.org](mailto:agembis@jpsonline.org) and [mpalma@jpsonline.org](mailto:mpalma@jpsonline.org).

### **CURRENT BAND PARENT QUOTES**

"One of the things I love about the Jenison Band program is that it is open to any student – all are welcome. The students understand that it takes all of them to be successful, everyone plays a part. I have watched my own children learn important lessons from their involvement in the band program. They learned that to be great, it takes hard work; they are part of a team and they must work collectively to have a good performance; and they have learned self-confidence from their accomplishments and performances. This is a community of students who look out for one another and help each other through difficult times. As my son was entering high school and we were trying to decide if he should participate in marching band, a friend said to me, when they get to High School, they will naturally be part of a "group" so why wouldn't you choose this group? These students are hardworking, dedicated and kind. She was right! We are privileged to have a community that realizes the benefits of the arts and have invested in these programs. We couldn't ask for better directors and instructors to teach our students and I would recommend the Jenison Band program to all students."

-Mary Bennink, Jenison Band Parent

"I'll never forget the day my son came home from elementary school asking to play in the Jenison Band. Neither my husband nor I have any musical talents, so we'd never even considered a "band child" – we ended up having two band children! The Jenison Band program not only provides a solid musical education, it promotes a sense of self, pride in both individual and band success, a place to belong and a desire to always strive for excellence. Being part of the Jenison Band program has also taught and fostered great time management skills as well as leadership skills – things that help develop students for success in life. We are so fortunate to have such an outstanding program and musical directors that are committed to our students! I could not be more proud of the Jenison Bands and am so happy that we took that first step with our son many years ago. I know you won't be disappointed if you take that first step as well!"

-Lisa Flessner, Jenison Band Parent