



Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Autrey Mill Middle School! My name is Autumn Smith, and I am the Director of Bands here at AMMS. I am excited to be working with our students this year and looking forward to helping your child start his or her journey in music. As we start this year, we will be learning about our classroom and emergency procedures, learn about behavior expectations for the culture of our school, meet our fellow musicians, and get an overview of how band class works before we move into music theory and instrument selection.

There are always a lot of questions at the beginning of this journey because students are eager to learn an instrument. The information provided below and/or distributed in class to your child over the next few weeks will be helpful in beginning to answer those questions.

To save some paper and provide you with information that is easy to access, much of our paperwork and information will be posted on our band website. **To access the band website, go to ammsband.org or scan the QR code at the bottom right corner of this page.**

Once on the site, click on the AMMS Program Information tab to access files for the First Steps Welcome Letter, Band Handbook, Course Syllabus, Music Store List and additional information about our program as needed throughout the year.

The Band Handbook serves as the operating guidelines for our band program. Please make sure you and your student have read through it completely as it contains important information, policies, procedures, grading information, assignment information, supply lists, helpful tips, suggestions for parents of musicians and more.

The **Band Calendar** tab contains all of our Concert dates, events, Fine Arts Activities and important due dates.

The **Events** tab will house information about the GMEA Solo and Ensemble Event, GMEA All-State/District Honor Band Auditions, "Trunk or Treat" with the JCHS Band, 8th Grade Night at the JCHS Football Game and more!

The **Band Online Payments** tab has links to all OSP (Online School Payments) needs for Band supplies/events. Other than instruments and instrument supplies, we do most of our fees upfront that would be collected throughout the year. **The fee is \$100 total. This fee covers uniforms, band binder system, start-up clinic fees, clinicians/instructors, method books, and more.**





What Do I Do Now?

1. Read through ALL AMMS Band Program documents on the band website.
 - First Steps - 6th Grade Welcome Letter
 - Beginning Band FAQ
 - Course Syllabus
 - AMMS Band Handbook
 - Operations Letter
1. Put all AMMS Band Calendar dates on your family calendar.
2. Pay yearly \$100 - Band Operations Fee.
 - a. Card payment only. No cash, checks, Zelle, Venmo, etc. OSP Payments can be paid through links located on the band website (ammsband.org).
3. Fill out the digital Student Information Sheet/Band Operations Form (**DUE AUGUST 18TH**)
 - a. Make sure you have paid the Online Band Operations Fee BEFORE completing the Student Information Sheet, as it will ask for a receipt number from OSP.
4. Read about the GMEA Solo and Ensemble event and the GMEA All-State, District Honor Band, and 6th Grade Honor Band events. These are three competitive and honorary events.
 - a. While the majority of our 6th grade students do not yet qualify for these events as they do not yet play an instrument, I want everyone to learn about opportunities available in the future. Students will learn about these events during this school year.
 - b. **Fall Solo and Ensemble Registration DUE SEPTEMBER 26TH.**
 - c. **All-State/District Honor Band Audition Registration DUE OCTOBER 3RD.**
5. Help your child obtain additional classroom supplies and/or donations if possible.
 - a. We are in need of: financial donations, Kleenex tissues, Band Aids, Clorox wipes. hand sanitizer, 9 volt/AA batteries, puppy pads, ping pong balls, standard size balloons

Items to Note:

1. Band Supplies should be brought to class every day: Band binder (provided with operations fee), class assignments, notes/worksheets. laptop, pencils, and agenda.
2. Over the next couple of weeks, we will begin daily routines, warm-up exercises, learn music fundamentals such as notes/rests/reading music, and begin learning about instrument families and instruments in preparation of our instrument testing night. Students will have a classroom procedures quiz (read the band handbook and use as a study guide) and music theory pre-test.
3. Students can expect more written homework/worksheets during the first 9 weeks as we learn to read music. Establishing strong fundamentals makes learning to physically play an instrument easier as students are not having to learn multiple concepts at one time.
4. Please make arrangements for your student to attend the required **Instrument Fitting Night Event on Wednesday, August 23rd from 5:30pm-8:30pm.**





Introduction to 6th Grade Beginning Band

Beginning Band breaks down into 4 basic steps:

- Signing up for band - **COMPLETE!**
- Learning about instruments and learning to read music - **Begins Monday, August 14th in class.**
- Instrument "Fitting" Night: **Wednesday, August 23rd from 5:30pm-8:30pm.**
- Start Up Clinic: **Wednesday, September 13th from 2:15pm-5:30pm.**

First few weeks of band:

Once we know who is who and how to find the band room, we will start learning to read music. We will also learn about the instruments offered in band, so that students have an understanding of what instruments they may be interested in learning. Students can expect more written homework/worksheets during the first 9 weeks as we learn to read music. Establishing strong fundamentals makes learning to physically play an instrument easier as students are not having to learn multiple concepts at one time.

Instrument Fitting Event

Once students have a grasp on the basics of music reading and traits of instruments, they'll go through the "fitting" process. Getting fitted for an instrument is much like the "Sorting Hat" from Harry Potter or like trying on clothes. Sometimes a shirt looks AWESOME on the hanger, but when you put it on it looks terrible. Other times the shirt might just seem OK on the rack, but man... you put it on and *you so rock it!!* Instruments are the same way. They each have their own traits and demands, so different personalities and physical characteristics fit better with different instruments.

The instrument fitting night is on Wednesday, August 23rd from 5:30pm-8:30pm. During this time students will try out a minimum of 4 instruments which will provide data to assist in finding an instrument fit for your student. Quality and ease of tone production, student characteristic analysis, musical aptitude assessments, and student preference are used to determine the best instrument fit for your child. Once instruments are selected, they are rarely changed. We take our time to be certain the right choices are made from the beginning for optimal success on beginning fundamentals. **Please make sure this very IMPORTANT DATE is on your calendar and that your student attends, as this is our ONLY opportunity for instrument testing. We bring in professional musicians and instructors to assist us and we need 100% participation. The event is for ALL 6th Grade Band students, even those coming in with prior experience from another school system or state.**

Beginning Band Instruments:

- flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, horn, trombone, baritone, tuba, and percussion (not just drums - we also learn mallet and auxiliary instruments).





Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does my child have to already know how to play an instrument?

A: No. The students will learn how to read music, play an instrument, and perform through their middle school band career (6th grade - 8th grade). If your child already know how to play an instrument (most likely from a previous school system or state), they will get positive reinforcement and a refresher on the fundamentals of music. This instruction will only make him or her better at what they already do well.

Q: Should I purchase an instrument?

A: **NO - PLEASE DO NOT DO THIS STEP YET.** The students will be exposed to many different instruments during the first 9-weeks as part of our curriculum and will have the opportunity to try several instruments that he or she might wish to learn. After the students have seen all the instruments, there will be an instrument selection process. This process will help your student and myself see what best suits him or her. Many students start band with one instrument in mind, but after seeing all of their options they tend to change their minds.

Q: How does Band instruction in Fulton County work?

A: All band classes and Fulton County Curriculum start in 6th grade and are taught in large group instruction (Not one-on-one private lessons.) By the end of the first 9 weeks all students will be on an even level of knowledge of the basic fundamentals. This will allow all students (no matter of what level they are at) to meld into one cohesive group. By starting with music fundamentals, such as note reading and rhythms, the students become very comfortable with the mental side of music. The physical side will be the next part of instrument after basic music theory.

Q: When do students start playing instruments?

A: Instrument testing will take place on Wednesday, August 23rd from 5:30-8:30pm, and we will begin instruments in our Start Up Clinic in September (Wednesday, September 13th from 2:15pm-5:30pm). By the end of the 1st 9 weeks, students will be playing instruments every day.

Q: Can my child pick his or her instrument?

A: Your child will have the chance to express an interest in a particular instrument(s). He/she will go through an instrument fitting / selection process and then from there the director will assess which instrument would be best and most successful for each student. This will allow the student a more fun and rewarding experience. Every effort will be made to consider the student's interest and previous experience. Students will naturally do better with some instruments or instrument families over others. The instrument fitting / selection process will help us to determine an instrument that allows them the most success.





Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What supplies will my child need to start the course?

A: 1" three ring black binder, sheet protectors, & dividers (binders, 3 sheet protectors & dividers included with fees to AMMS Band), Pencil, Notebook paper, Laptop, Agenda (provided by AMMS), Box of Kleenex/Hand Sanitizer for the classroom.

Q: Once students start with instruments, is there a place to leave them during the school day?

A: Yes, there are cubbies in the band room where the students can leave their instruments in the morning before school starts on the way to homeroom. Instrument cases MUST be labeled before leaving them in the storage room during the day.

Q: Do instruments have to go home every day?

A: Yes. Practicing is Band Homework. Reinforcement of each day's class is crucial to the students' success and continued growth.

Q: If I do not have Band on my schedule, can I still join the Band?

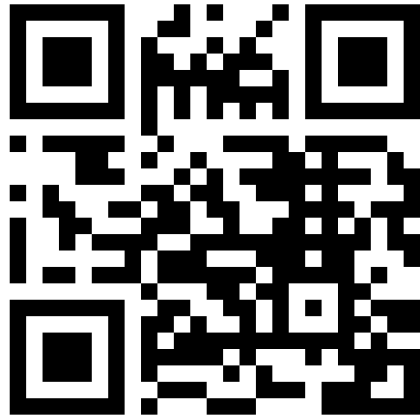
A: YES! Absolutely. – Add it to your schedule during Sneak Preview, see Ms. Smith (the band director) and she will take care of it, or fill out the Music Department sign up form during the first couple of days of school.

Q: What is the process for starting on instruments?

A: 1) Sign up for Band. The first 5-7 weeks will be an introduction to music theory and an overview of instruments. 2) Students will demonstrate their knowledge of music theory through worksheets, tests, class discussions, and hands on activities. 3) Students will view demonstrations of ALL band instruments, learn about tone production, & characteristics of each instrument. 4) Students will select the top 3-4 instruments that interest them and then complete the instrument selection process. 5) The combination of work ethic, attitude, mastery of theory knowledge, interests and instrument selection scoring will help the director provide students with the best instrument choice.

Total instrument testing is generally a several week process and is a culmination of a variety of factors. Please know that while every effort is made to consider student choices of instruments, some students may demonstrate difficulty on a particular instrument during the testing process because they do not have favorable characteristics for certain instruments. It is very possible that they might show incredible aptitude towards something different. Balanced instrumentation must also be considered for the whole ensemble. 6) Once students are approved and given the go ahead, students will secure an instrument and necessary supplies. 7) Our 1st day with instruments is during our 6th Start Up Clinic to learn the fundamentals of their specific instrument. This occurs during September and ALL 6th Grade Band members are expected to attend.





AMMS BAND WEBSITE



OSP

Contact:

Email: smitha7@fultonschools.org

Remind101: Text @ammsband6 to 81010

I am looking forward to an amazing and successful school year with our student musicians at Autrey Mill Middle School. Thank you for allowing me to teach your students and I wish you a great year!

Musically,

Autumn Smith
Director of Bands