

# AMMS 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Beginning Band

Welcome to the Autrey Mill Middle School Band program! I am so excited you have chosen to join the outstanding group of musicians that we have at our school. Our band students are hardworking, friendly, and some of the finest musicians in Georgia. Although it may take a little time and effort to get there, playing an instrument is such a rewarding experience and a lot of fun. Deciding on learning to play an instrument is the first decision. Now, you probably have several questions you want to ask. We will take it step by step and help you through each aspect of band. It is not only a learning experience and musical journey for students but parents as well. To get you started today, here are some of the most frequently asked questions during the first few weeks. Again, welcome and I look forward to working with you this year!

## Important Band FAQ's

- Does my child have to already know how to play an instrument?
  - No. The students will learn how to read music, play an instrument, and perform throughout their middle school band career (6-8).
  - If your child already plays 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.
- Should I go and purchase an instrument?
  - NO – Please do not do this step yet.** The students will be exposed to many different instruments during the first nine weeks as part of our curriculum and instrument 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 me to see what best suits him/her. Many students start band with one instrument in mind but after seeing all the instruments they tend to change their minds.
  - The first several weeks of band are designed to teach many musical fundamentals that do not require an instrument such as note reading, rhythm reading, music symbols, and basic music theory. These fundamentals are essential to all other concepts we learn, and it takes time to reinforce them.
- How does Band instruction in Fulton County work?
  - All Band classes and Fulton County Curriculum start in 6<sup>th</sup> 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.
- When do students start playing instruments?
  - Generally, instrument testing occurs towards the end of August / beginning of September, and we will begin instruments in our Start Up Clinic in September. By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> 9 weeks, students will be playing instruments every day.
- Can my child pick his or her instrument?
  - 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.
- What supplies will my child need to start the course:
  - 1" three ring black binder, sheet protectors, & dividers (binders, 3 sheet protectors & dividers included with fees to AMMS Band)
  - Pencil
  - Notebook paper
  - iPad
  - Agenda (provided by AMMS)
  - Box of Kleenex/Hand Sanitizer for the classroom
- Once students start with instruments, is there a place to leave them during the school day?
  - 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.
- Do instruments have to go home every day?
  - Yes. Practicing is Band Homework.
  - Reinforcement of each day's class is crucial to the students' success and continued growth.
- If I do not have Band on my schedule, can I still join the Band?
  - YES! Absolutely. – Add it to your schedule during Sneak Preview.
  - See Mrs. Wilson (the band director) and she will take care of it.
  - Fill out the Music Department sign up form during the first couple of days of school.
- What is the process for starting on instruments?
  - Sign up for Band. The first 5-7 weeks will be an introduction to music theory and an overview of instruments.
  - Students will demonstrate their knowledge of music theory through worksheets, tests, class discussions, and hands on activities.
  - Students will view demonstrations of ALL band instruments, learn about tone production, & characteristics of each instrument.
  - Students will select the top 3-4 instruments that interest them and then complete the instrument selection process.
  - 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.
  - Once students are approved and given the go ahead, students will secure an instrument and necessary supplies.
  - Our 1<sup>st</sup> day with instruments in during our 6<sup>th</sup> Start Up Clinic to learn the fundamentals of their specific instrument. This occurs during September and ALL 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Band members are expected to attend.

\*Once students are placed on an instrument, he/she must remain on that instrument for the remainder of the year. Switching will not be allowed unless the director observes progress cannot be achieved based on requirements of the instrument or the ability to demonstrate mastery of standards/objectives on that instrument. Learning to play an instrument is a process and takes a considerable amount of time to master. Everyone will not progress at the same pace. It is a process not an event. Not switching instruments is important to allow for students to have time to fairly adjust to the instrument, allow cohesiveness within the class, and to maintain integrity of the testing and beginning instrument process to be fair to all students.

**Congratulations and Welcome! You have already made a great decision and I am looking forward to making music with you this year.**

Musically yours,  
Mrs. Wilson