



Sycamore Middle School Bands



Structure of Program

Ensembles during the day:

Seventh Grade Band—9:49-10:31

Sixth Grade Band—10:34-11:16

Eighth Grade Band—11:19-12:01

Group Lesson Schedules will be forthcoming (these usually start in mid-September).

The Choir and Orchestra rotation schedules will also be finalized shortly.

- **Sectionals/Group Lessons are very important, as many instrument-specific concepts are taught and playing assessments are held during this time. These small-group lessons are crucial to our success.** If students cannot attend a sectional due to a classroom conflict (test, field trip, etc.), students are required to fill out a sectional absence form and make up the sectional at a later time. **If students do not fill out a sectional absence form, their classroom grade will be lowered.**

ALL SIXTH AND SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS WILL NEED TO PURCHASE A METHOD BOOK

6th Graders will need to purchase *Standard of Excellence, Book Two* for their instrument.

7th Graders will need to purchase *Essential Technique 2000, Book Three* for their instrument.

IN ADDITION, ALL PERCUSSIONISTS WILL NEED TO POSSESS

Stick Bag

Drum Sticks (SD 1 Vic Firth recommended)

Timpani Mallets (T1 Vic Firth General Sticks recommended)

Rubber Mallets (Mike Balter MB5-B Medium recommended)

Yarn Mallets (Mike Balter MB13-B Medium recommended)

Total Package Price from Ellman's Music: \$98.08 (individual prices available upon request)

All students are highly encouraged to purchase a tuner/metronome, or at least download a metronome and tuner app for their smartphone. For the tuner app, "Tonal Energy" or "Cleartune" are good (they cost either \$4 or \$3, respectively), and "Tempo" is an excellent free metronome download. If you'd like to purchase a regular metronome, the Wittner MT-50 is around \$25, and the Korg TM-50 combination tuner/metronome runs approximately \$30.

Many assignments this year will require students to execute scales or musical passages at a specific tempo, and it is important for students to be able to practice effectively. Technology has improved to the point where students can purchase a basic tuner/metronome (Korg TM-40)

for approximately \$25.00. These can be purchased from a music store (Ellman's Music, etc.) or online from Amazon.com or other companies. If your child prefers to use an amp,

There will be three required band concerts for each grade level this year. Please note the performance calendar, which is included in this handbook. In addition, there will be a solo/ensemble festival held on **Saturday, March 19, 2016**. Students will be required to perform in either a solo or ensemble for this event. If students cannot attend the festival, they and/or their group will perform for the band the following Monday. Please mark these dates on your calendar (found later in handbook). There is an additional, tentatively scheduled performance for the seventh and eighth grade bands—**please save the date of Saturday, May 21, 2016**.

Ensembles Outside of the Regular School Day

Jazz Band

The Sycamore Middle School Jazz Ensemble is open by audition to all students who play a jazz band instrument. Most students must be a part of the school concert band in order to perform in the Jazz Ensemble. However, students from the regular student body are encouraged to audition if they play piano, bass, or guitar. The Jazz Ensemble rehearses on Monday evenings from 5:00-6:30 p.m., and from 7:30-8:10 a.m. on Friday mornings before certain performances. The SMS Jazz Ensemble is led by Mr. Ken Goodman. He is also the high school concert band director. Students must be willing to commit to regular rehearsal attendance and extra practice for the jazz music.

Grading

Students will receive a grade on their report card at the end of each quarter that counts toward their overall academic G.P.A.

Daily Performance Grade—55%

This includes concert participation, practice records and a daily preparation grade in class. Students receive 2 daily points if they are participating; if students do not have their pencil, music, or instrument/percussion sticks, or if they otherwise interfere with the teaching of the class, their grade for the day is reduced accordingly. Repeated infractions will be dealt with through student conference, office referral, parent conference, and dismissal if necessary. Concert participation is required.

Test Grade—35%

This includes playing and written tests given during normal class time and sectionals. Students should prepare for weekly playing tests this year.

Sectional Attendance—10% of total grade

Students are required to attend their sectionals. Points will be deducted for each unexcused absence.

Extra Credit

Practice Records—Up to extra 10% (Sixth Grade only)

Because of our limited rehearsal time, home practice is crucial to the growth of this our young band students. In order to receive 100% on the weekly extra credit, students must practice 100 minutes spread over at least four days in a given week. These practice records must be signed by a parent. Students are required to hand in these practice records every Tuesday. Below is a breakdown of grading:

100+ minutes (over at least four days)— 100%

60-99 minutes (over at least three days) —90%

1-59 minutes (over at least two days)— 80%

0 minutes 70%

No Practice Record = 0%

(Translation—Turn in your practice record every week regardless of how many practice minutes you turn in!)

Concert Attendance

Sycamore Middle School students can pick up extra credit through attending concerts. These concerts can be other school performing music groups, Northern Illinois University music groups or recitals, regional or national symphony concerts, or other approved events. We are fortunate to live in an area where there are so many musical events happening, and I recommend students and parents take advantage of this. One good site to find out about NIU concerts is <http://www.niu.edu/music/concerts/index.shtml>. Each outside event is equivalent to one sectional date of attendance.

There may be other extra credit opportunities given at Mr. Mertens' discretion.

Dress Requirements for Concerts

Concert Bands (6th, 7th, and 8th Grades)

- Ladies—White top and black skirt or slacks
- Guys—White collared shirt (tie optional) and black slacks
- All students should be in black socks and shoes. Please avoid jeans and gym shoes.

Jazz Band

Specific attire for concerts is at Mr. Goodman's discretion.

Marching Band Performances

Students performing for marching band performances will wear a Sycamore Middle School Band T-shirt and blue jeans. These T-shirts will be handed out before performances, and they will be collected afterwards.

General Information

Attendance

It is very important for students to be present for regularly scheduled rehearsals and concerts. Band is a commitment, and concert attendance is a necessary part of membership in this group. Any conflicts should be discussed with Mr. Mertens several weeks ahead of the concert dates if possible.

Excuses that will not lower your child's performance grade if given in advance of the performance include:

1. Sickness or medical condition that prevents your child from performing, as per doctor's order.
2. Death in the immediate family.
3. Religious observance.
4. Attendance at family wedding, college graduation, or similar event whose scheduling is not controlled by the family.
5. Other special circumstances approved by Mr. Mertens.

Students who have an approved concert absence may still be asked to do a composer report of reasonable length to attain full credit.

Discipline

An organization like a band can only function effectively when everyone agrees to follow basic rules of conduct. Here are some basic rules:

1. Have the necessary equipment (instrument, reeds/mouthpiece/sticks, pencil, music).
2. Be musically prepared (practice regularly and effectively).
3. Do not disturb the rehearsal or performance process through talking or playing without permission.

Practice

Band is unlike most other subjects in that the success of the class depends upon **everybody** being prepared. If some people are not prepared, it can waste everybody's time.

The thing that will help you is **daily, efficient practice**. Practice is not always convenient; however, the positive results are usually obvious, and the self-discipline you gain will help you tackle other challenges in life. You should take your instrument home every day, and your improvement will become apparent.

Activities

Concerts

Band concerts are an opportunity for students to show what they have learned, both on stage and off. Band student behavior should be so that other students will see the proper way to behave during a concert. Also, band students are expected to stay for the entire concert.

Solo/Ensemble Festival

Band members will be expected to perform for the Sycamore Middle School Solo/Ensemble Festival (see calendar for exact date). Most students are required to perform in an ensemble (selected by me), but students are also encouraged to take a solo. Students perform for judges who will give constructive feedback. **Students who take private lessons should also plan on performing a solo, as this is a natural extension of what you are learning about in lessons.** If you are taking a solo, please make sure you have an accompanist. I can accompany some students, but please ask me well in advance of the festival date.

Small ensembles are crucial for developing intonation, independent rhythmic counting, and personal accountability for learning your part. This is one of the most important activities we do in band.

IMEA All-District Band and Jazz Band

Advanced seventh and eighth graders (and occasionally sixth graders) will be encouraged to audition for these two district honor groups. These are separate auditions, but they both take place on the same day at Hononegah High School. Students are allowed to audition for both groups if they wish. Membership in these groups is a high honor. Students should sign up to work with Mr. Mertens on their audition pieces before or after school prior to the auditions, which will take place in mid-October (see schedule). The school district picks up student audition costs; however, if a student backs out after the registration deadline, he/she will be asked to compensate the school for the cost of the audition. The school district also provides transportation to and from the auditions in Sterling.

Private Lessons—please read!

Our students have daily band rehearsals, but none of this time can be devoted to working individually with students. If you wish for your child to approach his or her musical potential, it is paramount that you pursue private music lessons. Our school has a relatively small number of band students studying privately given its population and socioeconomic makeup. Similar middle schools have 35-50% of band students studying privately; Sycamore Middle School currently has 10-15% of its band students studying privately. In top suburban school districts, most students in upper-level ensembles are taking privately. **If our students want to be in a top-quality program now and in the future, it is necessary for students and parents to embrace the worth of lessons and consistent practice in middle school.**

If you are looking for a private teacher, NIU's Community School of the Arts (753-1450) has many qualified individuals. There will also be a list of potential private teachers attached to this handbook.

Instrument Care

School-Owned Instruments

Sycamore Middle School owns a small number of musical instruments. Students and parents will be asked to sign an "Instrument Usage Contract". Any student that checks out a school-owned instrument is responsible for its care, safety, and repair as if it were his or her own instrument. Repair of these instruments should be handled through the music teacher.

Instrument Repair

If students have a problem with their rental instrument, they or their parents should contact the store from which they are renting their instrument. It is customary for these companies to provide "loaner" instruments during the rental period which students can use until the regular instrument is fixed.

If students already own their instrument and need it repaired, there are repair shops affiliated with Ellman's, Guzzardo Music, and Quinlan and Fabish. Students/parents can call these companies and arrange for a representative to pick up

these instruments at the middle school. Also, Roger Morgan is a local repairman (618 Spring Ave., DeKalb, 815-756-7440) who does very good work at a reasonable cost.

Name Tags

All instruments are required to have a name tag on the exterior of the case. If instruments become lost, it becomes needlessly difficult to track down the owner if there is no tag.

Instrument/Equipment Upgrade

The director or private teacher may suggest that a better instrument will enable a student to perform at a higher level. The matter of a step-up instrument should become a matter for family discussion and consideration, and a good time to begin this discussion is in eighth grade. The private teacher and band director can be of great help in selecting an appropriate instrument and recommending a reputable music company. Ellman's, Quinlan and Fabish, and Guzzardo Music all have instruments in their stores that students can try out. If you or your child wishes to have a free trial of one of these instruments, please contact Mr. Mertens.

It is also normal for some students to need equipment upgrades as well. Sixth or seventh grade is an appropriate time for students to improve their equipment. Please look at the attached recommended equipment chart to see which equipment might be appropriate. Prices in parentheses are taken from the Woodwind/Brasswind website (wwwbw.com), but they can be purchased from most reputable music stores.

Recommended Equipment

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED—Metronome— The Korg TM50 costs around \$30.00. It also has a built-in tuner, which is very helpful as students get older.

Smartphone apps for metronomes: Tempo (free), SilverDial (free)

Smartphone apps for tuners: Cleartune (\$2.99), Tonal Energy (\$3.99)

Quik-Time, Seiko, Casio, Wittner are other recommended metronome brands. These can be found for less than \$20.

Step-up Mouthpieces:

Clarinet	VanDoren 5RV Lyre—highly recommended Hite Bb Clarinet Mouthpiece (cost-effective alternative)
Alto Sax	Classical—Selmer S80 C* Jazz—Meyer 6M hard rubber (medium chamber) (\$82.87)
Tenor Sax	Classical—Selmer S80 C* (\$144.99) Jazz-Link 6 hard rubber (\$83.26)
Trumpet	Bach 5C
Trombone/Baritone	Bach 6 ½ AL
Tuba	Conn Helleberg 7B

Ligatures

Clarinet	Bonade Inverted Ligature Rovner 1R Ligature Luyben Inverted Ligature
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Reeds

Oboe/Bassoon	Handmade reeds are generally the best Jones medium-soft in a pinch (if you can find them). Nielsen Woodwinds at http://www.nielsen-woodwinds.com/ Roger Miller Reeds at http://www.rogermillerrom4oboe.com/
Clarinet/Sax	Van Doren 2 ½ or 3 are good for 6 th grade. Van Doren 3 and up are preferable for second semester 6 th , 7 th and 8 th grades

Useful Telephone Numbers

Sycamore Middle School	815-899-8170
Ellman's Music (Naperville)	630-355-5880
Roger's Music, 618 Spring Ave, DeKalb (Roger Morgan, Instrument Repairman)	815-756-7440
NIU Community School of the Arts	815-753-1450
Quinlan and Fabish (Burr Ridge)	1-800-63-SOUSA
Guzzardo Music (Rockford)	1-800-747-0480
Mattix Music	815-757-5284
Mr. G's Music	815-895-3980
Sycamore HS Music Dept.	815-899-8159

Mr. Mertens can most easily be reached at smertens@syc427.org. Voice-mail messages can be left at 815-501-9581.

Useful Web Addresses

Sycamore Middle School: <http://www.syc427.org/Schools2/junior2/junior.htm>

Ellman's Music: www.ellmansmusic.com

NIU Community School of the Arts: www.niu.edu/extprograms

NIU Music Concert Schedule: <http://www.niu.edu/music/concerts/index.shtml>

Woodwind/Brasswind: www.wwbw.com

Guzzardo Music: www.guzzardomusic.com

Quinlan and Fabish: www.qandf.com

Private Teachers—Band Instruments

Flute

Lynn Cook Hansen	815-753-1450
Danna Webber	815-757-5284
Cheryl Haines	815-753-1450
Rebecca Rome	815-757-5482
David Lehman	815-756-3723

Oboe

Kristine Mertens	815-895-0757
Dave Lehman	815-756-3723

Bassoon

Martha Robinson	815-753-1450
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Clarinet

Ashley Miceli	amiceli17@gmail.com
Marybeth Kurnat	815-757-0909
Mary Alberti Stratton	815-762-6467
David Lehman	815-753-1450
Rebecca Rome	815-757-5482

Saxophone

Marybeth Kurnat	815-757-0909
Evan King	937-212-1248
Jacob Slocum	815-753-1450
Dave Lehman	815-756-3723
Rebecca Rome	815-757-5482

Trumpet

Garth Anderson	815-762-4373
Mark Baldin	815-758-2123
Gene Vandenbosch	630-772-6616
Rebecca Rome	815-757-5482
David Lehman	815-756-3723

French Horn

Mike Kasper	michael.kasper@d300.org
Gail Anderson	gailanderson1691@gmail.com
Laura Fairfield	815-753-1450
Gene Vandenbosch	630-772-6616
Kate Swope	815-753-1450

Trombone/Baritone

Kirk Lundbeck	815-899-5006
Gene Vandenbosch	630-772-6616
Ian Fitzwater	815-757-5284
Rebecca Rome	815-757-5284
David Lehman	815-756-3723

Tuba

Gene Vandenbosch	630-772-6616
Deb Shofner	ask Mr. Mertens
Rebecca Rome	815-757-5482

Percussion/Drum Set

Ben Weaver	815-757-5482
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You may also contact the NIU Community Music School (815-753-1450), Mattix Music (815-757-5284), or Mr. G's Music (815-895-3980) for additional teachers.

Sycamore Middle School Band Performance Schedule 2015-16

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
Friday, September 25	6:00 p.m.	8th Grade Band w/HS Band (8 th grade band only)	Sycamore HS
Saturday, October 10	all day (mostly a.m.)	IMEA Concert/Jazz Band Auditions (specific students)	Hononegah HS, Rockton, IL
Saturday, October 24	morning	Pumpkinfest (possible small group performances)	Sycamore HS Fieldhouse
Saturday, November 14	all day	IMEA Jazz Band Festival (selected students)	Rochelle HS
Monday, November 16	7:30 p.m.	MS Band Concert (all)	Sycamore HS Aud.
Saturday, November 21	all day	IMEA Concert Band Festival (selected students)	DeKalb HS
Friday, January 8	5:30 p.m.	8th Grade Band w/HS Band (8 th grade band only--pep band)	Sycamore HS
Thursday, January 21	7:00 p.m.	8th Grade Band Concert (with 5 th grade and HS Band)	Sycamore HS
Tuesday, February 2	7:30 p.m.	6th/7th Grade Band Concert	Sycamore HS Aud.
Saturday, March 19	8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Solo/Ensemble Festival 6th/7th/8th Grades	Sycamore MS
Thursday, April 14 (tentative date)	6:30 p.m.	Family Fine Arts Night (jazz band and other selected performances)	Sycamore MS
Monday, May 2	7:30 p.m.	7th/8th Grade Band Concert	Sycamore HS Aud.
Saturday, May 21 (tentative)	All Day	TBA (7 th /8 th Grade Band)	??? ☺
Monday, May 23	7:00 p.m.	5th/6th Grade Band Concert	Sycamore HS Aud.
Monday, May 30	9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Memorial Day Parade (7 th /8 th Grade Bands)	Sycamore (meet at MS)

Performances in bold face are required full band performances for the bands listed.

Students—Read this handbook with a parent, sign below, and return this page by Friday, August 28.

I have read the rules of the Sycamore Middle School Band Handbook, and I agree to abide by them.

Student Signature

Parents—Please read the handbook, include relevant contact information, and sign below.

I have read the handbook for the Sycamore Middle School, and I support my son or daughter's membership in this ensemble.

Parent Signature

Parents: Please also include at least one contact e-mail and phone number where I can reach you. I will be sending some updates and sectional information directly via e-mail, and having your e-mail address will allow for much more efficient communication.

Parent e-mail address: _____
Please print legibly

Alternate parent e-mail address: _____

Phone number: _____