

Saddlebrook Elementary Instrumental Music Program

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Band lessons are off to a great start this year! Beginning band students are working on creating a quality tone on their instruments, learning how to read rhythms and note names, learning how to take care of and be careful with their instruments as well as working on listening to other students play in the band. We are just now wrapping up working on our scary song- band students are really looking forward to performing this song for the kindergarten students at the end of the month!

Over the next few weeks beginning band students will begin our band achievement program, The Principal's Own. This program will find students earning advancing ranks, much like in the US Marine Band's *The President's Own*. In addition to earning higher ranks, students can also earn special achievement awards for practice, remembering their instruments, attending concerts in the community and much more. More information will be sent home with your student in the coming weeks.

First quarter student progress will be reported on the regular classroom report card. Please look for a section on the report card labeled Instrumental Music- band. If your student does not receive a grade for band lessons, please contact me and I will make sure to correct this error. If you have any questions or concerns about grading, feel free to contact me any time.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled for this week. Because I teach at six different schools I will not be able to attend conferences at Saddlebrook for the entire two-day period. **I will be available for conferences at Saddlebrook on Thursday, October 24th from 1:00 – 3:30 pm** if you would like to stop by and discuss your student's progress in band.

I realize that the times that I am available for conferences will probably not work for everyone. But I would still love to speak with you about your student's progress in band lessons! If you would like to have a conference with me, please contact me at the numbers above to schedule a time that will work for everyone involved.

I thank you for being supportive of your child's efforts to learn a musical instrument! Being involved in instrumental music will have a lasting impact on your child- please read the back side of this page for more information on what you can do to help in this process. **Thank you for signing the back of this page and returning this letter to confirm it made it home to you.** Excitement is building for the band's performance at the Saddlebrook Winter Program on Thursday December 19th. I hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Tom Cosby

Tom Cosby
Band Teacher,
Saddlebrook Elementary

Why Should My Child Continue Learning a Musical Instrument?

Learning to play a musical instrument and acquiring the unique habits of mind that come with it is one of the most incredible opportunities that our school can offer your child. The instrument that has been placed in your child's hands has the power to transform their lives in ways that no other endeavor can. In addition to musical accomplishments, this year your child will learn to :

- Be patient and persistent with difficult tasks;
- Delay gratification by working in order to sound better;
- Develop curiosity, problem solve, and cultivate *grit*.

You play a vital role in the musical education of your child, and you can be successful at this even if you don't believe yourself to be musical! Supporting your child at home is easy and fun — if you can teach them to wash dishes, you can help them develop a healthy practice routine at home. Below are a few things you need to keep in mind to ensure that your child enjoys music as part of their life for years to come:

1. **Treat music as a long-term commitment right from the start.** Students who identify that they will play their instrument for longer than one year outperform students who only commit to one year of playing by up to 400% — *practicing the same amount of time if not less!* The ideas and mindsets students bring to their musical instrument study have a direct effect on their success, and it's the parents' role to set the tone on the first day by not giving their child an "easy out" to quit. Make the decision to invest in your child's music education for at least a few years of their schooling and you will see incredible results *this year*.
2. **Treasure the escape from "high-stakes" studies.** It seems that everywhere we turn, academic expectations run higher and panic begins to set in: about acing the exam, not marring the transcript, or keeping up with "high-achieving" peers. Playing a musical instrument helps parents pull their children off this fast track, if even for a moment, and not worry that other children will wind up "ahead". Instrumental music gives children the room to find their genuine passions, the freedom to discover true independence, and the space to fail and bounce back. They will become *better people* this year through their musical studies.
3. **Embrace the "offline" time.** Your child's ability to become a deep and complex person relies so much upon their ability to build their attention span. In our lightning-fast digital world, children do not have enough opportunity to build understanding and intelligence through mindful solitary activities. Musical instrument instruction facilitates this offline, "slow world" learning and brings children together in a unique, "unplugged" ensemble when they have band class.
4. **Understand that your child's instrumental music experience is just as crucial (if not more so in my opinion) to their growth as human beings than any other subject.** Music is much more than a "special," a "pull-out" or a "frill" subject — it is a *core subject*, and it should be approached that way by *all of us*. When taught with healthy rigor, it is often the most enjoyable subject during the school day, and the home practice should be treated as an essential part of the homework routine. When taught well and *minimally* supported at home, the craft of learning a musical instrument develops *fortitude, willpower, and metacognitive skills* that parents stay up at night hoping their children have when they grow up.
5. **Don't let your child quit too soon.** All children are capable of enjoying a successful K-12 music experience with a little support. By not letting your child quit, you are sending a clear message to everyone in our school system that you believe playing a musical instrument cultivates crucial "non-cognitive" skills that matter so much in the grown-up world. Spend 5-10 minutes a night helping your child create a practice routine and they will be far less likely to become frustrated and quit too early in their studies.

As the 1st quarter draws to a close I want you to know that I am not only passionate about growing a new generation of musician, music lover, and future patron of the arts — I am determined to arm your children with the tools to become great thinkers, citizens, and lifelong lovers of learning. I will take care of the musical instruction on my end, but the actions of adults assisting their children's practice at home, accompanied with a long-term commitment to their children staying in our school music program, will ensure that they receive the best well-rounded education our schools have to offer! Please sign on the line below and return with your child to acknowledge that you have read this letter.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)