

# STILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

## 2023-2024 BAND HANDBOOK



Chris Niesluchowski  
Doug Ruhs  
*Directors*

[www.stillmusic.weebly.com](http://www.stillmusic.weebly.com)

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Band Department at Still Middle School! We are very excited about the 2023-2024 school year! The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an awareness and understanding of the policies, organizational structure, and general functioning of Still Middle School Bands. Please read this handbook in its entirety, discuss it with your family, and keep it for future reference.

Music in District 204 is a vibrant part of the curriculum. In addition to providing music education, our music program is designed to help meet the emotional, social, and cultural needs of every student.

Goals for students include:

1. To discover, appreciate, and value their talents, the talents of others, and the beauty of music.
2. To develop the desire to improve their musical performance as well as increase knowledge of music theory, composition, and improvisation.
3. To gain a sense of self-fulfillment by striving to reach their full potential.
4. To develop a life-long enjoyment and appreciation of music.

We hope you will share in these goals and help us provide the best possible experience for everyone. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions or concerns you may have.

We're looking forward to a great year!

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## **The Calendar (NEW OPTION)**

<http://stillmusic.weebly.com/calendar>

Please mark your own calendar to avoid conflicts.

Dates in **bold** are required/graded performances

### **6th Grade Events**

**Oct. 25, 2023 - Fall Demo Concert - 7:30pm**

TBA - Day Of Percussion @ Waubonsie Valley HS - 9am to 7pm

**Jan. 29, 2024 - BCO Concert - 6:30 pm**

Feb. 17, 2024 - Solo & Ensemble Festival @ Fischer (optional)

**May 6, 2024 - Spring Band Concert - 7:00 pm**

**May 18, 2024 - Fine Arts Festival @ Metea Valley HS**

**May 27, 2024 - Aurora Memorial Day Parade**

### **7th Grade Events**

Sept. 20 - ILMEA Virtual audition recordings are due (optional)

**Oct. 25, 2023 - Fall Demo Concert - 7:30pm**

Nov. 11, 2023 - ILMEA District Band Festival – for students that were selected

TBA - Day Of Percussion @ Waubonsie Valley HS - 9am to 7pm

**Jan. 29, 2024 - BCO Concert - 8:00 pm**

Feb. 17, 2024 - Solo & Ensemble Festival @ Fischer (optional)

**May 6, 2024 - Spring Band Concert - 7:00 pm**

**May 18, 2024 - Fine Arts Festival @ Metea Valley HS**

**May 27, 2024 - Aurora Memorial Day Parade**

### **8th Grade Events**

Sept. 22 - Marching Mustang Night @ Metea Valley (optional - but highly recommended!!)

Sept. 29, 2023 - Marching Warrior Night @ Waubonsie Valley (optional - but highly recommended!!)

Sept. 20 - ILMEA Virtual audition recordings are due (optional)

**Nov. 8, 2023 - Fall Concert @ Waubonsie Valley HS - 7:00pm**

Nov. 11, 2023 - ILMEA District Band Festival – for students that were selected

TBA 8th Grade Pep Band Night @ WVHS (optional)

TBA - Day Of Percussion @ Waubonsie Valley HS - 9am to 7pm

**Feb. 5, 2024 - BCO Concert - 7:00 pm**

Feb. 17, 2024 - Solo & Ensemble Festival @ Fischer (optional)

**May 6, 2024 - Spring Band Concert - 7:00 pm**

**May 18, 2024 - Fine Arts Festival @ Metea Valley HS**

**May 27, 2024 - Aurora Memorial Day Parade**

### **Wind Ensemble & Jazz Ensemble Events**

Dec. 11, 2023 - Winter Honors Concert 7:00 pm

TBA - Metea Valley Jazz Showcase - 7:00 pm (Jazz Ensemble Only)

March 16, 2024 - IPSD Band Festival @ Still - Times TBA

May 2, 2024 - Waubonsie Valley Jazz Showcase 7:00 pm (Jazz Ensemble Only)

May 6, 2024 - Spring Band Concert - 7:00 pm

May 18, 2024 - Fine Arts Festival @ Metea Valley HS

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

These policies are designed to create a sense of community within our large classrooms. We emphasize the effort of our students in building self-esteem, teamwork skills, and respect for others.

1. Students should be seated with all materials - 2" Black Binder (includes music in page protectors, books), Chromebook and instrument and ready to play when class begins.
2. Tardiness is unacceptable, and consequences will be per the Still Middle School Student Handbook.
3. No gum, food, or drinks will be allowed in the band room. A water bottle is welcome!
4. Students must show respect for their teachers, themselves, their peers, their environment, and the music. Talking during class, playing out of turn, or causing any other disruptions is unacceptable. Appropriate consequences will be explained by the teacher.
5. Markings in the music should be made lightly in pencil. That's right, ONLY in pencil. **In the event that students cause irreversible damage to, or lose the music, they are responsible for paying for the replacement of the piece!!!**

## GRADING

With band being a curricular class in the student's day, a quarterly grade will be given to each student. Most of the students' individual performance grades will be submitted via Google Classroom. A major portion of the band grade is based upon performance tests given during technique class. The grading process also considers rehearsal participation, attendance, concerts, written and performance tests, home practice, and daily effort. Attendance at all performances is a crucial part of the curriculum, and consequently a large part of students' grades.

## GRADING FOR SCALES

Each quarter, all band students will be assigned a scale, or multiple scales to perform, record and turn in via Google Classroom. Scales are the building blocks of all music, and each scale is built using a very specific and unique series of intervals. If one interval is wrong, it changes the scale to something completely different and incorrect. All scales and arpeggios will be graded as either correct, or needs improvement. Students will be allowed to redo each scale and arpeggio as many times as necessary during that grading period, in order to get full credit.

## PERFORMANCES

All band members perform at least four times per year. These events are the culmination of daily rehearsals and give students the opportunity to share what they've learned. Our Concert Attendance Policy is located on the next page.

# Still Middle School Music Department



## Concert Attendance Policy

- **Are the 5 concert dates listed previously in this handbook entered in to your family calendar?**

- Students are expected to attend all performances. Failure to attend a required concert without a valid written excuse via the Absence Request Form ([CLICK HERE](#)), fully explaining the absence will result in the lowering of the student's grade. The Absence Excuse Form must be received **at least 2 weeks prior** to the event in order for the excuse to be considered. Ideally all excused absences will be reported by the time the handbook is due. (Notification of emergency conflicts will be received up to one week following the concert.)

- Upon notification of an absence via the Absence Request Form, **the director will acknowledge on the form that the absence is either Excused or Unexcused.** An excused absence allows the student to make up the grade in the form of an alternative assignment for a possible 100%. In the case of an unexcused absence, the student will be given the opportunity to make up the event; however, the highest possible grade a student can receive will be 50%.

- For the Fine Arts Festival and February BCO concerts, Combo students must complete two separate Absence Request Forms: one submitted to their Choir Director and one submitted to their Instrumental Director.

Although it would be impossible to include a complete list, the following items are examples of **unexcused absences.**

1. Commitments accepted after a rehearsal or concert date is announced.
  - a. This includes ANY activity that is NOT Still Middle School related.
2. Homework
3. Transportation problems
4. Babysitting
5. Watching TV
6. Falling asleep
7. Forgetting instrument and/or music
8. A family member's birthday
9. Your birthday

## TECHNIQUE CLASS

In conjunction with the daily rehearsal, the District 204 music curriculum provides an opportunity for instrumental music students to have technique classes during their ensemble rehearsal. They will be excused from a rehearsal on a rotating schedule. The benefit of technique class is that it allows for small group instruction that addresses students' specific needs. Technique schedules are listed on the grade level band calendar and posted in numerous places around the band room and music hallway.

## HOME PRACTICE

Home practice helps make it possible to play a musical instrument to the best of one's ability. All band members must practice regularly at home to insure progress. The benefits of home practice include building self-confidence and pride in one's performance. *PRACTICE IS HOMEWORK!!!* The recommended practice goal is 20 minutes per day. Please try to include practicing in your daily homework routine. This will help maintain consistency in practicing at home.

## PRIVATE LESSONS

It is **impossible** for us to overemphasize the positive impact of private lessons. Individual instruction is the best way to help students fulfill their potential. The main benefit of a private lesson is weekly one on one instruction with an expert on your particular instrument. A private instructor will immediately reinforce strengths and give specific instruction for improvement. Please request our recommended list of private instructors if this is an advantage you wish to offer your child. Private instructor information is listed on the music website.

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR BAND ACTIVITIES

The Still Middle School **Wind Ensemble**, **Jazz Ensemble**, and **Exploratory Jazz Band** are designed for students wishing to broaden their musical development and participation. Membership for these ensembles is based upon student desire, musical ability, and instrumentation needs. Rehearsal times are 6:45 a.m.-7:50 a.m. The Wind Ensemble meets on Tuesdays and Fridays. The Jazz Ensemble meets on Mondays & Thursdays. **Students should arrive at 6:45 a.m. in order for rehearsals to start promptly.** Participation in the Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble is determined by student auditions in the fall, and all performances are mandatory (please check the performance dates prior to audition). Audition information and materials may be obtained from the directors. The Exploratory Jazz Band will begin rehearsing after school later in the year, further information will be shared in class (no audition required).

Band students are given the opportunity to perform solos and/or ensembles at the Illinois Grade School Music Association (IGSMA) contest in February. More experienced band members also have the opportunity to audition for and perform in the Illinois Music Educator Association (IMEA) festival bands. Information for these events will be made available as they approach.

## **MUSIC UNIFORM**

All students should have the following for performances:

- Music department polo – to be ordered via PushCoin  
*Please Note: alterations to the uniform polo are NOT permitted; students may be asked to replace an altered polo at their cost.*
- Black pants – no jeans, shorts, skirts, or leggings.
- Black socks – Must be long enough so the ankles can not be seen when seated.
- Black shoes - shoes must be 100% BLACK, there are no exceptions. No flip-flops, and also no open-toed shoes. **Completely black gym shoes are fine.**

**\*\*Please click on the button on the main page at [www.stillmusic.weebly.com](http://www.stillmusic.weebly.com) to order your Still Middle School Music polo.**

Payment for the Band Polo will be handled via PushCoin ([www.pushcoin.com](http://www.pushcoin.com))

## **LOCKERS**

Band lockers are available for each student and will be assigned during the first week of school. We ask that students store only their instrument and band related materials in their band locker.

Locks will be available to purchase through PushCoin for \$8 ([www.pushcoin.com](http://www.pushcoin.com)). Locks are not mandatory, but are highly recommended. If you choose to use a lock on your band locker, it **MUST** be purchased through PushCoin. No outside locks will be accepted.



# BOOKS AND MATERIALS

## ALL BAND STUDENTS

### Each band student will need:

- an instrument to practice at home
- Pencil
- 2-inch **BLACK** 3-ring binder
- paper to put into the binder
- 10-15 page protectors

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>6th Grade - 5th &amp; 6th Periods</u></p>  <p>~ Essential Elements          - Book 1 for your instrument          ~ Festival Solos (Standard of Excellence)          - Book 1 for your instrument          ~ Winning Rhythms</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>6th Grade - 7th Period (Percussion)</u></p>  <p>~ A Fresh Approach to the Snare Drum - Wessels          ~ A Fresh Approach to Mallet Percussion - Wessels          ~ Winning Rhythms</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>7th Grade - Woodwinds &amp; Brass</u></p>  <p>~ Essential Elements (same as 6th Grade)          - Book 1 for your instrument          ~ Festival Solos Bk 1 (same as 6th Grade)          ~ Festival Solos Bk 2 (will also be used in 8th Grade)          ~ Winning Rhythms (same as 6th Grade)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>7th Grade - Percussion</u></p>  <p>~ Essential Elements Book 1 for Percussion          ~ Winning Rhythms (same as 6th Grade)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>8th Grade - Woodwinds &amp; Brass</u></p>  <p>~ Essential Elements          - Book 2 for your instrument          ~ Festival Solos (Standard of Excellence)          - Book 2 for your instrument          ~ Winning Rhythms (same book you used in 6th &amp; 7th Grade)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>8th Grade - Percussion</u></p>  <p>~ Essential Elements Book 2 for Percussion          ~ Winning Rhythms (same book you used in 6th &amp; 7th Grade)</p>



# SUPPLIES

[www.QANDF.COM](http://www.QANDF.COM)

YOU ORDER IT ONLINE, THEY DELIVER IT TO THE SCHOOL

## Woodwinds

- Reed guard (clarinet & saxes)
- Cork grease (clarinet & saxes)
- Cleaning swab (flutes, clarinets & saxes)
- Neck Strap (saxes only)

Clarinets & Saxes - At least **three good reeds at all times.**

- 6th Gr. Van Doren 2.5
- 7th & 8th Gr. Van Doren 3 or higher

Oboes - At least **three good reeds at all times.**

- [www.nielsen-woodwinds.com](http://www.nielsen-woodwinds.com)
  - 6th gr. Red string
  - 7th gr, Black string
  - 8th gr. Green string

## Brass

- Mouthpiece brush
- “Snake” internal slide cleaner made for brass instruments
  - Trumpets, Baritones & Tubas
    - Valve oil
    - Tuning Slide Grease
  - Trombones
    - Superslick Slide cream or slide-o-mix
    - Small spray bottle (filled with water)
    - Tuning Slide Grease
  - French Horns
    - Rotary Valve Oil
    - Tuning Slide Grease
    - A chromatic tuner is a good idea!!!

## Percussion – Please put your name on all equipment

- Percussion Stick Bag
- Vic Firth SD 1 Snare Sticks
- Innovative Fundamental Series F8.5 blue rubber mallets
- Timpani mallets – Labeled “General”
- Innovative Percussion FS250 Yarn mallets

# **SMARTMUSIC!!!**

**(we use this everyday in class and in every technique class)**

Do you ever get BORED practicing at home? Wish that you could PLAY-ALONG with the music, at your OWN PACE?

IF SO...THEN SMARTMUSIC IS FOR YOU!

SMARTMUSIC is an electronic subscription service that allows students to use their home computers to assist with their home practicing. As District 204 students, they will have access to a huge library of play-along accompaniments, including all of their book assignments, concert band selections, scale exercises, and solo works. In addition, they can purchase a microphone that records them as they play along, showing them exactly how well they are matching the music. This truly AMAZING software subscription is only \$60 year for District 204 students. At \$60 a year, the price of this software is equal to approximately 2 private lessons.

Students will see a demonstration in class...Feel free to contact the directors with any questions.

[www.makemusic.com](http://www.makemusic.com)