

August 22, 2023

Dear Parents of 2023-2024 Fifth Grade Students,

At Huron Academy, our Fifth Grade students have the opportunity to take part in the Fifth Grade Band Class. This class meets for the entire school year and during the course of the year I will teach your child everything they need to know about playing their chosen instrument. I have created a "Fifth Grade Band Frequently Asked Questions" document to answer many of the common questions parents and students have about joining the Fifth Grade Band Class. I have tried to anticipate all the common questions I have been asked throughout the years, but if you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to reach out. Our Fifth Grade Band Class does meet starting at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, with my goal of the students having their instruments by Tuesday, September 12, 2023. I am including the FAQ document and information on a local instrumental rental program to assist with you and your child's decision. A lot of this information is similar to what I sent out in the spring, but I have added some updates and additional information throughout the FAQ. Hopefully, many of you have already had an opportunity during the summer to get your child's instrument/music book. Additionally, there will be a QR Code and link to a Google Form to fill out to register your child for the Fifth Grade Band Class. Please, fill out this form prior to the first day of school so our staff is aware of who is enrolled in the Fifth Grade Band Class.

Again, please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or need assistance in the process of having your child take part in the Fifth Grade Band Class. I look forward to a fun and exciting year of music making here at Huron Academy in 2023-2024!

Sincerely,



Mr. Casey Rakowski  
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## 2023-2024 Huron Academy Fifth Grade Band Frequently Asked Questions

**Who can join the Fifth Grade Band?** Any Fifth Grade student at Huron Academy who is interested in playing a band instrument.

**What instruments are offered in Fifth Grade Band?** Flute, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone, Trumpet, French Horn, Trombone, Baritone, Percussion and Violin.

**My child plays an instrument besides one of the instruments listed. Can they play that in the Fifth Grade Band?** Unfortunately, no. There are thousands of amazing instruments in this world, but not all fit the instrumentation of a concert band. But we will have other avenues at Huron Academy in the future for those musical skills and talent.

**Are there any prerequisites for joining Fifth Grade Band?** No. Just an interest in learning to play an instrument. We will learn everything else in band class. In Fourth Grade Music Class, the students learned to play recorders. This includes the skills of learning to read music notation and playing together as a musical ensemble. Those skills assist in helping the students be prepared for Fifth Grade Band.

**How does my child get an instrument?** There are a few different ways to get an instrument. First, is through a music store with a "rent to own" program. This is a program where you pay a monthly rental fee that adds up until you own the instrument (paid the purchase price). We are fortunate to have a few quality music stores in our area that sell quality instruments and offer rent to own programs. I have worked for many years with A & G Central Music (locations in Madison Heights, Macomb Township and Troy). A & G Central Music offers one such rental program in which I am including a flier on their rental program. They do a complete online rental and will drop the instrument off at our school, or you can visit one of their store locations. Additionally they will visit Huron Academy weekly and pick up and drop off repairs and orders. Additionally, Ardis Music in Downtown Mt. Clemens offers wonderful service and affordable, quality instruments. The general rule of thumb is always look to see if a music store will repair instruments through their company before purchasing/renting from them. If they do not repair instruments that they sell, it probably will not be a successful experience for your child.

**We have an old instrument that a parent or sibling played, may we use that instrument for Fifth Grade Band?** Absolutely! Please have your child bring in the instrument so I can check it out to make sure. You can also take it to one of the recommended music stores that has a repair department to check out and make sure it is in playable condition (or what would need to be done to put the instrument in playable condition). Even if there is some repair work that would need to be done with a previously used instrument, in many/most cases it can be cheaper than getting a new instrument.

**We were shopping for paper towels at a warehouse store and saw an instrument that is a really good deal. Can we use that instrument for Fifth Grade Band?** As a general rule, if the store does not have a music repair element to the store, I would not purchase/rent an

instrument from that store. There are also many very cheaply made instruments out there that due to their poor quality, are incapable of making a good sound, and not able to be repaired if something breaks or is wrong with the instrument. The number one goal in band is for the child to be set up for success and have fun. If the instrument is incapable of producing a sound, a student will get frustrated and want to give up on playing the instrument. If any family is having difficulty with the cost of an instrument, please talk to myself or school administration and we will work to assist with getting an instrument. Huron Academy does have a limited amount of school-owned instruments for students to use while they are enrolled at Huron Academy.

***I found a really good deal in an online marketplace on an instrument. Should I purchase my child's instrument there?*** The answer to this question is very similar to the question about buying instruments from a warehouse store. As a general rule, if the store does not have a music repair element to the store, I would not purchase/rent an instrument from that store/marketplace. There are also many very cheaply made instruments out there that due to their poor quality, are incapable of making a good sound, and not able to be repaired if something breaks or is wrong with the instrument. **To begin band class, many of these instruments may work to start class, but be prepared to have to purchase a future instrument of higher quality as your child continues in band.** Also, due to the lower quality of these instruments, most are unable to be repaired by a certified instrument repair shop. The reason these instruments are less expensive is because to cut costs, they use cheaper materials in the building process which make repair impossible, let alone being able to stay in tune and create a more advanced tone.

***My child would like to play drums. Can they play drums in the Huron Academy Fifth Grade Band?*** Drums are part of percussion. Percussion involves playing more than just drums. Percussion includes snare drum, concert bells, bass drum, cymbals, timpani and many other assorted instruments. Students interested in percussion would rent/purchase a percussion kit from a music store that would include a snare drum practice pad (or snare drum) and a set of concert bells for practice at home. They would also need a set of drum sticks and bell mallets. The other mentioned instruments we have in the music/band room at school and the student would use those instruments in the classroom at school. But students interested in percussion will have to learn how to play multiple instruments as that is what is required of modern percussion players.

***When does the Fifth Grade Band meet?*** The Fifth Grade Band at Huron Academy meets during the school day as part of your child's school schedule. There will be two performances (concerts) after the school day throughout the school year. The dates of our concerts will be Wednesday, December 20, 2023 and Thursday, June 6, 2024 (start time 6:00pm). Attendance by the students at their concert/performance is mandatory and part of their grade in Fifth Grade Band.

***How does my child choose an instrument to play in the Fifth Grade Band?*** The instrument your child plays is a choice and decision made between the student and parent. I know from experience if a child is really determined to play a certain instrument, they will figure out how to

play that instrument. I encourage you to take your child to a local music store and try the different instruments out before they make their decision. Also, by trying out the instruments, the student will usually rule out instruments they are completely unable to make a sound on. Each child's mouth structure is slightly different so there are things beyond their control that would make it more difficult for them to play a certain instrument. But my general guidance on this subject is if they can make a sound on the instrument prior to official instruction from me, they will be able to play the instrument. But again, If your child is interested in physically trying out any of the instruments, I would directly contact one of the recommended music stores and they will more than likely be able to schedule this experience for your child and do this within COVID-safe protocols and instrument disinfection.

***Is there anything else I need besides the instrument for Fifth Grade Band class?*** For every student, they will need a copy of the instrument method we use in the classroom. The method book we use at Huron Academy is *Essential Elements For Band, Book 1*. This book is available online and at many music stores. A & G Central Music knows the book we use and will make sure you have it when you rent an instrument from them. If your child is playing violin, I will provide them with parts transposed from our book specifically for their instruments. In the Music Classroom, we have music stands for the students to use here, but when your child practices at home, they will more than likely need a stand to use for their music. These can be purchased online or at any music store. Additionally, each instrument has various items students may need for that specific instrument (valve oil and slide grease for brass instruments; reeds, cork grease and swabs for woodwind instruments). Any music store will be able to tell you the exact items you may need. Additionally, I will post recommended items for each instrument on the Huron Academy Music Website.

***Where can I get updates on band/music class?*** I will post information and updates on the Fifth Grade Band Class on the Huron Academy Music website ([www.huronacademymusic.weebly.com](http://www.huronacademymusic.weebly.com)) I will post help videos, PDF's of any music that I pass out in class (in addition to our method book, and other helpful resources. I also will maintain a Fifth Grade Band "Google Classroom" where I will post much of this information and specific items for the students. If you ever have any questions or need assistance I can be emailed at [rakowskic@huronacademy.org](mailto:rakowskic@huronacademy.org) (preferred) or by calling the school office and leaving a message. My goal is always to get back with you within 24 hours (if not sooner). There are a lot of things and complexity that goes into playing an instrument and I am here to be a resource and make this a fun and educational experience for your child.

***My child has been playing their instrument for 2 months and does not like it. Can they switch instruments?*** Generally, I encourage students to stick with their chosen instrument for the school year. Each instrument has certain things and points that are sometimes easier and sometimes more difficult. These all happen at different times for different instruments. We are fortunate that our band class at Huron Academy is scheduled to have the full band meet on Mondays and Fridays, and then instrument families (Woodwinds, Brass/Strings, Percussion) to meet in a sectional class (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday depending on the instrument) where we can work in a smaller group on items unique to that instrument/family. But, I also want

each child to enjoy music/band and if a child truly has tried and wants to switch, I will work with them to make that happen. I can't speak for every instrument rental program, but I know A & G Central Music allows you to exchange an instrument for a different one and your money paid to that point transfers over to that new instrument. I encourage everyone to contact me if your child is struggling or if you have questions so we can work together to help your child be successful in Fifth Grade Band.

***If my child chooses Fifth Grade Band, will they be able to take part in the other enrichment classes at Huron Academy?*** Yes! As a music/band teacher, I strongly believe in having students have the opportunity to take part and be exposed to other enrichments. Our administration and enrichment team at Huron Academy works very hard to keep the flexibility in the schedule for our Fifth Grade students to also have the opportunity to take part in the other enrichment classes. When I taught high school marching band, I loved having varsity football players and cheerleaders taking part in marching band. It was great seeing students march halftime in their football pads or cheerleading uniform!

***Can my child choose which days to attend band and which days to choose to go to other enrichment classes?*** No. First, there is a schedule for all the classes and the other enrichment teachers have to be able to plan lessons, materials and activities around who they know will be in their class on a certain day. Second, Band class instruction is cumulative, so it is not easy for me to cover things that are missed if a student attends class infrequently. Also, on the sectional days, I tailor the instruction to that specific instrument or groups of instruments so it is important for the student to be there for that instruction. Lastly, as the band progresses, students play different parts depending on their instrument. When people are missing (or don't practice their parts) it ends up affecting all the students because that part of the "puzzle" is missing. Fifth Grade Band students are required to attend every class they are scheduled to attend.

***Does my child have to attend the band concerts?*** Yes, concerts are mandatory and part of their report card grade in band class. Our two band concerts for the 2023-2024 School-Year take place on Wednesday, December 20, 2023 and Thursday, June 6, 2024 (both concerts at 6:00pm).

***How much does my child have to practice at home as part of the Fifth Grade Band Class?***

As a general rule, I require the students to practice for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. This gives two "flex days" for students to have other obligations or activities. In experience teaching band, I also have found many band students who when they want to do something or additional activities/extracurriculars, they find a way to make it work. I am a realist and know things come up and students/families are busy and will always work with everyone on this. Please always contact me if you ever have extenuating circumstances. But, since so much of playing an instrument is physical and requires muscle development (much like any sport, dance or athletic activity), regular practicing assists your child in their success playing on their instrument. In the beginning, they will more than likely not be able to play for 30 minutes, as their musical muscles are not developed (since they just started playing) so less time will be required in the beginning.



Instead of weekly practice records, the students receive a daily participation grade in class. Included in this grade is having their instrument, all the materials they need (including reeds, mouthpiece, music book, valve oil, etc.), having practiced/prepared their music and actually played in class. In most cases students get the full participation points daily because they do all this, but I like to remind parents that band is a class and students/parents need to treat it as such.

***When does Fifth Grade Band begin and when does my child need to have an instrument?***

Fifth Grade Band Class will begin soon after the first day of school. During the first week of school I will work with the band students on skills and procedures. My goal is to have all the students have their instruments in class by Tuesday, September 12, 2023. This date is fluid in that there may be supply chain issues (there were last school year) that delay a student getting their instrument. But please make every effort to get your students instruments by that date as the longer they are without their instrument, the more behind they will get in class. After a period of time where any students do not have instruments, they will be dropped from the Fifth Grade Band Class.

***How does my child get enrolled in the Fifth Grade Band Class?***

Please either go to

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFKR84cxNtHnEzGImwxE7FdRHxaXRImPoiz8BiCtgfz-fz-A/viewform> or click on the QR Code below to fill out the Google Form to enroll in Fifth Grade Band. Please, fill out this form prior to the first day of school so our staff is aware of who is enrolled in the Fifth Grade Band Class.

**Click QR Code To Register Your Child For Fifth Grade Band**





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