

2023-2024 Huron Academy Middle School Band Frequently Asked Questions

Middle School Band Course Description (Year-Long Class):

The Middle School Band class offers instruction on woodwind, brass, string and percussion instruments with a focus on the skills necessary for long-term student success. Fundamentals stressed include proper posture and playing position, development of characteristic tone quality and training in music literacy. Instruction offers continued focus on the refinement of tone quality, technique and aural skills. As a member of the Middle School Band, attendance is required at Winter and Spring Concerts. **Prerequisite for Middle School Band: Completion of Fifth Grade Band or by audition/permission of the Middle School Band Director.** An audition to join Middle School Band includes the following requirements:

- Concert F, Bb & Eb Major Scales
- Understanding of whole, half, quarter, eighth and dotted half rhythms
- Understanding of 4/4, 2/4 and 3/4 time signatures
- Basic sight reading
- A short solo piece demonstrating level of proficiency (no pop or jazz selections)
- Private lessons are encouraged but not required

Who can join the Middle School Band? Any Middle School student at Huron Academy who has previously played a band instrument.

If my Middle School student would like to join the band and has not played an instrument, can they join? It is more difficult, since the students enrolled had previously played an instrument, but it is not impossible. It will take some extra work to “catch up” to where the other students are, as band classes are cumulative. Beginning instrument lessons are not taught as part of the Middle School Band Class. Please, read the above course description for the procedure if your child has not previously been in band. If your child was not in the band previously, please contact me so we can discuss what it will take for your child to participate in Middle School Band. It is not impossible to join band and I will work with any student who wants to put the work in to play an instrument.

My child no longer has their instrument from when they took 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 and Macomb Township). 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 Middle School 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 the Middle School 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.

Is there anything else I need besides the instrument for Middle School Band class? I provide all the music your child needs for band class. Many of the songs I arrange specifically for our students and instruments to meet their needs. Please make sure in addition to their instrument that your child brings their music with them for band class every day. 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.

When does the Middle School Band meet? The Middle School Band at Huron Academy meets during the school day as part of your child's school schedule. The two Middle School Band classes meet either 6th Period (2:22-3:09) or 7th Period (3:13-4:00). We will have two mandatory performances (concerts) on Wednesday, December 20, 2023 and Thursday, June 6, 2024 (both at 6:00pm). These performances are mandatory as stated in the Middle School Band Course description as the goal of a performance ensemble is to perform in front of an audience. We also want to showcase the talent and hard work of our Middle School Band students for our

families. Additionally, the concerts are a big part of each student's final grade in the band class. Not attending the concerts will result in a significant lowering of a student's report card grade.

Where can I get updates on band/music class? I will post any updates on the Middle School Band Class on the Huron Academy Music website (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 Middle School 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 (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.

How much does my child have to practice at home as part of the Middle School 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. I will have the students completing a weekly practice record that will be signed by their parent guardian. 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. 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, 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 will we begin with instruments in class? My hope is as soon as possible. As soon as I meet with the students in class, I will be able to determine this. Please check back frequently for updates on this. If they already have their instrument, please have your child bring it to class right away (and every day!).