



Elementary Band

Toquam School
Stark School
Newfield School

September 21, 2011

Dear Fourth Grade Families:

Welcome back to another school year. I am excited to be back at school and I am looking forward to having the opportunity to work with your children. I am pleased that your child has shown an interest in the instrumental music program. The overall purpose of the beginning band program is to introduce a child to the playing of a band instrument and to try to foster a lifelong love of music. There are benefits to playing an instrument that go beyond learning music. Children are able to develop self-confidence, a good self-image, responsibility, and self-discipline through instrumental music. Students are also learning teamwork through playing with the band. Each instrument is able to stand on its own, but it is only through working together that we can play a piece of music. Research also shows that students who are involved with instrumental music show an improvement in test scores and grades.

This letter contains important information about how to participate in the instrumental music program, and some suggestions to help your students to be successful. Please read all of this information carefully with your child. Additionally, information can be obtained at my website, www.chusic.weebly.com.

SELECTING AND OBTAINING AN INSTRUMENT

In order to get started each child will need to have an instrument. The Board of Education allows me a limited budget to provide instruments for student who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Only these students are eligible to have an instrument provided for them. All other children will need to provide their own instrument. Parents are free to rent (or purchase) an instrument for their child from any dealer they choose to.

Additionally, if you currently own, or have access to an instrument that is of good quality and in working order you may use (and are encouraged to choose) that instrument as well.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Students who sign up for band are **REQUIRED** to attend each scheduled class. Classes are usually 25 - 30 minutes long. Children are pulled out of their classrooms for instrumental lessons on a rotating basis. This means that no child should miss any given class time more than once every 6 weeks. This schedule has worked in the past and the classroom and specials teachers are aware of this rotating schedule. Students participating in band leave from their regular class at the arranged time, and will have the opportunity to make up the missed class work.

If a student is absent from school for an excused reason then their absence from band is also excused. Most other absences from band will be marked as unexcused. If a student needs to miss a lesson on a day that he/she is in school they should come to me on the morning of their lesson and let me know in person. **Excessive (3 or more) unexcused absences may cause the student to be dropped from the band program.**

We all make an occasional mistake, and sometimes students will forget their music, or even their instrument. As long as students attend the lesson they are allowed three lesson absences for “forgetting” something. After that they will be returned to class and given an unexcused absence.

The fourth grade band will participate in the Spring concert and one or two parades in the Spring as well. Attendance at these performances is required. Any absence from a performance should be explained in writing well before the date of the event. An unexcused absence from a performance will result in a lowered grade for band.

PRACTICE

Most students who are not successful in band are not successful for one reason: **THEY JUST DIDN'T PRACTICE ENOUGH!** Each instrument requires a unique set of skills that do not come naturally and they need to be learned. Students are required to practice for 10 minutes a day at least 5 days a week. While it is understood that there are family or extracurricular activities that will keep a student from practicing on a given day, these need to be rare. Practice is the key to success in instrumental music. If there were an easier way to do it I would teach it, but unfortunately there is not. To be successful in any endeavor practice is necessary and worth the time.

DROPPING FROM THE BAND PROGRAM

I would like every student who begins band to finish the year. This said, I understand that for one reason or another some students will drop. No student should ever drop before they complete eight weeks of lessons. This is a good amount of time for a student to investigate what band is all about and to see if they enjoy their instrument. If there are any problems that you would like to discuss please contact me. If a student puts in the proper amount of effort and still decides that they are not interested in continuing with band, they may drop. I will need a letter from the parent and the instrument returned to me.

If you would like more information about the band program, please do not hesitate to contact me. The best way to reach me is through e-mail at rchuhta@ci.stamford.ct.us . If you do not have access to the Internet I can be reached at school: Toquam on Monday and Tuesday, Stark on Wednesday, and Newfield on Thursday and Friday.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Chuhta

Rebecca S. Chuhta
Instrumental Music

Please keep this letter for future reference.