

Fowler MS Beginning Band FAQs

HERE ARE THE ANSWERS TO THE MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BEGINNER BAND.

1. When does the band class meet? What instruments are started?

Beginning band meets as a regular class for 46 minutes at different times throughout the school day for the entire school year. Students are grouped into classes according to what instrument they play. The teacher-pupil ratio is kept low to facilitate individual supervision of student's progress. Skills develop slowly at first, therefore, students and parents must be patient and committed for the entire school year in order to get the full benefit of band instruction.

Beginners are started on flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, euphonium, (baritone), tuba, and percussion. We will help you choose the instrument that is best for you at our instrument screening and selection meetings in early Spring.

3. Is any previous musical training necessary?

No. The method books used in beginner band are for the musically untrained student. We teach the fundamentals of reading music as well as the fundamentals of playing an instrument. As students progress, you will be able to recognize familiar tunes. Their progress culminates in a Spring Concert at the end of the year.

4. Are certain instruments for girls and others for boys?

Definitely NOT! Instrument choices are not based on a student's gender, but rather their desire to play that instrument. Instrument selection is based primarily upon the facial characteristics of the student, and, most importantly, their personal choice.

5. When do students need instruments?

Instruments will be needed on the first day of school. Locked storage for all instruments is provided in the band hall. Please make sure that the case is labeled with your child's name. Don't wait too long! Most music companies run out of stock in July AND raise their prices to take advantage of late renters/buyers! We will have a music company attend our instrument selection orientation meeting for you to reserve an instrument for the fall.

6. Should I rent or purchase an instrument?

RENT! Renting an instrument will give your child the opportunity to begin in band with only a small initial investment. Your child can have the advantages of a brand new instrument, such as pride of ownership, freedom from error due to poor equipment, and the opportunity to be the best player they can be by having the best available instrument for their age level. Your child will have the instrument and mouthpiece recommended by the band directors. The instrument can be returned to the company at any time without further obligation. All rent applies towards purchase.

7. What about buying used instruments?

Some used instruments are good bargains. However, you could possibly end up spending more money on repairs than the instrument is worth. For this reason, we ask that if you do purchase a used instrument, try to let a F.I.S.D. Band Director examine it prior to purchase. Local music stores and former band students are excellent sources of used instruments. You might see if the music companies have used instruments available. We have found most pawn shop instruments to be of dubious quality. WARNING: The "band instruments" listed in departments store (i.e. Sears, Sam's), in my personal opinion, are JUNK! They are practically toys. The Fowler Band program will not allow any Sam's Club, Sears, or Walmart instruments. Again, we recommend that you RENT an instrument the first year from a reputable music company.

8. Are there any school owned instruments available?

Yes. The school provides the more expensive instruments: tuba, baritone, French horn, oboe, and bassoon. These are assigned on the basis of aptitude, suitability, and availability - NOT financial need. Parents whose child is selected to play one of these *school owned instruments* are required to pay a \$50 per Semester usage fee, and will still be required to purchase necessary accessories such as a mouthpiece, books, reeds/valve oil. Due to the unique nature and difficulty of the oboe, bassoon, French horn instruments it is REQUIRED that they take weekly private lessons (See #14). These instruments are so challenging that if you don't take lessons, you should not even elect to play them. Private lessons for all instruments lessons are strongly encouraged.

9. Will my child be successful on an instrument if they have a learning challenge like Dyslexia?

Honestly, in my 30+ years of teaching I have found the students with Dyslexia do struggle with the demands of learning a musical instrument and are rarely successful because of the difficulty in reading music. Where we will CERTAINLY welcome these students into band if they want to be in band, most of the time these students struggle so hard that it really hurts their self-esteem when they are not as successful as other students.

10. Can my child start playing as soon as he/she gets an instrument?

In order to prevent costly repairs and the formation of bad habits, we prefer that the instrument stay in the case during the summer. Instruments will stay in the storage room of the band hall during the first week of school. After formal instruction is given on the care and assembly of the instrument during the first week of school, your child will begin taking the instrument home. This is to protect your investment! If you rent/purchase from a music company, the store will deliver the instrument and materials to our band hall before the first day of school.

An additional option for eager students is to start band this SUMMER with a Private Lesson teacher (See # 14). This is a chance to get one-on-one help and be set-up for success with one of the professional musicians who teach on our campus each week. The teachers understand that some lessons might have to be rescheduled due to family vacations.

11. Can my child participate in both athletics and band at the same time? Band and choir?

Band and Orchestra? Band & Theatre Arts?

In 7th and 8th grade YES, but NOT in 6th grade. Athletics is not offered in the 6th grade. There is only ONE elective in 6th grade and students must choose between either Band, Choir, Orchestra, Art, or Theatre Arts. In 7th & 8th grade students may take more electives than they can in 6th grade. There are many middle school students who are in band, athletics, and other organizations such as theatre arts, choir, etc. Because of the unique nature of playing a musical instrument, we try to encourage students to begin band in 6th grade and then take other electives along with band in their 7th & 8th grade years. If you want your child to learn a band instrument, you will need to put band as your FIRST CHOICE for an elective. Students choosing band as their elective SECOND choice will NOT be placed into BAND.

In 7th grade & 8th grade, the school administration, coaches, classroom teachers and band directors work together to try to avoid conflicts in scheduling. We have current Fowler MS Band members who are also in 7th & 8th grade football, volleyball, basketball, math science team, cheerleading, and in school theater productions!

12. Are there any extra rehearsals required? Concerts?

Beginners are required to attend only three (3) concert performances their first year: One mini-concert in November to demonstrate progress, a February Concert and our May Spring Concert. We will also attend a Music Festival in April/May during school and the students will learn a solo in April. There will only be two after school rehearsals prior to the festival and the May concert. Other than these few performances & rehearsals, there are NO after school responsibilities or activities. Also, we have an optional trip to Hurricane Harbor the day after school is out in June.

13. Will my child be required to practice at home?

Yes. Beginning the second week of school, students are required as a part of their grade to practice 10-15 minutes every day outside of class. This weekly time (not daily) increase over the first semester as their facial muscle develop and strengthen and they can practice up to 2-30 minutes, several days per week (not every day). They record their time on a "Practice Card", which is turned in and graded weekly. For home practice, students are to purchase a folding music stand, metronome (electronic time-keeper). Parents are encouraged to give positive support to the student as he/she progresses. .

14. Are private lessons available? Are they required?

Private lessons are **strongly encouraged** for all students, but are **not** required. If your child takes private lessons, he/she will receive one-on-one instruction from a professional musician (many of which have graduate degrees). Lessons are held once a week at Fowler Middle School (supervised by a band director) at a cost of \$18 per half hour. Private lessons help challenge faster-paced students and strengthen slower paced students. **Above average** results are almost guaranteed! **It is better to RENT to OWN a less expensive instrument and participate in the private lessons program than to purchase.**