**Clemens Crossing Elementary School**

***Band & Strings Handbook***

***2016-2017***

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Welcome to another great year of Instrumental Music! I am excited to be returning for my 21st year as the band and strings teacher at Clemens Crossing! I believe that every child should have the opportunity to experience music, and I am confident we are going to have a wonderful year of music together!

By signing your child up for instrumental music lessons, you are providing the opportunity for your child to explore the unique joy of creating music. Performing in a band or orchestra gives children so much more than just musical training. Students learn cooperation, teamwork, commitment and responsibility, tolerance and acceptance, perseverance, and hard work. Playing in a group that performs well also builds self-esteem, confidence, and pride in accomplishment. Studying music also reinforces reading and math skills, as well as enhancing gross and fine motor skills.

Having high expectations and standards gives each student the benefit of enjoyment from their musical experiences. This handbook will explain those expectations and the policies regarding your child’s participation in band or strings. Please read through this handbook with your child so he/she is clear on what is expected.

If you have any questions at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me. The quickest means of communication is via e-mail at Marybeth\_Eber@hcpss.org (will be changing to Marybeth\_DeSantis@hcpss.org shortly), though you may also call me at school at 410-313-6866. I am looking forward to working with your child this year!

Musically yours,

Marybeth DeSantis

CCES Band and Strings Teacher**Clemens Crossing Elementary School Band & Strings**

**Grading Policy**

The Howard County Public School System Elementary Instrumental Music Report Card will supplement your child’s academic report card each quarter. It is important that you and your child review this report card so that you may identify areas where your child might need some additional work. Your child will be assessed and graded in the following areas:

1. **Lesson Attendance**

It is absolutely essential that your child attend all scheduled lessons and rehearsals and is prepared with all materials and assignments. If a student is unable to attend a lesson, it is suggested that he or she notify me in advance so I can inform them of their assignment, to prevent them from falling behind in class.

1. **Performance Assessments**

All students will be assessed regularly, either formally or informally as a part of their weekly lessons. These assessments are used to determine proficiency or need in specific areas of your child’s performance on their instrument. Performance assessments include all areas that cover the fundamentals of performance on the instrument, and they are the strongest indicator of progress. As you can see, this is the largest part of their grade.

1. **Participation/Preparation**

Every student begins with an “A” for this portion of his or her grade. If a student does not show up for his or her lessons, comes unprepared without all required materials (instrument, book/music and folder), or does not try his or her best during lessons and rehearsals, this grade will be lowered accordingly.

1. **Practice Habits**

As in any discipline, proper and sufficient practice is a key to improvement. Since a regular practice routine is a new concept for many elementary band or string students, I recommend you help encourage and monitor his/her practice routine at home. It is critical that your child establish a regular practice routine in order to hear and evaluate progress on his or her instrument. It is important for you to know he/she is making progress so that continuing to play is an enjoyable experience. Completing and turning in monthly practice charts are part of this grade.

1. **Concert Attendance**

All Band and Strings students are **required** to participate in 2 concerts per year - our Winter and Spring concerts. Concerts are not only a valuable musical learning experience for our students, but are also an opportunity for them to present their hard work to the “public”. In addition, as an ensemble, each member relies on the other members to perform their parts. So a missing member of the ensemble not only loses the opportunity for a valuable and enjoyable experience, but also places added burden on his or her fellow ensemble members. Any student who cannot participate for any reason must submit a written note from a parent/guardian to excuse his or her absence. County policy states that an excused absence from a performance is illness, death in the family or religious reasons. The grade for concert attendance will not be marked for quarters when there has been no performance.

**Clemens Crossing Elementary Band & Strings**

**Student Responsibilities and Expectations**

As a member of the Band or Strings, you are an important part of a team. The rest of the group is relying on you to arrive on time, practice at home, have a positive attitude, and to always try your best. Because lessons are during the school day, you will be responsible to make up the work you have missed in your regular classes.

**Students Responsibilities**

1. Follow ***ROAR*** in Band and Strings!
2. Be Prepared – Have your instrument, folder, book or music, and all supplies at every lesson.
3. Be on time – Know your lesson schedule. Schedules are handed out at the beginning of the month, and you can also find them in the team areas, my bulletin board, and on my website. There are always extra hard copies of the schedule outside my door. There is NO EXCUSE for not knowing the lesson schedule. You MUST attend every lesson even if you are unprepared for class or forgot to bring your instrument to school.
4. Some of your lessons will be scheduled during Recess and/or Related Arts, and this must be accepted as part of your decision for being a member of the band or orchestra. Since I use a rotating schedule you will miss the same class time only once per month (Except for beginning strings which has a fixed schedule). You will not be asked to miss math to attend lessons, and if there is a special activity in your classroom, I will adjust the lesson schedule.
5. Make up your missed work – Be sure you always find out, and make up what you missed while you were at your lesson.
6. Practice regularly at home! This is critical for steady progress.
7. Take your instrument and folder home with you EVERY DAY!
8. Get help if you need it and whatever you do, DON’T GIVE UP! If you have practiced and still need some extra help, I will be more than willing to work with you.
9. Always do your best, and encourage others to do the same!

**Student Classroom Expectations**

1. Wait **quietly** outside the band/string room before your lesson begins. Put together your instrument, close your case and put it up against the wall. Please be courteous of the other students in your class, arrive to your lesson on time, and ready to work.
2. Please respect Ms. DeSantis and do not talk or play when she is working with other students.
3. You will be taught basic instrument maintenance and you will be responsible for keeping your instrument in good playing condition. Keep a good supply of working reeds and oil or rosin on hand to keep your instrument in good shape.
4. Please try to use the bathroom before coming to your lesson.
5. Remember the instrument you hold in your hands is very valuable. Please be careful and respect your classmates’ instruments and their space. Instruments can break easily and aren’t always easily fixed.
6. Play your instrument, never any one else’s instrument in class.
7. You will be expected to try your best 100% of the time! You can do it!!

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**Concerts/Performances**

All Band and Strings students are required to participate in our Winter and Spring concerts. For each concert, there will be performances during the school day as well as an evening performance. All concert dates will be announced as soon as they are finalized.

Concerts are a valuable opportunity for students to learn about performance etiquette, teamwork, focus, and many other skills. Our concerts are also the students’ opportunity to present their hard work to an audience. Also, as I stress with the students, the Band or Orchestra is a team. If one person is missing from the team, the rest of the team suffers. We don’t want to put extra burden on any of our students to compensate for students who are missing from the performance!

Although the majority of Band and String students will only be performing in our Winter and Spring concerts, there may be additional performances that arise, especially for our more advanced groups. Any additional performances will be announced as soon as they are finalized. Please check the CCES Band/String website for these dates. (www.ccesbandandstrings.weebly.com)

**Concert Dress**

When we perform on stage it is important that we both sound and look our best. Remember, the audience will SEE us before they hear anything we will play. For that reason, we all wear the same concert attire so that we will look uniform on stage. Concert dress is very simple and, for most people, consists of clothing they already have at home.

For our daytime concerts, students will wear nice school clothes. Avoid sweatpants, holey sneakers, and the like. Brush your hair and look nice! The dress code for our evening concerts is more formal. Concert dress for the evening concert performance is **black bottoms** (pants or knee length skirt) and **white tops** (shirt or blouse). Black shoes are preferable for evening concerts. Please wear dark socks or tights. Remember, we want to look our best when we are sitting in front of an audience. If you need help obtaining concert clothes, please let Ms. DeSantis know so she can let you borrow something to wear.

**WINTER CONCERT January 18, 2016**

 ***Strings Concert: 6:30pm – 7:00pm***

 ***Band Concert: 7:30pm – 8:00pm***

**SPRING CONCERT May 25, 2016**

 ***Strings Concert: 6:30pm – 7:00pm***

 ***Band Concert: 7:30pm – 8:00pm***

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**Home Practice Tips and Practice Steps**

Home Practice is Band and Strings “homework”. But it’s more than just a homework assignment. Practice is the key to success on an instrument. Usually if a child is getting discouraged, it is because they are not making the progress they want to. The best way to prevent this is to ensure that they are practicing as much as they can and are getting any extra help they need. Here are some ways to get the most out of home practice:

**Students** (see “Practice Steps” on the next page on how to practice at home)**:**

1. **Find a quiet, distraction-free place to practice.**
2. **Schedule a time to practice each day.** Setting up a regular practice “schedule” will make it easier to remember when to practice every day.
3. **Always practice with the correct posture.** You want to practice correctly. That means using correct posture, not puffing your cheeks, and using all the correct fingerings. Remember, practicing something incorrectly means that you will have to re-learn that skill, which can be more difficult. If you have a specific question, ask Ms. DeSantis.
4. **Never start out practicing a piece at full speed.** Start practicing at a slow tempo and gradually increase the speed until you can play it comfortably.
5. **Break it down.** Break bigger pieces of music into smaller phrases that you can practice. Once you are comfortable with one phrase, add another.
6. **Three times is the charm.** Before moving on from one phrase or section to another, be sure you can play the phrase 3 times with no mistakes; then you can move on.

**Parents:**

1. Help your child **schedule a daily practice time**. You may need to be creative and have your child practice in the morning before school, or while you make dinner at home in the evening. If you need more suggestions, please contact Ms. DeSantis.
2. Help your child **find a quiet, distraction-free place to practice**. Like any other subject, music requires concentration. Students may stand (except cello, trombone, baritone, tuba) and have a music stand to use to help promote proper posture.
3. **Become involved with what your child is doing.** Listen to what he or she is playing. Ask your child for an explanation of what he or she learned in their lesson that day. Ask your child to play a concert for the family!
4. **Encourage your child** to always do his or her best.
5. **Praise your child**for work well done, especially if they seem to be getting frustrated. The more frustrated they get, the more they need your praise for their improvement.
6. **Please do not use practicing as a punishment.** Practicing should be an enjoyable activity for the child. Approaching practicing in a way that the child may see it as a negative activity or punishment may defeat the purpose.
7. **Help to foster a musical environment in your home.** Attending local concerts, listening to recordings of professional musicians, and having your child perform for friends and family members will show them how much you value what they are doing.
8. **Help your child persevere.** There are times when your child will feel less interested and not very motivated. This is normal, especially when the newness or excitement of a concert has worn off and they realize it’s hard work. Try to withstand the tough times by reaffirming how far your child has come. Remind your child that he or she is a very important member of a team and that everyone else is counting on them knowing their parts and practicing. Remember, as adults we can easily lose sight of how hard it is to learn to play an instrument and this is something that is totally new to our children.
9. **If you ever have questions as to what your child is doing, PLEASE ask Ms. DeSantis!** You are not expected to know about your child’s instrument or even anything about music! Send an email to or call Ms. DeSantis.
10. **Please help your child complete their practice chart at home.** They need to have their name and teacher code on it, and have it initialed by you every weekend. These must be turned in after the month is complete. Students are graded on the amount of time they practice during the week, as well as being responsible for turning in monthly charts. Students who do not practice or fill out charts are at risk of being removed from the program. Extra charts can be found on the Band/String Room door and the Band/String website- [www.ccesbandandstrings.weebly.com](http://www.ccesbandandstrings.weebly.com).

**PRACTICE STEPS**

Have you heard the saying “Practice Makes Perfect”? Well, that’s true, BUT it’s only true if you are practicing the right way! Instead of “Practice Makes Perfect”, think “**Practice Makes Permanent**”, and then what you practice will “stick with you”! If you’re not sure what to do when you’re practicing, think back to what we do together in your lessons…

 **SAY –** Say/Sing the names of the notes in the song or phrase you are going to play.

**FINGER –** Without playing, say the names of the notes using the correct rhythm,

 **and** finger them on your instrument (percussionists, shadow stick).

**PLAY –** Now play the notes using the correct rhythm. Remember to start slow and make sure each note sounds it’s best. Every note is important…make it sound as great as it can sound.

OR…

**CLAP –** Clap the rhythm of the phrase you are going to play. (String players use this step to figure out your bowings, and shadow bow)

 **SAY –** Say the names of the notes.

**FINGER –** Say the names of the notes using the correct rhythm, and finger them on your instrument at the same time (percussionists, shadow stick).

**(PLUCK) –** If you are a string player, pluck the notes using the correct rhythm before playing it with the bow.

**PLAY –** Play the notes using the correct rhythm. Remember to start slowly and try to make it sound perfect 3 times before moving on.

**Students will be graded on the report card categories using this scale:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A**  | Highest Level of Performance  |
| **B**  | High Level of Performance  |
| **C**  | Acceptable Level of Performance  |
| **D**  | Low Level of Performance  |
| **E**  | Unsatisfactory Performance  |
| **N/A** | Does not apply at this time  |