

Instrument Considerations



There are 3 instrument families in band: **woodwind, brass, and percussion**. The instruments are listed on the next couple pages in order of their families.

WOODWINDS

Flute



The flute is the smallest of the beginner instruments.

Physical Characteristics: Flute players should have a slight “frown” to the upper lip with NO tear drop shape in the middle. Flute tones are produced by being able to focus an extremely small airstream to an exact location on the tone hole. The tear-drop-shaped lip will make it difficult to direct the air so precisely. Flute players should also have agile fingers for moving this multi-keyed instrument through a fast, musical passage. Students with extreme overbites (receded jaw) should avoid choosing flute as this makes it difficult to produce quality sounds.

Oboe / Bassoon



The oboe is similar in its appearance to a clarinet, but it is played using a “double reed” instead of a single reed and mouthpiece. The bassoon is longer but also uses a “double reed” instead of a single reed.

Physical Characteristics: Students with profound overbites or underbites would have EXTREME difficulties producing good sounds on the oboe since the embouchure (mouth position) requires equal pressure on both sides of the reed at the same placement.

Other Considerations: Due to the difficulty of this instrument private lessons are strongly encouraged. Students are required to maintain a supply of 3-4 high-quality reeds at ALL times. Reeds can cost \$15-18 each.

Clarinet



Unlike the oboe, the clarinet uses a “single reed” and a mouthpiece to produce the sound. Willingness to purchase or rent a director-recommended clarinet is a MUST! Unfortunately, there are some clarinets on the market whose poor design and craftsmanship will make it next to impossible for your student to succeed. We can help you avoid that pitfall and will provide information in order to help you with

selecting a clarinet.

Physical Characteristics: One necessity of clarinet tone production is the ability to make the chin flat.

Saxophone



The saxophone gives the impression of being both a brass AND woodwind instrument, however, it is indeed considered a woodwind instrument. The alto saxophone (which use a single reed like the clarinet) is a very popular instrument like the flute and only a few students will be chosen to play them.

Physical Characteristics: Since the balance of the saxophone is maintained by the use of a neck strap, it is extremely important that students be able to sit

up completely straight when asked to.

Other Considerations: Saxophone players are responsible for maintaining a working stock of 4-6 quality reeds. A box of 10 reeds costs \$15-25 and can last (with proper care) up to 4 months.

BRASS

Trumpet



The trumpet is the smallest member of the brass family. The sound on trumpet is produced by buzzing into a small mouthpiece.

Physical Characteristics: A slight overbite is okay, but an underbite can severely hinder progress on cornet / trumpet. Cornet / trumpet players come in all shapes and sizes.

Other Considerations: Trumpet parts usually have the melody (recognizable) part, therefore students who choose and are selected for trumpet should exhibit a confident demeanor, strong personality, and demonstrate a high level of self-motivation.

French horn



The French horn is the also a member of the brass family. Its sound is produced by buzzing into a small mouthpiece similar to a trumpet.

Students with good musical ears should consider French horn.

Other Considerations: Because of the difficult nature of French horn (mentioned above), students should exhibit GREAT ability to match pitches by humming or singing. Perhaps this is a good instrument choice for students who have

participated in piano lessons or honor choir groups. WBMS provides French horns for students at minimal cost for an entire school year. Private lessons are strongly recommended for this instrument.

Trombone



Like the French horn, trombone players should have good “musical ears”. The trombone is played like the other brass instruments (buzzing into a cup-shaped mouthpiece) but uses a slide instead of valves. The slide is not marked and players rely on their memory and hearing to tell if they are in the EXACT proper position.

Students with good musical ears (such as Honor Choir students) should consider Trombone.

Physical Characteristics: While some might think that trombone players must have long arms, the truth is there are numerous accommodations that make it possible for students of all shapes and sizes to play. A slight overbite is acceptable, while an extreme underbite would hinder success.

Tuba



While many believe the tuba is the largest instrument in the band and would be hard to physically manage, we do have a $\frac{3}{4}$ size tuba for smaller students, making it easy to handle.

Other Considerations: The tuba provides the musical foundation for the band. WBMS provides tubas for students at minimal cost for an entire school year, but students must still purchase their own mouthpiece.

Percussion



Just because you are always tapping on things does not mean you are a natural percussionist. In fact, the percussion section is the most select, hand-picked section of the band. Selection of percussion students will be completely at the discretion of the director based on pre-determined criteria including, but not limited to, rhythmic aptitude as demonstrated during instrument fitting, a possible interview with the band director, academic and discipline history at the elementary level, prior participation in piano lessons (recommended, but not required), and a dexterity test for fine and gross motor skills.

Physical Characteristics: Students should exhibit a great deal of coordination in gross and fine motor skills

Other Considerations: The study of percussion includes bells, triangle, tambourine, maracas, and claves, among many other instruments. Students wishing to play “just drums” are discouraged from selecting percussion. We do not teach drumset in class.