

MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Dear Parents of Fifth Grade Students:

Next year we will be welcoming your child to middle school. The purpose of this letter is to assist you in making the best choice for your child in music.

- All Band, Orchestra, and Chorus classes are scheduled during the regular school day. Band and Orchestra students also have an opportunity to sing in Chorus one day per week, with the exception of Beginning Band and Beginning Orchestra (new offering) students.
- Students currently participating in Fifth Grade Orchestra and Fifth Grade Band are **strongly encouraged to continue playing the same instrument** in Sixth Grade Orchestra or Band. Any exception to this instrumental continuity should be discussed with the Fifth Grade Orchestra or Band teacher and have the **approval** of the Middle School Orchestra or Band teacher.

***Orchestra:** Sixth Grade String Orchestra brings together all string players who have participated in their school orchestra in fourth and fifth grade. Now in their third year of playing, the Sixth Grade Orchestra enjoys learning more challenging string orchestra literature. Students in orchestra may choose to sing in Chorus one period each week.

***Band:** Sixth Grade Band brings together all woodwind, brass, and percussion players from the Fifth Grade Bands. With full, balanced instrumentation, students enjoy a Concert Band experience. Students in Band may choose to sing in Chorus one period each week.

Beginning Band: This class is designed for students **who have not played an instrument before**. Students may begin the study of **a woodwind or brass instrument**, based on the needs of the Sixth Grade Band instrumentation. An important purpose of this class is to start students on specialty instruments to balance the instrumentation of the Concert Band. These instruments include French horn, baritone horn, trombone, tuba, bass clarinet, oboe, and bassoon, as well as instruments which *are* needed in greater numbers. Choice of instrument is determined by the Sixth Grade Band teacher after consulting with your student in September. ***No students will be assigned to saxophone or percussion.*** Students joining Beginning Band should not acquire an instrument prior to September. As students progress on their instruments, they become members of the Sixth Grade Band. Students cannot take Chorus with Beginning Band. After a successful completion of Beginning Band, students in Grade 7 Band *may elect* to take Chorus (1x per week) and Band (2 x per week).

*NOTE: Instrumental lessons are provided for all students in Orchestra and Band in a manner similar to fifth grade. Small group lessons are scheduled once each week on a rotating basis in order to cover the Board approved music curriculum.

Beginning Orchestra (new offering for next year): This class is designed to help students who have not played an instrument before to begin on an orchestral instrument. An important aspect of this class is to help balance the Sixth Grade Orchestra instrumentation and allow students an opportunity to participate in the Orchestra programs here at Fairfield Woods Middle School. Choice of instrument will be determined by the Beginning Orchestra instructor with input from the student in September. These instruments include violin, cello and double bass. Students joining Beginning Orchestra should not acquire an instrument prior to September. As students progress on their instruments, they become members of the Sixth Grade Orchestra. Students cannot take Chorus with Beginning Orchestra. After a successful completion of Beginning Orchestra, students in Grade 7 Orchestra *may elect* to take Chorus (1x per week) and Orchestra (2x per week).

Chorus: Sixth Grade Chorus is open to all students and is a continuation of the Fifth Grade Choral experience. Now in their second year of choral singing, students will learn more challenging choral literature, and will expand their vocal performing and musical literacy skills. Students who participate in Band or Orchestra may sing in Chorus one period a week.

Keyboard Music: *is a non-performing class* provided for students who do not participate in Band, Orchestra, or Chorus. Sixth grade Keyboard Music is a continuation of the fifth grade music curriculum and focuses on developing the musical skills and knowledge of every child. It includes a hands-on experience with our Piano Keyboard Lab. *Seating is limited, and every effort will be made to honor requests.*

Enrollment in the performing groups; band, orchestra and chorus is a full year commitment and all students are expected to participate in the scheduled concerts throughout the year.

As extension experiences, the Music Department offers several co-curricular performing ensembles that meet either before or after school. These ensembles, Jazz Band, Chamber Orchestra and Chamber Choir, are designed to expand the musical learning that takes place in the curricular performing groups. As such, they are available, by audition only, to students who are enrolled in a curricular performing ensemble.

Challenge and enjoyment characterize music in our middle schools. Our music program offers exciting opportunities for your child, and we want to assist you in determining what is best for your son or daughter. With the rich musical background developed in the elementary school, students are well prepared and motivated for more advanced musical experiences. Now you are considering your child's musical involvement in the

middle school, but high school is not far off. We urge you to keep a long-range view of your child's music education in mind.

The teachers at both levels, elementary and middle school will work closely together to provide continuity in your child's music education. If you have any questions, we suggest that you speak first with the music teachers in your elementary school, *then with the music coordinator who can answer questions and connect you with your child's middle school music teacher. Mr. Fecteau can be reached by email at dfecteau@fairfieldschools.org.*