

MONROE BAND & CHOIR HANDBOOK

PHILOSOPHY APPROACH

The Monroe Music Department offers a number of opportunities for students to engage and express themselves through music. Participation is open to all students who are willing to put in the effort to improve their musical skills. Students are expected to arrive with a positive attitude and ready to learn. Every action and decision we make will either help us:

- 1) Improve as an Individual Musician
- 2) Improve as an Ensemble

REQUIRED MATERIALS – BROUGHT EVERY DAY

- 1) BAND
 - a. Students will need their instrument in proper working order. If an instrument is out on repairs, students still attend band but their grade will not be affected so long as Mr. Driscoll is informed. A school instrument will be provided for the student to use when available.
 - i. Also any necessary supplies for operating the individual instrument: reeds, valve oil, mouthpiece, neck strap, sticks, etc.
 - b. A binder will be provided to 5th grade students to keep paperwork, assignments, and sheet music. 5th Graders will need a copy of our method book, "**Sound Innovations, Book 1.**"
 - c. 6-8th grade students will continue to use their binder to keep paperwork, assignments, and sheet music.
- 2) CHOIR
 - a. Each student will be provided a folder slot in the room to store their paperwork, assignments, and sheet music.
 - i. Any music that goes home for extra practice (which is encouraged) should go home in a folder. A stack of borrowable folders are provided. Don't take loose music home.
 - ii. Music should be treated with care and respect – all music must be returned in like-new condition.
 - iii. All music is numbered to match the folder slot; if a student's number of music is lost at the end of the year, **they will be charged a replacement fee.**
- 3) Students need a pencil each day. Pens are not appropriate for marking on music.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS AND RULES

- 1) Students are expected to follow all rules and procedures outlined in the student handbook.
- 2) Absence from rehearsal/sectionals during the school day must be pre-approved or else the student's grade will be lowered and consequences will be issued; this not just a commitment issue but also a safety concern. Students who are not present in class/have not communicated their location will receive a 0 on that day's rehearsal skills grade. Detentions will be issues as necessary to make-up lost class time for those who habitually are not present in rehearsal.
- 3) Students are expected to maintain passing grades and remain current on any missing work in their other classes. Those students with a pattern of not taking course work seriously or turning in late work may be pulled from the ensemble in order to receive additional instruction and assistance. Depending on the individual student and the timing during the year, students who have been removed for academic reasons may be allowed to rejoin once they have been cleared, but they might also need to wait until the start of a semester to rejoin.
- 4) Students should leave the classroom in better condition than they found it. Always pick up after yourself.
 - a. When not in use, instruments should be stored only in their locker or other assigned location. Only instruments and music should be stored in lockers: do not store shoes, bags, homework, etc.
 - i. Students who have an after school practice should take their instrument with them to practice, just as they would take their book bags and other belongings.
 - b. Music should be stored in the assigned folder or folder slot. Loose music that is left out will be thrown away – it is the students' responsibility to take care of their materials!
- 5) Students should practice respect at all times: to each other, to both their instrument and others', to any teacher or staff member present in the room, and to any items in the room as well.
- 6) Students should arrive to the classroom each day prepared to develop and grow as musicians. A positive attitude is crucial! Leave your stress outside.
- 7) Students are expected to practice outside of the school day and perform at their very best.
- 8) Students disrupting class and preventing the rest of the ensemble from improving will be removed from class for that day or permanently if the problem is consistent.

PRACTICE ROOMS

Students are expected to treat the practice rooms with the same respect as the rest of the music room. The privilege to utilize these rooms can be revoked if necessary. Students can sign up to use these rooms both before and after school via the bulletin board in the classroom. Practice Room #1 can be used by up to 1-4 students at a time. Practice Room #2 can be used by 1-2 students at a time. Practice Room #3 can only be used by percussionist students or with prior approval from Mr. Driscoll due to the percussion equipment stored in that room.

Some of the rooms will have equipment in them either for specific student use (piano, drum set, etc) or for storage (percussion room). The same expectations about playing on instruments that are not belonging to a student will apply.

5-8 BAND SECTIONALS

In addition to our full group rehearsals, students will meet for one session of sectionals each week as well. This small group instruction is where much of our technical instruction can occur. Sectionals will be scheduled during gym time and be posted in the room. Instead of reporting to gym on their assigned day, students will report to the music room for that class period.

6-8 CHOIR SECTIONALS

In addition to our full group rehearsals, students will meet for small group sectionals based on their voice parts twice over every three weeks. Sometimes sectionals will be used to rehearse additional small groups, such as honor choirs or solo and ensemble music. This small group instruction is where much of our technical instruction can occur. Sectionals will be scheduled on a rotating block during gym time on Fridays. The schedule will be posted each week outside the music room for students to verify their attendance. (There are no sectionals for 5th Grade Choir.)

CONCERT ATTIRE

- 1) **Monroe Polo** – these will be distributed prior to our first performance and are school property. They should be kept in good condition and returned following our final performance in the Spring. Report cards will be held or fees applied if they are not returned. These are a \$25 replacement fee if lost or damaged.
- 2) **Black Pants – long dress pants; no shorts.** All school handbook expectations regarding attire continue to apply for concert dress, even for performances outside of the school day.
- 3) Dark Shoes – Flip-flops are NOT acceptable. Preferably dress shoes.
- 4) Concert Attire may be more casual for certain events; students will be notified of any changes.

IMPORTANT DATES

The performance calendar is provided to students at the beginning of the year, with updates also handed out at the start of each quarter, and is available on the music website.

SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS

When scheduling doctor's appointments, especially orthodontist appointments or any dental procedures, please be mindful of performance dates. Please try to set those appointments after a performance or during a break from school. Getting braces on or tightened is a big adjustment, and being able to play a wind instrument after getting braces on or off takes time and practice. It could also be painful for the student when they first begin to play again.

PERMISSION SLIPS / ELIGIBILITY

The handbook return slip also doubles as a permission slip for all band and choir related activities during the year. This should save the extra stress of lost papers during the year by returning just the one sheet. Most of our events during the school year will use this permission form. Some events where students can optionally ride the bus to the event or returning (such as solo and ensemble or organizational contest) or those using alternate transportation methods will still use a traditional permission slip. Information sheets with locations and times for these events will still be sent home with the students and via e-mail. If at any point emergency contact information needs to change, please communicate with Mr. Driscoll to update the handbook return slip.

Any time we leave the school we are representing Monroe. On all of our outside performances students are expected to act accordingly (including while on the bus) and follow all school rules appropriately. The same applies to any field trips that we may take throughout the year. Disruptive behavior may jeopardize an individual student's ability to go with us on these events or prevent the events from happening in the future for the entire group.

Performance based trips that involve the presentation of Monroe ensembles will be considered different from trips that are more casual. These field trips might include large festival performances or non-performance trips. For a field trip school handbook expectations will apply for eligibility.

DROPPING CLASS

Music ensembles are a commitment and yes, sometimes difficult. These groups require outside work and relying only on class time will not be adequate preparation. Students are only allowed to drop from an ensemble during the year at the end of the 2nd quarter and before the 3rd quarter begins. This is a serious decision and should be considered carefully; a note from a parent will be required to verify that this decision has been discussed at home. This is the only time that an enrollment change can occur – students can only add into ensembles during the same window.

INSTRUMENT STORAGE

Locker shelves are provided in the Music Room for storage of most instruments. Band students are allowed to enter the school early each morning to drop off their instruments but are then expected to return to the appropriate morning waiting location. These shelves are for instrument and folder storage only. Some students with larger instruments may have alternate storage locations within the room. Instruments should not live in the Music Room – instruments should go home most nights during the week for at-home practice. Instruments **must** go home on the weekends and this will be checked weekly as a grade. Some exceptions apply in cases where students have an instrument available at home or for large instruments: discuss with Mr. Driscoll if there is a unique situation.

SCHOOL-OWNED INSTRUMENTS

Monroe has a small number of instruments owned by the school. These will be loaned out and issued on an as-needed basis depending on student need and special requests made by Mr. Driscoll in an attempt to strengthen the instrumentation of the group. Students who use a school-owned instrument will be asked to fill out an agreement form accepting responsibility for the care and return of the instrument and have it signed by their parents.

INSTRUMENT SWITCHING

Students are not allowed to decide on their own to switch instruments. The only times that a switch will be allowed is if Mr. Driscoll makes the determination that a different instrument would be better suited for the physical build of an individual student or that the instrumentation needs of the whole ensemble require a volunteer instrument switch. Students who have an interest in learning a secondary instrument can discuss this with Mr. Driscoll. Students are not allowed to participate on an alternate instrument in class until they have developed the sufficient skills on that instrument to keep up with the rest of the class.

DISCIPLINE

Students are expected to refer to the two guiding principles of the program when considering any action: does it improve individual musician skills and does it benefit the ensemble. If the answer to either of these questions is no, then they should avoid the choice. Discipline issues such as forgotten instruments and poor preparation will be reflected through the student's rehearsal skills grade. Students who forget their instrument for a 2nd time (and beyond) during the quarter will receive an After School Detention in order to make up for lost classroom time: students without their instrument cannot participate fully in class and will fall behind.

Issues that disrupt the class as a whole or represent disrespect to other students or equipment will be written up according to the Monroe Handbook. Students that consistently disrupt class or are off task will be issued an after school detention to be served with Mr. Driscoll and will be spent practicing to make up the lost time.

Gum and food are not allowed in the classroom. Other classrooms in the school may allow these, but students are not able to play their instrument or sing correctly with gum or food. A reminder will be given, but repeat offenders will be written up. Only water is allowed in the room.

Playing or messing with instruments that are not yours (including percussion instruments or pianos) will result in disciplinary action. Using any form of an instrument as a weapon against others will be grounds for immediate and permanent removal from the ensemble.

INSTRUMENTAL REEDS / SUPPLIES

Students are expected to have the necessary reeds, valve oil, sticks, and other supplies necessary to play your instrument. Percussionists are expected to have their own sticks and bell mallets every day. Not having these will lose rehearsal skills points. Reed players should always have 2 or 3 good-condition reeds in their case that they are not currently playing with as back-ups. **Monroe is NOT responsible for supplying reeds!** Order blanks for Kidder Music are available on the bulletin board just inside the door. These can be filled out and given to Mr. Driscoll with the appropriate payment and Kidder will deliver the requested materials in about a week. Mr. Driscoll does have an

emergency supply of reeds available for a cost of \$2 per reed (some exceptions apply). This should not become a frequent means of obtaining reeds.

Students in 6-8th band should refer to the Monroe Music website for suggestions on reed strengths and types. Do not continue to purchase the beginning reeds when you get into 6th grade: you are ready for better quality.

Students should have the following supplies with them at all times based on their instrument. All of these can be easily obtained through Kidder. Don't wait until you are on your last reed or drop of oil before ordering more. These supplies are important to keeping your instrument in the best playing condition.

Flute	Cleaning Stick, Swab/Soft Cloth
Clarinet/Sax	Swab, Cork Grease, Reed Guard/Case, 2-3 PLAYABLE reeds (no chips, cracks, or mold!)
Trumpet, Baritone	Valve Oil, Tuning Slide Grease, Snake
Trombone	Slide Cream or Slide Oil, Tuning Slide Grease, Snake

PEP BAND

Students in the 6-8 Band also make up the Monroe Pep Band that performs at pep assemblies as well as one game for each of the sports held at Monroe. Unless students are participating in the specific game that we are playing at they are required to be present as part of the Pep Band, and even the athletes are welcome to pick up their instrument for the game they don't participate in (the same applies to cheerleaders). A special "pep band camp" will be scheduled and held during the fall to help in preparation for this event and attendance is crucial to learn all of the music and be ready to perform.

JAZZ BAND

Jazz Band meets before school from 7:30 – 7:55 am on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and is open to ANY STUDENT (regardless of instrument) who participates in the 6-8 Band (exceptions may apply). This is a great opportunity for students to experience a different style of playing and performing. The Jazz Band performs many times throughout the year and has several additional performances from the regular concert band. Students who participate in Jazz Band will have it included in their overall course grade, including expectations of attendance. Excused absences need to be communicated to Mr. Driscoll so as not to receive a 0 for the day's rehearsal skills. Additionally, those who are not reliable about attending may jeopardize their chair placement and/or ability to have solos during songs. Students who develop a habit of being late or absent from morning rehearsals may be asked to no longer be part of the group or to not perform on certain songs or concerts.

GIRLS ADVANCED VOCAL ENSEMBLE

The Girls AVE meets before school from 7:30 – 7:55 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays and is open to all 6-8 choir members. This is a great opportunity for students to experience a different style and format of singing and performing – it is much more independent based than normal choir. Students who participate in AVE will have it included in their overall course grade, including expectations of attendance. Excused absences need to be communicated to Mr. Driscoll so as not to receive a 0 for the day's rehearsal skills. Students who develop a habit of being late or absent from morning rehearsals may be asked to no longer be part of the group.

BOYS ADVANCED VOCAL ENSEMBLE

The Boys AVE operates similarly to the Girls AVE, but will meet typically once a week after school. This group will be scheduled on a per-semester basis and will have rehearsals scheduled around other after school events as much as possible.

GRADING SYSTEM

Grades will be based on a point system. Everything students do will be worth a specific number of points. The totals will be different for each quarter. Final grades will be percentage based, following the grading scale from the Monroe handbook. Students can receive "extra credit" points for anything they do outside of the school day that engages them in music or the arts – including after school practice, participation in outside groups, and attending outside concerts/performances. Talk to Mr. Driscoll if you have something you think might earn you extra credit points!

Each quarter, students will be provided a breakdown sheet that will explain how each quarter's grades are determined. Points are always due on the last day of each quarter.

Concerts and Performances

Music ensembles are primarily a performance based class and this becomes the bulk of our grade. Unless otherwise noted, all performances and events are considered mandatory for students. The ensemble is a group and the absence of any one person will result in the lessening of our overall ability to have success. An individual student's performance grade may be lowered for students who arrive late (without notice), are not in the appropriate performance attire (specifically provided attire items), or for issues with behavior during the performance.

Mr. Driscoll must be notified of any absence from a performance by a note or e-mail from a parent **prior to the concert date** in order for an absence to be considered excused. These absences are limited to family emergencies. Students sick from school are automatically considered excused but *are* welcome to attend performances if they are feeling better by the time of the performance.

Unexcused absences or those not communicated prior to the performance will receive a make-up assignment typically comprised of written and performance sections. **It will be the student's responsibility** to pick up and complete the make-up assignment by the due date if they expect to receive the points. Mr. Driscoll will not seek out these students to provide the make-up assignment.

All of our events, whether at Monroe or off-site, represent both our school and our music program to the public and attendance is crucial and expected. A calendar of performances is provided at the beginning of the year – this should be used to immediately make sure the appropriate dates are free and Mr. Driscoll should be notified IMMEDIATELY if a conflict is present. As a co-curricular school organization, performances take priority over extra-curricular activities and outside of school organizations/activities. These are not considered excused absences. In the event of a performance scheduled at the same time as a significant school conflict, please talk to Mr. Driscoll as soon as possible so that a plan of action can be worked out with the other coaches.

Concert attendance should not be used by parents as a punishment for home behavior. Even though most performances are held outside of the school day, they serve as our tests and major assessments of student learning. Just as it would be inappropriate to say that a child is not allowed to take their math or reading test because they had behavior issues at home, the same logic applies to performances.

Band Practice Records / Practice Logs

The recording of practice minutes is not typically required for students. It is expected that students should be developing the skills and understanding of their instrument as well as the self-discipline to know when and how much they need to practice. It will be very clear to Mr. Driscoll whether or not students are actually practicing at home. If the situation and general work ethic requires it, weekly graded practice records will be added into the grade. Students who do wish to record their practicing can turn in weekly charts for additional points.

5th Grade Band students will keep a Practice Log in their binders, recording what they are expected to work on each day. It is expected that students fill this out and it will be checked for a grade.

Playing Assessments

Students should be prepared to have regular playing assessments on the music they are expected to have prepared. These tests will be done through digital means like Google Voice, Flipgrid, or Google Classroom. These tests are to be completed outside of the school day. If for any reason this is not possible, please communicate with Mr. Driscoll to find an alternative assessment method. Students are always welcome to complete playing assessments through after school sign-ups.

Late Assignments

Band and choir will follow the same late assignment policy as the rest of the classes in the Junior High which states in the Student Handbook: "students will have only two warnings of late or missing work per quarter. After the second warning, the third time the students comes to school without homework completed, they will be assigned a detention."

Rehearsal Skills – Daily Grade

10 points per class

Up to 10 points will be allotted for each class session or sectional. These points will reflect a student's preparedness both in physical materials and music familiarity, and also the individual behavior, focus, preparation, and attitude.

All required class materials are needed for each meeting unless otherwise instructed. A forgotten instrument or music will remove 5 points each. A student without an instrument and/or music cannot participate fully in class. The same applies for students without reeds or other supplies that prevent their ability to play their instrument. Students with a forgotten instrument or music are still expected to report to class and will have a written component to complete during rehearsal; concepts can be learned even without having your materials.

Students who are not present in class will not receive the 10 points for participation. A student who has an excused absence from school will receive an excused mark for the daily grade. If a student has an excused reason to be missing rehearsal for another reason at school, they will also be excused for the grade provided the student communicates this in advance. An excused absence from rehearsal is only given for work that cannot be completed at home such as making up a test or something that must be done under direct teacher supervision. Not completing assigned homework does not fall under an excused absence situation. **Students are encouraged to explore alternate times to complete these assignments (before/after school, recess, etc) as opposed to missing rehearsal.** Students who do not check-in before class starts will receive a 0 for the daily grade and the discipline steps outlined above will be followed even if the absence would have been considered as excused. Students should not rely on other classmates to pass the message for an excused absence – it should be done in person by the student themselves or communicated by the teacher directly to Mr. Driscoll.

Weekend Points

10 Points per weekend

Instruments should go home frequently during the week, ideally every day, as student schedules allow. It is required that instruments go home over the weekend. Instruments that remain at the school over the weekend are not helping students improve during class. In addition to the 0 pointed received for taking the instrument home, an additional practice assignment will be provided to make up for the lost time.

If a student has access to an instrument at home or are a large instrument where transportation is not feasible or practical, please communicate with Mr. Driscoll so that 0's are not entered for the weekend grade. Students in situations where transportation prevents them taking an instrument home should make plans to regularly work after school in order to get practice time with the instrument.

Worksheets / Tests

Worksheets and tests will be given during class on an as needed basis.