

Hello Parents! My name is Doug Schaffer and I am the band director at Mark Twain Jr/Sr High School. By now I'm sure you have been made aware of the rotation that has been implemented in 6th grade, allowing students to have a few days of art and a few days of band, before making a final decision on which one they would like to sign up for. My goal in sending this out is to try to keep you as in the loop as possible about what your student will be doing in band, as well as answering any questions you have about band. I will be putting a PDF of this letter, as well as other helpful documents and information on our band webpage

<https://sites.google.com/a/rallsr2.k12.mo.us/marktwainband-org/> which you can reach either by going directly to it or using the link on the school website.

As far as what we will be doing these upcoming weeks; all students will have all of the instruments band offers demonstrated to them. Upon completion of the demonstration students will be asked to play test a couple instruments of their choosing. I am asking that all 6th graders try at least one woodwind and one brass instrument. This allows them to see if they will enjoy playing the instrument they choose. After the completion of the rotation, a form will go home asking them to choose art or band. Should they choose band, another form will go home with recommendations on which instrument your student should play. Once that form goes home I encourage you to have a discussion with your student and help them make the best choice. From there class will get up and running, and you will receive my syllabus and formal class expectations.

So now that you know what these next couple weeks will entail, I'd like to take a couple of moments and just give you information about band.

Who should do band/what kind of students do you want in band?

Any child who wishes to try band will be welcomed. As far as what is the ideal type of student? A student who is prepared to learn something new, and understands it probably won't happen on the first try. Perseverance is the biggest trait of a band student. They are learning something that is basically brand new. As long as they keep pushing, it will come.

Why should my student do band?

I believe in providing opportunity through performance. The high school band is going to see some great venues and perform in front of thousands of spectators this year, including performing at Lucas Oil Stadium for the Bands of America Grand National Championships. The 7th and 8th grade band will be performing at Music in the Parks in Six Flags(an opportunity your student will have next year if they join band). I very much use performances to attempt to provide unforgettable experiences. Sometimes the best experience is just being around 30 or more of your best friends. Band is very much a team, and I push the kids to enjoy that aspect of it as well. Also, band is a pathway to scholarships. Every college has money for their music department, and you do not need

to be a music major to qualify for scholarships. So far every student I have ever graduated from a band program has gotten some money for college.

What if my student is torn between choosing band and art?

They need to join band. I am not saying this as a recruiting pitch. Here is the reality, a student can join Art 1 as late as their senior year of high school. There is always time to try art out. This is their only chance to join band. I use the 6th grade year to teach a fundamental approach to music. In the 7th grade year, we start performing in festivals. If a student joins without any of that fundamental knowledge, it is simply not fair to the students who have put in the work. With this in mind, a student must join band their 6th grade year. So I tell students, even if they are a strong “maybe” on wanting to do band, it is best to join band, see what it’s all about with the horn in their hands, and then make an informed decision. If they change their minds down the road, I can always get them in art, I can’t always get them in band.

Myths about band: I’d like to use this section to address some common misconceptions about band.

- **My student can’t do band, they do sports.**
 - Calvin Johnson did band in high school, and went on to break one of Jerry Rice’s records. In all seriousness at Mark Twain the coaches and I have a great working relationship and share students very well. In the high school band I have 4 football players, 9 softball players, 3 cross country runners, and 3 cheerleaders. Those are just the fall sports. I also have several basketball and baseball players. I build the competitive schedule around the sports schedule, and this allows our students to participate in both.
- **My student will be in classes in high school that will conflict with band.**
 - Our guidance counselors and principals are amazing, and have put together an amazing schedule that has minimized conflicts with band.
 - Students CAN do band and Ag classes.
 - Students CAN do band and honors/dual credit courses.
 - Students CAN do band and weight training.
 - Students CAN do band and VO-Tech.
 - Basically the only time a student would have an issue with scheduling would be if they failed courses, and lose space in their schedule due to having to make stuff up. Our district is committed to always putting forth a schedule that works for the students to have opportunities.
- **I can’t afford an instrument.**
 - There are several different avenues for instruments. Basically there are three options:

1. A rent to own program with the company we do business with: Mozingo Music. I have partnered with Mozingo for three main reasons. 1) They keep rental costs low. Depending on the brand/instrument you go with, you are looking between \$20-\$30 per month. 2) They provide a service contract with all of their rentals stating that they will take care of any and all repairs while you are renting the instrument. They even come to the school to pick it up, and provide a loaner instrument. 3) If a family can not afford a standard rental, they work privately with them in order to make sure that the student gets an instrument.
 2. Used/online options. You can find used instruments almost anywhere. We have former band parents looking to sell (please let me know if you would like to be put into contact with them). There's also Facebook marketplace, and other options. My only request on used instruments, if possible please send me a picture of it before buying. I like to analyze and see if I think the instrument will need repairs. Keep in mind a \$150 trumpet that needs \$250 of repairs, is really a \$400 trumpet. As far as online goes, I would prefer you send me a link if possible before buying. There's some bad stuff out there. Two general rules with buying online. 1) if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. There are some companies that make poorly constructed knock off horns in China, and then sell them at incredibly cheap prices. These will wind up being roadblocks in your student's success. 2) Please avoid colored horns at all costs. Much like the knock off horns you see online, these simply are not quality constructed, and as cool as they may look, they will be harder for your student to achieve success.
 3. School horns. This is a last resort. We do have a limited supply of school horns. Since they are limited, they will only be distributed on an as needed basis. Additionally, they will need repairs throughout the year. This will not hurt your student's grade, but it can get frustrating not having a horn for a week while it's in the shop. I will gladly give a school horn to a student if it is the only way to get them in band, but if another option can be pursued, I encourage it to be.
- I will be sending home another document with more specific information including Mozingo plan prices, good brands to look for and bad brands to avoid if you are looking on your own, and other information in terms of

getting an instrument. Bottom line though, be it a little bit a month, one up front cost, or a school instrument, there are several outlets out there that will allow your student to get an instrument at the right price for your family.

I believe this is all the necessary information at this time. Should something else come up I will send more home. Please do not hesitate to contact me with your own questions at dschaffer@rallsr2.k12.mo.us

Thanks!
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