

Hi Band students!

I'm John Ray--call me Mr. John! I am excited that you have chosen to play a musical instrument in the Band! This is going to be so much fun!

When you speak with anyone, anywhere who has played in school band through their middle school and high school years, they almost always say that their time in Band was the most memorable and it was their favorite part of the day!

Band is not just a class--it is an experience! Whether you love music, movies, science, writing, math, languages, art, reading, computers and devices, building or mechanics, Band is a way to connect all of these elements and more in a way that gives you control of your creativity. Even while having fun playing music with your band-mates, in a very short time, you will have skills that allow you to create your own music anytime you like.

For class, you will need to ALWAYS bring these:

1.) your **instrument** (in its case or bag)
2.) a portable **music stand** (in a carrying bag)
3.) your **band book, Essential Elements for Band (Book 1) for your instrument**
4.) a **pencil with an eraser**

At home, you will need to spend about 60 minutes per week playing your instrument. Here's how you can do that easily:

1.) I will give **1 regular weekly assignment** for you to practice at home. When you feel you can play the assignment correctly, you will log in to your own student account online and **record yourself playing**. Your online account will automatically show me that you have finished a recording and I will listen to it and write some comments to help you along each week.
2.) If you practice and finish recording yourself and you still have lots of time left to finish your 60 minutes, you can **play anything you like!** In fact, as long as you are playing your instrument, you are making progress!
3.) **Log your practice time** in your student account!

Band I class will start at 3:00 PM and end at 4:30 PM, **on Mondays**.

Band II class will start at 3:00 PM and end at 4:30 PM, **on Wednesdays**.

When you arrive to Band each week at 3:00pm, you will set up your instrument and music stand and begin playing notes on your own. Between 3:05 and 3:10pm, I'll say "OK, everyone, it's time to start!" Setup and playing your first notes of the day usually takes about 5-10 minutes.

HELPFUL TIPS!

1.) **Always do your practice log entries!** These help you keep track of your 60 minutes, and they help both your parents and myself to see that you are making weekly progress!
2.) Try to practice **15 minutes per day**. Strive for a minimum of **60 minutes per week**, outside of Band class. If you don't practice every day, try **20 minutes 3 days per week**. **Figure out a weekly schedule and try to stick to it!**
3.) **Let yourself get lost in your playing.** In other words, you're doing awesome if you just play SOMETHING. Play what is fun to you! Playing ahead in your book is fine!

The three moods of your practice time...

1.) ***I'm up for a challenge:*** FIRST, make sure you've done your assignment. THEN play through a harder section of music you worked on in band class, or play ahead in your book a little bit. See if you can figure it out for yourself!
2.) ***I'm bored:*** FIRST, make sure you've done your assignment. THEN play anything you've played before that you liked. Looking back and playing songs you already know well is fun, and they get easier to play and sound SO much better over time. We all have likes and dislikes, and they are not all the same, even among band friends. Some things are more fun to play on your instrument than they are on a different instrument.
3.) ***I'm overwhelmed:*** FIRST, make sure you know HOW to do the assignment, and if not, contact Mr. John for some helpful tips, but don't wait until the day before class! Usually a quick text or email back and forth will get you going. If you are generally overwhelmed with playing the instrument, then let's schedule a meeting outside of class time to see what's going on. Sometimes, a simple thing like instrument adjustment or hand position adjustment can greatly improve your playing. While you are waiting for my text/email back, go back a few songs and play something you know well. The simple act of playing makes you better, even if you're not working toward any specific goal.

About me:

To give you a little background on myself, I grew up in Lebanon, TN (Nashville area) in a church-going Southern Baptist home where my father was the music minister of a large Baptist church and my mom taught Sunday School. I developed a passion for ministry and music and poured my efforts into studies at Belmont University, graduating with a Bachelor's in Music, and began serving as Music Director at two Baptist churches consecutively over the course of about 19 years. While serving in ministry, I obtained a Master's in Education and K-12 Music Teaching license at Cumberland University and taught middle and high school band for a few years as well as performed a variety of gigs on trumpet and vocals in Music City. During this time, I met my amazing wife, Arjana, and God allowed us to have the great blessing of a daughter, Isabella. We moved to the Tampa area in 2015 and began homeschooling Isabella from the start. We joined the T.E.A.C.H. family in 2017 with Isabella in classes at age 7. She's now in high school at T.E.A.C.H. My wife, originally from Albania, has been a CRNA (anesthetist) for about 15 years and practices in Tampa. Our family loves to hang out with her mom, two brothers and their families in Tampa and to visit my dad in Lake Placid, FL. We love road trips, plane trips, going to farms and beaches and "Gatlinburg-esque" places.

Our T.E.A.C.H. family is truly a family like none other. You will find no other place like it. I'm looking forward to having a blast and making music with the T.E.A.C.H. Band students! I hope you'll make the rewarding experience of Band a part of your child's life!

John Ray

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