

## Which Band Instrument Should I Play?

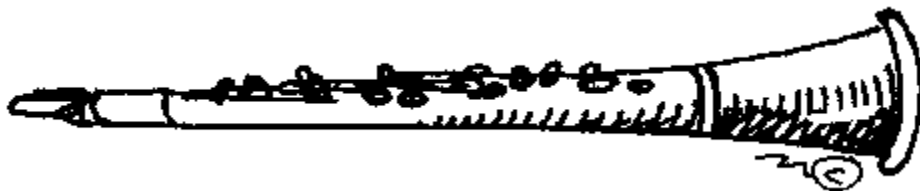
Learning to play an instrument is easy and fun! It is no more difficult than learning to rollerblade, ride a bike, or swim. Like any skill, it gets easier with practice. Learning to play an instrument will give you new skills and will help you to understand more about the music you hear every day.

Which instrument should you play? It is important to go to concerts, listen to good recordings, or watch some instrument videos when you are trying to figure out which instrument you would like to play. The more you know about the instruments that you are choosing from, the better your choice will be.

You should begin by doing some research on the instruments that seem interesting to you. Attached is information on the instruments that we start on in the sixth grade. Each paragraph tells what each instrument is made of, what kind of music it might play, and how much it might cost to rent or own. Recently, your child had the opportunity to try out some of these instruments at their school during our 5<sup>th</sup> grade instrument fittings. Your goal should be to find an instrument that you sounded good on during the instrument fittings and that you like the sound of.

It's important to remember that both boys and girls can play every instrument. Some of the best flute players in the world are men, and some of the best trumpet players in the world are women. Choose the instrument that *you* want to play - don't let peer pressure make the choice for you.

Read about each of the instruments on the following pages to learn how they work and where you can play them. You have a better chance of doing well in the band if you've chosen the right instrument for you.



# About the Instruments

## FLUTE

Flutes are made of silver or composite metal. If you have ever made a sound by blowing across the top of a bottle, you can make a sound on a flute. Flutes play in concert bands, marching bands, and orchestras. We usually have between 8 to 12 flutes in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. Some flute players may switch to oboe or bassoon later in their first year. One reason my students like to play flute is because the flutes often play the melody, and the case is small, so it's easy to carry. It takes a lot of air to play flute. It costs about \$30 per month to rent a flute.

## CLARINET

Most beginner clarinets are made of plastic, and intermediate and professional clarinets are made of granadilla wood. When air is blown into the instrument, it vibrates a reed and sound is made. Clarinets can play in concert bands, marching bands, and orchestras. We usually have between 18 to 30 clarinets in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. Some clarinet players switch to bass clarinet, bassoon or oboe later in their first year. Students with very small fingers may have trouble with the clarinet. Many of my clarinet players like this instrument because of its warm sound and that they get to play a variety of parts, from melody to harmony and rhythm. It costs about \$30 per month to rent a clarinet, and reeds cost about \$1.50 each.

## ALTO SAXOPHONE

The alto saxophone is made of brass or composite metal. The sound is produced in the same way as the clarinet, using a slightly bigger reed. Saxophones come in different sizes; the one that our 6<sup>th</sup> graders play is the alto saxophone. We usually have between 7 to 10 alto saxophones in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. Some saxophone players learn to play the tenor or baritone saxophone later in middle school. Saxophones can be played in concert bands, marching bands, and jazz bands. Some of my saxophone players like this instrument because it is easy to get a sound out, and, like the clarinet, they get to play a variety of parts. The alto saxophone costs almost \$65 per month to rent, and is one of the most expensive instruments to buy. The reeds cost about \$2.00 each.

## TRUMPET

The trumpet is made of brass or composite metal, and produce sound by “buzzing” the lips into a mouthpiece. Brass instruments can be a little more challenging than woodwinds, because you can make more than one note with the same finger position. You need a good ear to hear whether you are playing the right note. Trumpets can play in concert bands, marching bands, orchestras and jazz bands. We usually have between 20 to 30 trumpets in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. My students like the trumpet because it has a nice big sound and frequently plays the melody. Trumpet players sometimes switch to French horn, baritone, or tuba later in the year. Trumpets cost about \$30 per month to rent.

## TROMBONE

Like the trumpet, the trombone is made of brass or composite metal, and produces sound by “buzzing” the lips into a mouthpiece. Since the trombone is bigger than a trumpet, it sounds lower. The trombone changes notes by moving a slide, much like a slide whistle. If you have very short arms, the trombone may not be for you. Trombones usually play harmony or rhythm parts in the band, but sometimes they get to play the melody. Trombones play in concert bands, marching bands, orchestras, and jazz bands. We usually have between 12 to 15 trombones in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. My students like the trombone because it is easier to buzz on the bigger mouthpiece and they like using the slide to change notes. Sometimes, trombone players switch to tuba later in the year. Trombones cost about \$30 per month to rent.

## OTHER INSTRUMENTS

In the beginning of the year for 6<sup>th</sup> grade band we start students on the five instruments listed above. These instruments fit our 6<sup>th</sup> graders well with their smaller sizes and it helps streamline classroom instruction by keeping it to 5 instrument options. During the school year, 6<sup>th</sup> grade band students will have the opportunity to try out other instruments including percussion (mid-October) and oboe, bassoon, bass clarinet, tenor sax, French Horn, baritone, and tuba (December). These are important instruments as well and help fill out the sound of our 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. More information about trying out these instruments will be provided during 6<sup>th</sup> grade band class next year.

## **When to Get an Instrument**

This document is designed to give you some background information on each band instrument. If your child is interested in taking 6<sup>th</sup> grade band plus a rotation of 4 exploratory classes (gym, art, etc.) please indicate that on the scheduling form that Mrs. Pirog sends out. Once you choose band plus rotation on the scheduling form it will ask what instrument your child would like to play. Please indicate your child’s choice at that time. If your child forgot the name of the instrument that they chose at instrument fittings, you can email me at [msauer@cvs.k12.mi.us](mailto:msauer@cvs.k12.mi.us) and I will send you that information.

Once I have this information, I will send out information regarding how to get an instrument. This will include recommended music stores, quality instrument brands, and when to get an instrument. Students will not need to get an instrument until right before next school year.