

Dear Parents:

It is with great excitement that we welcome your family to our instrumental music program!

Learning to play a musical instrument and acquiring the unique habits of mind that come with it is one of the most incredible opportunities that our school can offer your child. The instrument that will be placed in your child's hands has the power to transform their lives in ways that no other endeavor can. In addition to musical accomplishments, this coming school year your child will learn to :

- Be patient and persistent with difficult tasks;
- Delay gratification by working in order to sound better;
- Develop curiosity, problem solve, and cultivate *grit*.

You play a vital role in the musical education of your child, and you can be successful at this even if you don't believe yourself to be musical! Supporting your child at home is easy and fun — if you can teach them to wash dishes, you can help them develop a healthy practice routine at home, and we will assist you along the way. In the meantime, there are only a few things you need to keep in mind to ensure that your child enjoys music as part of their life for years to come:

1. **Treat music as a long-term commitment right from the start.** Students who identify that they will play their instrument for longer than one year outperform students who only commit to one year of playing by up to 400% — *practicing the same amount of time if not less!* The ideas and mindsets students bring to their musical instrument study have a direct effect on their success, and it's the parents' role to set the tone on the first day by not giving their child an "easy out" to quit. Make the decision to invest in your child's music education for at least a few years of their schooling and you will see incredible results *this year*.
2. **Treasure the escape from "high-stakes" studies.** It seems that everywhere we turn, academic expectations run higher and panic begins to set in: about acing the exam, protecting the transcript, or

keeping up with “high-achieving” peers. Playing a musical instrument helps parents pull their children off this fast track, if even for a moment, and not worry that other children will wind up “ahead”. Instrumental music gives children the room to find their genuine passions, the freedom to discover true independence, and the space to fail and bounce back. They will become *better people* this year through their musical studies.

3. **Embrace the “offline” time.** Your child’s ability to become a deep and complex person relies so much upon their ability to build their attention span. In our lightning-fast digital world, children often do not have enough opportunity to build understanding and intelligence through mindful solitary activities. Musical instrument instruction facilitates this offline, “slow world” learning and brings children together in a unique, “unplugged” ensemble when they have band class.
4. **Understand that your child’s instrumental music experience is just as (if not more) crucial to their growth as human beings than any other subject.** Music is much more than a “special” or a “frill” subject — it is a *core subject*, and it should be approached that way by *all of us*. When taught with healthy rigor, it is often the most enjoyable subject during the school day, and the home practice should be treated as an essential part of the homework routine. When taught well and *minimally* supported at home, the craft of learning a musical instrument develops *fortitude, willpower, and metacognitive skills* that parents stay up at night hoping their children have when they grow up.
5. **Don’t let your child quit too soon.** All children are capable of enjoying a successful K-12 music experience with a little support. By not letting your child quit, you are sending a clear message to everyone in our school system that you believe playing a musical instrument cultivates crucial “non-cognitive” skills that matter so much in the grown-up world. Spend 5-10 minutes a night helping your child create a practice routine and they will be far less likely to become frustrated and quit too early in their studies.

At the beginning of every school year I am not only passionate about growing a new generation of musician, music lover, and future patron of the arts — we are determined to arm our children with the tools to become great thinkers, citizens, and lifelong lovers of learning. We will take care of the musical instruction on my

end, but the actions of parents assisting their children's practice at home, accompanied with a long-term commitment to their children staying in our school music program, will ensure that they receive the best education our schools have to offer.

Please join us in what we know will be a transformative experience for your child this year.

Sincerely,

Ms. Thompson

Mr. Jussila

Mr. Hofer