

# Laurel Woods Elementary School Instrumental Music Department

Peggy Dumler, Principal  
Steve Whiddon, Instrumental Music Teacher

<http://www.MrWhiddon.com>

August 30, 2010

Dear Parents,

Greetings from the Instrumental Music Department of Laurel Woods Elementary School! I am happy to be back and am looking forward to another great year of Band and Strings. Your child has seen a presentation about the Band and Orchestra and this letter gives a brief overview of instrumental music lessons at your elementary school.

## Getting Started

Once our schedule is in “full swing,” all Band and String students will receive instruction once or twice a week both in small groups and in full ensemble rehearsals.

To get started, you must complete the *Instrumental Music Permission Form* and turn it in to Mr. Whiddon **by Wednesday, September 15th**. Please discuss with your child the work involved in learning a musical instrument and that Band or Strings is a year-long commitment. Students cannot quit the program mid-year unless there are extenuating circumstances and all of us (student, parent, and I) have discussed the issue together.



We will meet once (without instruments) during the week of **September 20th**. Before that time, every student who chooses to participate will receive a letter from me detailing what instrument and supplies they need to acquire. This list is also included in this packet. At that meeting, every student will receive a folder containing important information about the schedule and expectations for the year.

We will begin rehearsing with instruments during the week of **September 27<sup>th</sup>**, by which time your child will need an instrument, book, and any other required materials. Make sure your child's name is on his or her instrument case and on his or

her book! A folding music stand is essential for correct home practicing but does not need to be brought to school.



## Where Do I Get An Instrument?

With regard to the instrument, I recommend you take advantage of a rental plan. These typically have low monthly payments and may allow you to apply your payments to the final cost of the instrument.

Several stores offer these rental plans. A wide variety of Musical Instrument Dealers can be found in your local phone book. Several local vendors are listed on my web page ([www.MrWhiddon.com](http://www.MrWhiddon.com)). Each store's rental plan works slightly differently, so be sure you fully understand the plan before signing on.

If a rental plan does not appeal to you, you may obtain an instrument in any way you like. Instruments used by previous family members are always a good option provided the instrument is in good working order. I am available at any time before the start of lessons to check instruments to determine whether they are usable or in need of repair. An instrument that is not functioning properly can be very frustrating to a beginning student and will likely slow their progress. I do not recommend buying an instrument at a pawn shop or over the internet unless you are familiar enough with musical instruments or the specific vendor to guarantee you are getting a quality instrument that is fully functioning. As with anything, "let the buyer beware." If you see an instrument that seems to be much less expensive than all the others, there is probably a reason. Be careful!

The school does have a few instruments available for use by students. I stress, there are very few instruments available through the school. If you are interested in acquiring a school instrument, please contact Mr. Whiddon **no later than Friday, September 10th**. Remember, due to the limited number of instruments, requesting a school instrument does not guarantee that you will be able to get one. Decisions about school instruments will be based on need.

## Thoughts On Instrument Choice (or "Setting Your Child Up For Success")

Third Grade students are able to begin on the string instruments (violin, viola, and cello) only. Fourth and Fifth Grade students may begin on any of the string instruments or any of the band instruments. Students will not be allowed to change instruments during the school year.



I recommend any student who is unsure about which instrument to select speak with me to help him or her choose. For beginners, we offer instruction on the following:

Violin, Viola, and Cello (3rd, 4th or 5th Grade), as well as Flute, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone, Trumpet, Trombone, Baritone, and Percussion (4th and 5th Grades only). String Bass, French Horn, and Tuba are available on a case-by-case basis after discussion with Mr. Whiddon. I encourage each student to play whichever instrument appeals to him or her, but you may be interested in the following:

1. There is a great need for Cello, Trombone, and Baritone players. These instruments tend to be less popular and therefore there are more performance opportunities for players of these in middle and high school.
2. "Percussion" does not equal "Drums". First-year percussionists will focus primarily on Orchestra Bells. Drums become more prominent in the Advanced Band. This approach results in a more fulfilling, exciting, and well-rounded musical experience for the student. Children with piano experience will have a significant head start on percussion. There are a limited number of percussion spots available. Percussion students will be selected through a lottery system. If your child is interested in percussion, **be sure to list a second choice.**
3. The saxophone, though popular, can be more expensive and heavier than the other instruments. This is worth considering if your child will have to carry the instrument a long distance to and from school on lesson days.
4. I am asking for a **first and second choice** of instrument for beginning students. In most cases, the first choice is fine, however it may not always be possible for various reasons. Please do not rent an instrument before your child has received a note from me or met with me during the week of September 20<sup>th</sup>.

Whichever instrument your child chooses, please do not allow him or her to play with it at all until he or she has been instructed to do so. Many instruments have fragile parts that can break easily if handled incorrectly. In fact, I would love for the case to remain unopened until the first day of class!



## How Much Time Is Involved?

Music, just like any other discipline, takes commitment and practice. The main reason for a student wanting to quit Band or Strings is that they are getting discouraged because they are not making the progress they would like to. The main reason they are not making progress is that they are not practicing. The more a student practices, the more progress he or she will make. The more progress he or she makes, the more he or she will want to practice. It's a cycle of success! Specific practice requirements will vary for each student, but all students will be expected to practice at home several times each week.

It should be stressed that joining the Band or Strings program is a full year-long commitment. Students are not allowed to quit mid-year without extenuating circumstances. Students need to



understand that hard work is involved. No one will be released from the program without a parent conference. Again, please discuss with your child the commitment involved in joining Band or Strings.

## **Should My Child Be Involved In Instrumental Music?**

You have the opportunity to introduce your child to a new and wonderful world. Your decision to enroll your child in the Instrumental Music program may be one of the most important contributions you'll ever make to his or her education.

Unlike some disciplines, music is fun to learn. We all enjoy listening to music, and it is even more fun to create it. There is a simple joy in experimenting with an instrument, playing real notes, and discovering how those notes fit together to become a melody.

There is also a unique and special satisfaction in performing as part of a Band or Orchestra that will be cherished for a lifetime!

- Middle school and high school students who participated in Instrumental Music scored significantly higher than their non-Band peers on standardized tests.
- In a University study, music majors score the highest reading scores among all majors, including English, Biology, Chemistry, and Math.
- Improved self-esteem has been measured in students given music instruction.

I hope to meet each of you soon. If you have any concerns about anything in this letter or about anything at all during the school year, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. You can always leave a message for me at the school or feel free to e-mail me. Thank you in advance for supporting your child's musical interests and music in our schools.

Please check out the LWES Instrumental Music Department website for more information about the program including a calendar, frequently asked questions, and up-to-date announcements.

Musically,

Steve Whiddon, Instrumental Music Teacher  
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410-880-5960

# Required Supplies

All students should have the following supplies for their lesson the week of October 1st. Students who receive a school instrument are still required to get everything except the instrument, case, and bow (for string instruments). **EVERYTHING** should be labeled with the child's name. Bring this sheet with you to the music store because instrument "packages" do not always contain everything that you will need.

**METHOD BOOKS!!!** – ALL BAND AND STRING STUDENTS NEED THE CORRECT METHOD BOOK. These can be purchased at any of the music stores that sell or rent instruments. Here is a list of the correct method book for your child...

All Strings – *Essential Elements 2000 for Strings, Book 1* (This is not the same as *Essential Elements for Strings, Book 1.*)

All Beginning & Advanced Band – *Measures of Success, Book 1* (I also highly recommend you purchase the *Parent/Guardian Guide* that accompanies this series.)

## VIOLIN

Violin with bow in case  
Rosin  
Shoulder rest  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

## VIOLA

Viola with bow in case  
Rosin  
Shoulder rest  
Folding music stand and Pencil

## CELLO

Cello with bow in case  
Rosin  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

## FLUTE (4th & 5th gr. Only)

Flute with cleaning rod in case  
Small cloth  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

**CLARINET** (4th & 5th gr. Only)

Clarinet in case  
Clarinet swab  
3 Clarinet reeds (#2)  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

**ALTO SAX** (4th & 5th gr. Only)

Saxophone in case  
Saxophone swab  
3 Alto Sax reeds (#2)  
Neck strap  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

**TRUMPET** (4th & 5th gr. Only)

Trumpet in case  
Valve oil  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

**TROMBONE** (4th & 5th gr. Only)

Trombone in case  
Slide cream  
Small spray bottle for water  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

**BARITONE** (4th & 5th gr. Only)

Baritone in case  
Valve oil  
Method book  
Folding music stand  
Pencil

**PERCUSSION**

(4th & 5th gr. Only)

Bell kit  
Bell mallets (1 pair)  
Practice Pad with stand (this may  
come with the bell kit)  
Drum sticks (1 pair)  
Method book  
Folding music stand (Many bell  
kits come with a music  
stand attached. That one is  
fine.)

# Instrumental Music Permission Form

I give my child \_\_\_\_\_ permission to participate in the Laurel Woods Elementary School Instrumental Music program. I have read the introductory letter and understand that participating in the Instrumental Music program is a year-long commitment and students will not be released without extenuating circumstances. I understand that occasional after-school commitments to participate in our Winter and Spring Concerts are a part of the program and are expected of all Instrumental Music students.

I also understand that my child will need to have an instrument and all necessary supplies for the week of October 5th and will need it for the remainder of the school year.

I understand that the Instrumental Music program is a pull-out program and will required my son/daughter to be pulled out of another class in order to attend his/her Instrumental Music lessons and rehearsals.

By enrolling my child in the Instrumental Music program, I understand that there will be audio recordings, video recordings, and pictures containing my child for in and out-of school use.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent Name (print)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Daytime Phone*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent E-Mail Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Classroom Teacher*

## Instrument Choice:

My child's first and second choice of instrument are...

First Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

***This form is due to Mr. Whiddon NO LATER THAN Wednesday, September 15th!***