

Riverwatch Middle School Band Handbook 2022-2023

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Welcome to the Riverwatch Middle School Band Program!

What is a band? What makes band different from other courses in the school curriculum? What are the benefits of the band to the student and the student body? Why music?

First, a band is a group of individual instrumentalists working together toward a common goal. That goal is to perform music in such a way that is aesthetically pleasing to both performer and listener, is true to the intentions and inspirations of the composer and at the same time advances the skill of the individual player. Band differs from other courses in the curriculum in that it requires energy and focus dedicated towards group goals. There is no “bench” in band – each individual must contribute 100% to ensure a successful performance. A baseball player with a batting average of .350 would be considered outstanding for successfully hitting the ball 35% times at bat. A concert, however, with only 95% correct notes and rhythms would sound pretty bad to the average listener, to say nothing of the larger issues of tone, balance, dynamics, articulation, and musicality.

In spite of the great demands placed on the student, the benefits they gain from band justify the cost. Band is the only course that reaches all aspects of the student’s mind including the intellectual, the physical, the psychological, the spiritual, the emotional, and the social. Band has the potential to expose the student to the arts: the lasting aspects of our culture. In band, students learn an appreciation of music through performance, repertoire, interpretation, and trained listening. Band teaches discipline of mind and behavior. Playing an instrument combines coordination of mind and body to a greater degree than any other single activity. Through the band experience, the student learns techniques of artistic interpretation, judgment, insight, and problem-solving. As well as teaching the benefits of hard work, band can also be a form of recreation and a much-needed creative outlet.

Participating in band gives students a sense of belonging and an opportunity to be a part of something that is bigger and better than any of the individual parts. It puts students in a position of responsibility and gives them opportunities to achieve. Through band a student can raise his or her self-concept and develop confidence by knowing that they are an important part of the sum total.

Because of the variety of people who join the band, it becomes the embodiment of all of society. All variations of human nature and behavior can be found in the members of a band program. Through interaction with these different individuals, a student enriches their own personality and learns to work and live successfully in cooperation with others. The band offers opportunities to develop leadership skills and is a means to help students become responsible adults. It offers students a sense of purpose, values, and discipline.

Throughout middle school, high school, and college, the band serves to represent the school and community. In many ways, the band acts as a showcase for the school’s achievements and successes.

As the directors of the Riverwatch Band Program, we are committed to providing you with as many musical opportunities as possible. We feel that this is your band and these experiences are at your disposal, but you must make the decision to claim them. You must follow up that decision to be a band member with dedication, practice, and hard work. Your involvement in the band program provides you with an opportunity to instill

in all people an awareness of music's important role in the enrichment of the human spirit. Being involved in a band program is an activity in which you can participate for your entire life. The benefits available to you through music and its countless variations are limitless. It offers opportunities and rewards that no other discipline can provide.

Sincerely,

Hunter McGee
Director of Bands

Katie Larkin
Associate Director of Bands

Rules of Conduct

In 7th & 8th grade, students will have opportunities for out-of-school performances and trips, including overnight trips. Please keep these performance opportunities in mind while reading these rules.

There are over 500 students enrolled in the Riverwatch Band Program for the 2022-2023 school year. We are the largest band program in United States. These rules exist to ensure that all students in the Riverwatch Band Program have the best possible experience.

1. All school policies of conduct and behavior apply to all band functions. The penalties resulting from the abuse of the regulations will be consistent with school board policies.
2. Tobacco, alcohol, and nonprescription drugs are clearly prohibited under school and state law. Penalties include immediate suspension and possible expulsion from school.
3. Food and drink (including water) are not allowed in the band room at any time. Gum is not allowed at band functions or in the band room. The band room will be kept clean and free from trash at all times. This is our home away from home and we must work to keep it clean.
4. The use of obscene language or gestures will be considered unbecoming of a Riverwatch Band member. Public displays of affection will not be allowed in the band room or at any band functions. We do not wish to project this image and the problems will be addressed immediately.
5. Disrespect and/or bullying to fellow students, members of the faculty, chaperones, guest clinicians, or substitutes will not be tolerated.
6. Only band members are allowed in the band room. Please do not bring other students into the band room to visit. The strict rules of the band room are to protect school and individual property.
7. Mr. McGee and Ms. Larkin will be in the band room every morning beginning at 8:00 a.m. (with the exception of faculty meetings, etc.) Students wishing to be in the band room between 8:00 a.m. and the start of school are expected to use this time for practice, extra help, and pass offs.

Students who come to the band room at 8:00 a.m. for extra help and pass offs should not leave the band room during this time without permission.

8. Students are not allowed to handle an instrument other than their own or the instrument assigned to them. Many instruments are delicate and can be damaged easily. If it is not yours, don't touch it! Do not borrow any instrument that does not belong or is assigned to you.

9. The band facilities are to be cleaned and straightened after every class and performance. It is the responsibility of each band member for seeing that the band room is kept neat and orderly.
10. Cell phones are to be kept in lockers during band class. Any use of cell phones in class will result in the phone being confiscated. Other technology is only to be used at the appropriate time. It is never appropriate to use technology during rehearsal or class without instructions from the teacher. During band trips or any band functions, cell phone and/or social media use must be in accordance with FCS policy.
11. The director's door is always open, and students are welcome to come into the office to discuss music, instruments, class, etc. The director's office, however, is not a student lounge and there will be no students in the office unless the director is present.
12. Only students who store their instruments in the storage room may enter the storage room.
13. No students may enter the ensemble room without permission from the directors.
14. The sink is off-limits. Only Mr. McGee and Ms. Larkin are allowed to use the sink.
15. Because of the large number of visitors and guests, the general appearance of the band room must be kept neat at all times. Only your instrument, folder, and band accessories will be stored in your band locker. Bookbags, clothing, food, students, etc. are not allowed in the band lockers. Only materials needed for connections classes should be brought into the band room each day during band class.
16. All students must have the necessary materials to perform correctly. Each member is required to keep up with all assigned music and materials. It is your responsibility to make sure that the music is not lost or damaged. Each band member must have a pencil during class each day.
17. For the safety of all students, all band members are required to ride the buses to and from any off-campus performance. In the event that a band member will not be riding back on the bus, the director must receive a signed note or email from a parent or guardian at least 24 hours prior to the event.
18. While in the classroom, all talking and playing will cease when the director steps on the podium. Students are expected to have their instrument assembled, with chair, stand, and music in place. Any student not ready will be considered tardy.
19. We have a limited number of band lockers available. There are unfortunately not enough lockers for students to have individual lockers – everyone must share.
20. Many students and families choose to rent their instruments. We have several different rental companies in the surrounding vicinity. Sometimes, the road representatives from these stores will come to Riverwatch to do repairs, pick up

instruments, etc. Please communicate all these needs directly with the music store and the representative. Due to the number of students in the band program, Ms. Larkin and Mr. McGee are not able to facilitate conversations that need to happen between parents and music stores.

The Riverwatch Band Program is a team. Mr. McGee reserves the right to adjust class schedules for the best interests of the team. Mr. McGee reserves the right to remove any student from the band program if a student's participation is negatively affecting the performance of the band or the ability for students to learn.

Grading Policy

Student grades will be determined by the following formula:

- 40% Pass-offs (see below)
- 40% Concert Performances and rehearsals
- 20% Class preparation/participation (determined by practice habits, equipment for class, ensemble discipline, completion of written work, timeliness, etc.)

Pass-offs

Pass-offs are individual playing tests performed by the student for the director. Through the use of pass-offs, individual student progress can be measured, and specific help can be given.

Students must successfully complete a minimum number of pass offs each nine weeks in order to receive 100% for the pass-off portion of their grade. The number for each grade level will be announced at the start of each nine weeks. Each pass-off not successfully completed will lower your pass-off grade by 5 points.

The lists of assigned pass-offs for the entire year are posted in the band room and on the RMS band website. There will be class time reserved for pass off completion, and students may also complete pass-offs before school. The directors will be available for extra help or to listen to pass-offs beginning at 8:00 a.m. every day (unless in a faculty meeting or a rehearsal).

Most students will complete more than the minimum number of pass-offs each nine weeks. Chair placement will be determined by number of pass-offs completed and playing history.

Successful completion of a pass-off is considered a performance that is 98% correct or higher. Missed notes, inaccurate rhythms or articulations, or unacceptable tone quality will not result in a successful pass-off. A student may attempt a pass-off as many times as he or she needs to get it right. The pass-offs will be organized in sequential order – this order must be followed when completing multiple pass-offs. Daily practice is essential to completing the required pass offs.

Students that are involved in special, invitational performances representing Riverwatch and Forsyth County will be responsible for additional pass offs on performance music. These pass offs will be graded using a 100 point rubric. Students may attempt these pass offs as many times as they like prior to the due date to receive the highest possible grade.

Concerts

Public performances are an important part of the band experience. Concert dates are published at the beginning of the school year on the band website and given to students on the first day of school.

It is artificial to give a student a make-up assignment for a missed concert. There is no fair way to recreate the experience of performing with peers in front of an audience. Of course, emergencies do happen. In the case of illness or death in the family, the student will play the concert music for the director for a make-up grade.

Most conflicts can be worked out ahead of time. Communication is key, but concert days are also very busy. Please let the director know well ahead of time if there is a perceived conflict.

Students involved in extra rehearsals for special, invited performances and/or Large Group Performance Evaluation will also receive grades for rehearsal attendance. Make-up responsibilities will be the same as missed concerts.

Preparation/Participation

Grades will be taken daily for class preparation/participation. All music and instruments are required on a daily basis for class preparation/participation. Points will be deducted from the preparation/participation grade for students not prepared with their instrument, music, pencil, reeds, or any other equipment needed for class. Ensemble discipline is the prime factor in the determination of the class preparation/participation grade. Performances outside of school hours are considered an extension of the classroom and will be graded accordingly.

Students in each class will be graded on an individual basis, equally and fairly.

About the Riverwatch Middle School Band Program:

The Riverwatch Middle School Band Program is comprised of 676 students. Each year, all students perform in several concerts at Riverwatch. 7th & 8th graders also participate in the Georgia Large Group Performance Evaluations. Selected students are members of GMEA All-State Band and the District IX Honor Band

The Riverwatch Middle School Band Program is a 2017 recipient of The Sudler Cup, presented by The John Philip Sousa Foundation. This is the highest honor any band program can achieve. The band program was also selected by the Georgia Music Educators Association to receive the GMEA Exemplary Program Award in 2022, 2019, 2015, and 2010. The Exemplary Program Award is the most prestigious award available to middle school bands by GMEA and was established to recognize middle school bands that achieve outstanding results in all areas of performance, including Large Group Performance Evaluation, Solo and Ensemble, All-State Band, and District Honor Band. The award is presented to the most outstanding bands in Georgia whose students excel in all aspects of band performance, both individually and as part of a group.

The Riverwatch Symphonic Band has presented invited performances at several prestigious conferences and conventions. Recent performances include

- 2022 Georgia Music Educators Association In-Service Conference
- 2019 Reinhardt Middle School Honor Band Clinic
- 2017 The Midwest Clinic
- 2017 Music for All Southeastern Regional Concert Festival
- 2016 National Band Association/College Band Directors National Association Southern Division Convention
- 2015 University of Georgia Midfest
- 2014 University of Alabama Honor Band Festival
- 2014 Music for All National Concert Band Festival
- 2013 Georgia Music Educators Association In-Service Conference
- 2012 Southeastern United States Band Clinic at Troy University
- 2012 National Band Association/College Band Directors National Association Southern Division Convention
- 2010 University of Georgia Middle School Festival

The Riverwatch Symphonic Band is a four-time state level winner for the Foundation for Music Education Mark of Excellence Project. In 2015, the band was featured on “Strike Up the Band” on WABE 90.1 National Public Radio. The Riverwatch Symphonic Band will present a featured performance at The Midwest Clinic: International Band & Orchestra Conference on December 21, 2017.

In active encouragement of new music composed for middle school band, the Riverwatch Band Program commissioned composer Richard A. Crosby to write a Grade II piece for world premiere at the University of Georgia Middle School Festival. This commission is titled *Tribute* and is available from Northeastern Music. The Riverwatch Band Program was also a member of a nationwide consortium that commissioned composer

Donald Grantham to write a work for middle school band. This commission is titled *Baron Piquant on Pointe* and was performed at the Southern Division NBA/CBDNA convention by the Riverwatch Symphonic Band.

Wall of Fame:

Any student who makes All-State Band will have their picture permanently displayed on the Wall of Fame in the band room.