

Village Elementary School
Instrumental Music

September 2021

Dear Parents,

Today all fourth grade students were introduced to the musical instruments that they will have an opportunity to play. Participation in the instrumental music program is voluntary. We are excited that most of our 4th graders choose to participate. The instruments available include: baritone horn (euphonium), bass, cello, clarinet, flute, French Horn, oboe, percussion, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, viola, and violin.

General information

- **Small group lessons-** Lessons are scheduled during students' academic classes once per week and last for 30 minutes. Students are responsible for making up missed class work.
- **Ensemble rehearsals-** 1-2 times per week before school (arrival time between 8:00 and 8:15 AM)—Parents are responsible for transportation to these rehearsals. Specific days will be determined both by instrument selection and by homeroom.
- **Students must participate in BOTH the ensemble rehearsals and the small group lessons** to participate in the instrumental music program.
- **Students who participate in instrumental music may also participate in chorus.** Students may not play more than one instrument in school due to the pull-out lesson schedule. Chorus information will be distributed by Dr. Bell over the next few weeks.
- **Practice expectations-** Students are expected to practice 20-30 minutes at home each day.

Instruments

It is the parent's responsibility to provide a quality instrument in good working order for their child. For your convenience, the National Educational Music Center (NEMC) works with Village Elementary School to provide and service rental instruments. More specific information about instrument rental will be sent home once we know which instrument your child has chosen to play. **Please do not rent an instrument until we have worked with your child to help them select an instrument.**

Selecting an instrument

The best instrument for your child is one that your child wants to play and also one that is a good "fit" for your child. During the next few weeks, all interested students will have an opportunity to meet with us to discuss and even try some of the instruments that we offer so that we can help your child to select an instrument. This will be done following our district's covid safety protocols. To help you make a decision about which instruments your child might want to try, I have included information about each instrument in this letter.

Please fill in the attached registration form, detach, and have your child return it to their classroom teacher **no later than Monday, September 20th.**

Sincerely,
Cheryl Houston, wind and percussion teacher (chouston@mtsd.us)
Eugenia Goldman, string teacher (egoldman@mtsd.us)

About the Instruments

No matter which instrument your child chooses, he or she will have to practice both playing skills and music reading skills daily. There aren't any "easy" instruments, however, with practice, 4th grade children are capable of learning these instruments.

Orchestra (String) instruments:

String instruments are violin, viola, 'cello, and bass. They all belong to the same family of instruments. To play a string instrument, a player has to make one or more strings vibrate by plucking the strings or sliding the bow across the strings. The strings stretch lengthwise along the fingerboard and are tied to the tuning keys (pegs). Loosening or tightening the strings makes them sound higher or lower. Different notes are played on string instruments by pressing the strings down in different places on the fingerboard. Although orchestra string instruments look similar to each other, they are different in size and have different ranges of sound. Small instruments use thin strings and produce high pitched sound, large instruments, like 'cello and bass, use thick strings and produce low sound.

Band (Wind and Percussion) Instruments:

Woodwinds: Woodwind instruments have many keys and require good finger coordination. The woodwind instruments that we offer in 4th grade are flute, clarinet, saxophone, and oboe.

Flute: Sound is produced by blowing across a hole. Students who are able to demonstrate good finger coordination and produce a sound on the try-out days have a strong chance for success at the flute.

Clarinet and Saxophone: Sound is produced by blowing through the mouthpiece and reed. The saxophone is much larger than the clarinet and is made out of brass.

Oboe: The oboe is an instrument for a child who wants a challenge. It may require more home practice time than other instruments in order to be successful. Due to our instrumentation needs we can only select a few students to play oboe each year. If we do not recommend oboe for 4th grade, I encourage your child to play a different instrument. Some students are more successful at oboe after a year or two playing a different instrument. Please be aware that the cost of quality oboe reeds ranges from \$12- \$20 per reed. Oboe is not included on the tryout registration form, but if you are interested in having your child try the oboe, you may write it in on the form.

Brass: Brass instruments have only 3 valves (buttons) or a slide. Different sounds are produced both by changing the valves or slide positions and by changing the lips. The brass instruments that we offer in 4th grade are trumpet, trombone, baritone, and French Horn.

Trumpet: The trumpet is the highest pitched brass instrument. Lip muscle development (and therefore daily practice) is essential for producing good sounds on trumpet.

Trombone: The trombone is the only instrument that uses a slide to change notes rather than valves. Because of this, good coordination and a willingness to work on developing extra strong music reading skills are necessary for success. The trombone has a larger mouthpiece than the trumpet making it easier for some children to produce a sound.

Baritone/Euphonium: The baritone (sometimes called the Euphonium), like the trombone has a large mouthpiece, but like the trumpet, has valves. The baritone is a large instrument but it is not a difficult instrument to play. Even the tiniest of students have had great success with the baritone. **VES owns several baritones so most students who play baritone will be able to rent an instrument to keep at home and will be able to play on a school owned instrument during school, eliminating the need to carry this instrument to and from school. Rest assured that no student will be sharing an instrument with another student.**

French Horn: This is a more challenging instrument than any of the other brass instruments. To be successful, French Horn students need to have a strong sense of pitch and must be highly independent learners. If horn is not recommended based upon the assessment, I encourage your child to try a different instrument. Some students are more successful at horn after a year or two of experience on another instrument.

Percussion- 4th grade students will learn how to play bells (like a xylophone) and they will learn snare drum technique (played on a drum pad). Percussion students do not learn drum set in school in 4th grade. Instead they will focus on music reading and counting skills. Percussion can be quite difficult because students need to learn two instruments. Although attendance at rehearsals is important for all students, it is even more vital that percussionists have excellent attendance. Students who do well at percussion are those who have a good sense of rhythm and coordination and who are independent and highly motivated learners. Piano experience is helpful but not necessary.

Instrument Tryout Registration

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN THIS PAGE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND NO LATER THAN MONDAY, SEPT. 20TH.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Homeroom Teacher: _____

Circle 3 instruments that you want to try:

Trumpet	Flute	Violin
Trombone	Clarinet	Viola
Baritone/Euphonium	Saxophone	'Cello
French Horn	Percussion	Bass

Please note that due to time constraints, every child will not be able to try every instrument listed. We will work with your child to identify on which instrument they demonstrate a strong potential for success. We will do so through a number of different activities that help us identify students' strengths and weaknesses on different instruments. Based on these activities, and of course taking your child's preference into consideration, we will identify which instrument is a good match. If none of the 3 chosen instruments seem to be a good match, we will continue trying more instruments until we find the best match for your child.

Parent Name (please print): _____

Parent email (please print clearly): _____

Parent signature: _____

It is not necessary to have prior musical experience to participate in the instrumental program in 4th grade!!! However, we'd like to know if your child has any instrumental experience outside of school.

Have you taken piano lessons, and if so, how many years? _____

Lessons on another instrument? Which instrument and how long? _____