



Higgins Band
2025 - 2026 Handbook
Online at www.higginsband.org



Higgins Middle School Band

Mike Giannopolo, Director
85 Perkins Street
Peabody, MA, 01960
giannopolom@peabody.k12.ma.us
www.higginsband.org

“If you push through that feeling of being scared, that feeling of taking risk, really amazing things can happen.” – Marissa Mayer

Dear Families and Friends:

I'm so excited to be working with our returning young musicians and to be welcoming our sixth grade beginners. We are already off to a great start and as we move into the second quarter and begin preparing for performances, the fun will ramp up!

Thank you, families, for supporting your child's involvement in our Band program. Playing an instrument helps build confidence and resilience. These benefits are fully realized when we get out of our comfort zones a little and TAKE RISKS! Volunteering to play a solo for the class or at a performance; auditioning for an ensemble; or just learning to do something that is new and unfamiliar involves some risk, but these risks always yield reward...

Learning to play an instrument is an experience unlike any other. Studying music can have a powerful and positive impact on students' academic, social, and emotional development. Reading music and practicing regularly strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving skills—abilities that carry over into all subjects, from math to language arts. Making music together builds teamwork, patience, and empathy. Students learn to listen carefully, collaborate, and work toward a shared goal. Playing an instrument gives them a sense of accomplishment, pride, and joy—something that can last a lifetime.

The first graded assignment of the year for all Band members will be to return a completed copy of the handbook contract, which you will find on the reverse side. Please read through the handbook, complete the contract, and see that your child returns it to me no later than **Friday, November 21**.

I look forward to another great year of music. See you at the concerts!

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. J. Giannopolo".

Mr. Giannopolo

Contents

Additional Opportunities...14

Band Store...10

Calendar...3

Communications...5

Contract...17

Expectations...6

Grading...7

Home Practice...8

Instrument Lockers...11

Materials...9

Parents' Group...16

Performance Dress Code...12

Private Instruction...13

2025 – 2026 HIGGINS BAND CALENDAR

WWW.HIGGINSBAND.ORG/CALENDAR

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26: FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 : JAZZ ENSEMBLE OPEN REHEARSAL, 2:30 - 3:20

MONDAY AND TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AND 16 : JAZZ AUDITIONS, 2:30 – 5:00

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26: BOSTON SAX QUARTET PERFORMANCE, 9:00 **6B,7B,8B**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 : FIRST JAZZ ENSEMBLE REHEARSAL **JE**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17: MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND INVITED TO PLAY WITH PVMHS BAND AT HOME FOOTBALL GAME **8GB** (OPTIONAL)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10: FIRST DAY OF BAND REHEARSALS **7B/8B**

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21: HANDBOOK CONTRACTS, SECTION LEADER APPLICATIONS DUE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2: PVMHS/HIGGINS BANDS COLLABORATIVE REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE , PVMHS AUDITORIUM, 7:00 PM **7B/8B**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23: “DECK THE HALLS...WITH JAZZ,” 7:30 AM **JE**

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9: FIRST GREAT EAST PAYMENT DUE **7B/8B**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20: 6TH GRADE WINTER CONCERT, 7:00 PM **6B,JE**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21: 7TH GRADE WINTER CONCERT, 7:00 PM **7B, JE**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22: 8TH GRADE WINTER CONCERT, 7:00 PM **8B, JE**

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23: WINTER CONCERTS SNOW DATE

MONDAY, JANUARY 26: FIRST DAY OF FULL BAND REHEARSALS **6GB**

FRIDAY, MARCH 20: FINAL GREAT EAST PAYMENT DUE **7B/8B**

-CALENDAR, CONTINUED-

THURSDAY, MARCH 27: #BANDPRIDE DAY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1: "AN EVENING OF JAZZ CONCERT," 7:00 PM JE

THURSDAY, APRIL 9: 6TH GRADE BAND PIZZA AND GAMES NIGHT, 6:30 PM 6B

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6: GREAT EAST FESTIVAL DRESS REHEARSAL, 6:30 PM 7B/8B

**FRIDAY, MAY 8: GREAT EAST FESTIVAL, PALMER HIGH SCHOOL/ SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND
7B/8B**

THURSDAY, JUNE 4: SELECT ENSEMBLES SPRING CONCERT, 7:30 PM JE

TUESDAY, JUNE 9: 6TH GRADE SPRING CONCERT 7:30PM 6B

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10: 7TH GRADE SPRING CONCERT, 7:30 PM 7B

THURSDAY, JUNE 11: 8TH GRADE SPRING CONCERT 7:30 PM 8B

7B: 7th Grade Band

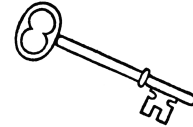
8B: 8th Grade Band

JE: Jazz Ensemble

RS: Recommended Students

All events take place in the auditorium at Higgins Middle School unless otherwise indicated.

Communication Is Key!



VISIT OUR WEBSITE, WWW.HIGGINSBAND.ORG

SOCIAL MEDIA

- FOLLOW @HIGGINSBANDSTAGRAM ON INSTAGRAM 

SIGN UP FOR TEXT MESSAGE REMINDERS

HIGGINS BAND USES REMIND, A SAFE, CONVENIENT WAY FOR TEACHERS TO TEXT MESSAGE STUDENTS AND KEEP IN TOUCH WITH PARENTS. STUDENTS AND PARENTS CAN SIGN UP ANONYMOUSLY BY TEXTING ONE OF THE CODES BELOW TO **81010**:

- **6th Grade Band: @ag7dk3k**
- **7th Grade Band: @hig7gb**
- **8th Grade Band: @hig8gb**

NO PHONE NUMBERS ARE EXCHANGED AND STUDENTS CANNOT REPLY TO TEXT MESSAGE REMINDERS FROM THE TEACHER. A GREAT WAY TO BE REMINDED ABOUT TESTS, SCHEDULE CHANGES, PERFORMANCES AND OTHER EVENTS!

Expectations

BE RESPECTFUL

- Do not talk or play while the conductor is talking.
- Raise your hand when you have a question or comment.
- Gum, candy, and food are strictly prohibited. Students may have water
- Per our school rules, phones should be OFF and AWAY.
- ONLY percussionists may handle percussion equipment. Each member of the band is responsible for their OWN instrument.
- Remember the routine: find your seat, take your instrument out, check the agenda, and be ready to play when the conductor stands on the podium.

BE COMMITTED

Participation in the Higgins Middle School Band program is for the entire academic year. Because band is a scheduled, graded class, students may not withdraw from the program during the school year.

BE PREPARED

- Come to every rehearsal and class with your instrument, band folder, and pencil.
- If you happen to forget your instrument, pay attention and stay engaged. Answer questions and participate. In short, find a way to contribute to rehearsal.
- Come to every rehearsal knowing your music. We come to rehearsal not to learn our parts, but to learn other sections' parts.

BE PROUD

- Have a positive attitude and try your hardest.
- Remember that the opportunity to play a musical instrument is a privilege that not everyone has, so BE PROUD to be a band member! You are doing something very special.

Behavior Improvement

1. **Mr. Giannopolo will speak privately with those students whose behavior is not appropriate.**
2. **If inappropriate behavior continues, Mr. Giannopolo will speak with students' caretaker(s) about a plan to help students make better choices with respect to their behavior.**
3. **If inappropriate behavior continues, students will stay for a teacher detention. Students will be given at least 24 hours before detention is to be served. Failure to report for detention will result in disciplinary referral to the Associate Principal.**

Grading Procedures

Students will receive a grade each quarter based on the system that Higgins Middle School has adopted for exploratory subjects:

Honors (H)
Satisfactory (S)
Needs improvement (N)
Unsatisfactory (U)

A final grade of "N" or "U" prohibits a student from earning Principal's List.

Grades are determined by a number of factors, including:
Rehearsal Contribution (class preparation, participation, and binder check)
Sectional Attendance
Performance Participation
Recording Assignments
Playing Tests

- Band members are assessed frequently with Playing Checks.
 - Students will be notified well in advance when playing checks are to take place.
 - If a student is unprepared on the day of the playing test, s/he may make it up on his/her own time, but not for full credit.
- Ten points will be deducted from the rehearsal contribution grade for each time a student is unprepared for rehearsal (missing an instrument). *Students must maintain a well-organized band binder. Binder checks will be unannounced and take place once per semester.*
- Performance is the primary function of the band and is therefore *required*.
 - Written excuses for absence from a performance may be considered when submitted *two weeks* prior to the concert if the excuse has validity.
 - Unexcused absences for performances will result in no points being issued for that performance.
 - Students must wear the appropriate concert dress for performances. (see page 11).
 - If a performance is missed due to an excused absence (sick on the day of performance or approval by director), a makeup assignment may be offered.

Average Of:	Grade For Term
96 - 100%	Honors
75 - 95%	Satisfactory
60 - 74%	Needs Improvement
59% or Below	Unsatisfactory

Home Practice

The success of our band program, individually and collectively, depends upon students' dedication to individual practice time. Parents/families are asked to review the guidelines below and help students to maintain good home practice habits.

MAKE IT A ROUTINE

THINK OF PRACTICING AS A PART OF YOUR DAILY ROUTINE IN THE SAME WAY THAT HOMEWORK, SPORTS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES MIGHT BE. SET ASIDE A SPECIFIC BLOCK OF TIME EACH DAY FOR PRACTICING.

FIND A GOOD PLACE

PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO HELP STUDENTS TO FIND A QUIET PLACE, FREE OF DISTRACTIONS, FOR HOME PRACTICE. CREATING A DESIGNATED PRACTICE SPACE WHERE A MUSIC STAND AND CHAIR CAN BE KEPT OUT AND READY ENCOURAGES THE STUDENT TO PRACTICE MORE FREQUENTLY.

PRACTICING THE RIGHT WAY

- DON'T JUST PLAY THINGS YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW TO PLAY – THIS IS NOT PRACTICING!
- PRACTICE A VARIETY OF MATERIALS: SCALES AND TECHNICAL EXERCISES AS WELL AS DIFFICULT PASSAGES FROM BAND MUSIC THAT NEED WORK.
- PRACTICE DIFFICULT PASSAGES SLOWLY, GRADUALLY INCREASING THE TEMPO ONLY WHEN YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE. A METRONOME IS AN EXCELLENT TOOL TO ASSIST WITH THIS.

DON'T OVERDO IT

IT IS FAR BETTER TO PRACTICE FOR **20 – 30 MINUTES FIVE DAYS PER WEEK** THAN IT IS TO PRACTICE ONCE PER WEEK FOR THREE HOURS!

REWARD YOURSELF

PRACTICING IS HARD WORK. REWARD YOURSELF AT THE END OF YOUR PRACTICE SESSION BY PLAYING SOMETHING FUN. IT CAN BE ANYTHING AT ALL THAT YOU SIMPLY ENJOY PLAYING.

PERFORM FOR PEOPLE

DON'T LET SCHOOL CONCERTS BE THE ONLY TIME PEOPLE HEAR YOU PLAY. FAMILIES SHOULD ASK STUDENTS TO PLAY FOR THEM FREQUENTLY. EVEN IF IT'S JUST ONE QUICK SONG ONCE PER WEEK, A LITTLE BIT OF ENCOURAGEMENT GOES A LONG WAY.

Required Materials

Find web links to many of these materials at www.higginsband.org/required-materials

Higgins Band members, students are expected to be prepared with a few supplies. In addition to their instruments, students should come to each rehearsal and class with:

- 1) An instrument identification tag
- 2) A one- inch three-ring binder with view front and at least 25 sheet protectors
- 3) A hole-punched pencil case in which to keep a dedicated Band PENCIL and HIGHLIGHTER
- 4) A method book (for the appropriate instrument):
 - 6th Grade Band: Essential Elements for Band, Book 1
 - 7th Grade Band: Essential Elements for Band, Book 1
 - 8th Grade Band: Essential Elements Band, Books 1 & 2
- 5) Miscellaneous supplies from the list below depending on instrument

All students should have their own music stands for home practice.

Flute

A cleaning rod and cloth (an old, clean t-shirt about four inches by four inches works best.)

Clarinet/Saxophone

- A tube of cork grease (the most inexpensive brand will work well.)
- A “step-up” mouthpiece. Please do not play on the mouthpiece that comes with the instrument.
Suggested step-up mouthpieces:
 - *J & D Hite Premiere for Clarinet OR Vandoren M13 Lyre for Clarinet.*
 - *Yamaha 4C for Saxophone OR Selmer C* for Saxophone.*
- Three clean, unchipped reeds, strength 2 1/2 or 3.
 - *Hemke and Vandoren brands are recommended for Saxophone.*
 - *Mitchell Lurie and Vandoren brand reeds are recommended for Clarinet.*
 - *Reeds are significantly less expensive if purchased by the box, rather than individually.*
- A reed case for storage when reeds are not in use (*Rico Reed Gard* is a good, inexpensive case.)
- A clarinet or saxophone swab is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL to keep the instrument in good working order.
A silk swab is recommended.

Trumpet

- A bottle of valve oil (*Al Cass* and *Ultra Pure* brands are recommended.)
- A container of tuning slide grease (*Schilke* brand slide grease is recommended.)
- A cleaning snake, valve brush, and mouthpiece brush (may be purchased as part of a Trumpet Cleaning Kit)

Trombone

- *Superslick Slick-It Trombone Kit* (includes slide cream, liquid slide treatment, and spray bottle)
- A container of tuning slide grease (*Schilke* brand slide grease is recommended.)
- A cleaning snake and mouthpiece brush (may be purchased as part of a Trombone Cleaning Kit)

Percussion

- Bell/Practice Pad kit for home practice
- The *Vic Firth EP2 Intermediate Education Pack*, which includes drum sticks, bell/xylophone mallets, timpani mallets, and marimba mallets.

Higgins Band Store

A convenient, inexpensive way to purchase supplies at school.

Reeds

Clarinet...\$3.00
Bass Clarinet...\$3.50
Alto Sax...\$2.50
Tenor Sax...\$3.50
Bari Sax...\$4.50

Brass Care

Valve Oil...\$7.00
Slide Grease...\$7.00
Superslick 3 Piece Kit for Trombone...\$8.00
Trumpet Snake...\$6.00
Trombone Snake...\$8.00
Brass Mouthpiece Brush...\$2.00

Reed Storage

ReedGuard for Alto Sax/Clarinet...\$11.00
ReedGuard for Bass Clarinet/Tenor, Bari Sax...\$7.00

Misc

Sax/Clarinet Mouthpiece Cushion...\$3.00
Sheet Protectors...5 for \$1.00

Woodwind Care

Silk Clarinet Swab...\$22.50
Silk Alto Sax Swab...\$22.50
Clarinet/Sax Mouthpiece Brush...\$2.00
Flute Cleaning Rod...\$5.00
Cork Grease...\$3.00
Flute Cleaning Rod...\$10.00

The Higgins Band Store is open every day from 7:45 until 8:15.

All sales are CASH ONLY. The store is made possible by the Higgins Performing Arts Parents Group as a NOT-FOR-PROFIT-way for students to obtain supplies AT COST.

Instrument Lockers




Wind players will be assigned an instrument locker in the Band Room. While these are generally kept unlocked, students who would like to provide their own combination locks for their lockers are welcome to do so.

Instruments that are stored in lockers must be labeled with students' names.

Students should bring instruments home to practice on a regular basis – at the very least, over weekends.

Student-owned instruments *may not* be stored in lockers over December, February, or April vacations. Students whose instruments are left in lockers over week-long vacations will be issued a “parking ticket.”

PARKING VIOLATION



This instrument was left in a locker, ALL BY ITSELF, over vacation. It should have been brought home to be loved and cared for (AND PRACTICED!) like the nice instrument it is.

Owner/Operator _____

1st OFFENSE
 2nd OFFENSE

The second offense will result in a mandatory after-school practice session.

Performance Dress Code

Students are expected to follow the Higgins Middle School Band dress code standards for all performances. Unless otherwise indicated, band members should follow the specifications below.

Performers should wear:

- **BLACK SLACKS**
- **WHITE SHIRTS/TOPS**
- **THE NICEST FOOTWEAR THAT THEY OWN**

Performers are encouraged to wear a black bow tie for that extra touch of professionalism and class.

Please make best efforts to avoid sneakers, jeans, and any clothing with lettering.

Private Instruction

All Higgins Band members are encouraged to work with a one-on-one, instrument specific instructor outside of school. While all students can be successful with the musical instruction provided through the Higgins Band program, some choose to seek extra challenges that may not be accessible in a large group lesson or ensemble setting. Other students may take advantage of private lessons as a source of extra help with their band music, much like students seeking tutoring in other subject areas. Whatever the reason, private lessons are an excellent supplement to public school music instruction and afford students more playing time, and an intensive one-on-one musical experience. Mr. Giannopolo is happy to recommend a well-qualified, reasonably priced private instructor.

Additional Opportunities

JAZZ ENSEMBLE

The award-winning Higgins Middle School Jazz Ensemble is open to band students, grades six through eight. Because the Jazz Ensemble's repertoire focuses on advanced jazz, swing, and rock literature, the band's membership is determined by auditions, which are held at the beginning of each school year. Membership is limited to specific numbers within each section.

Our jazz ensemble performs several times throughout the year, both at and outside of the school. The jazz band also competes against other middle school jazz ensembles at the Northeastern District Junior Jazz Festival, and performs at a joint concert with the high school's jazz band at the Black Box theater in the spring.

Students who pass the audition are expected to be a part of the group for the entire year, and should understand the commitment involved. The Jazz Ensemble rehearses every **Tuesday from 2:30 until 3:45, and one Tuesday per month from 2:30 until 3:20**. Because rehearsals take place outside of the regular school day, **students must arrange for their own transportation, and are encouraged to find carpool opportunities.**

AFTER-SCHOOL SESSIONS

Mr. Giannopolo is available for extra help most Wednesdays from 2:30 until 3:20. Students needing extra help should set up an appointment with Mr. Giannopolo. Students staying for extra help may take the late bus home.

SECTION LEADERS

Section leaders are students who represent their groups of instruments within the band. They act as officers to assist the director. Section leaders meet after school two - three times throughout the school year. One section leader will be assigned for each section of each grade's band. Interested students who have proven themselves to be responsible and dedicated music students will be selected by the director based on their completion of an application at the beginning of the school year.

SECONDARY INSTRUMENTS

As students progress further into their musical studies, some may be recommended for secondary instruments. These instruments include piccolo, bass clarinet, tenor and baritone saxophone, baritone horn, and tuba. In most cases, these instruments sound higher or lower, but involve little adjustment from students' primary instruments, as they utilize the same fingerings. They do however add valuable complements to the band's depth and color, and as such are essential additions to the middle school band.

SECONDARY INSTRUMENTS, CONTINUED

All secondary instruments are owned by the school. It is the responsibility of the student to keep the instrument in good condition, and to return it to its case and shelf after each use. Students who might be a good fit for secondary instruments will be recommended by the director. The playing of a secondary instrument is contingent upon a parent/guardian's signing of an agreement stating that all repairs and upkeep are the financial responsibility of the student and his/her family. Failure to take proper care of the instrument will prohibit the student's further use of school-owned instruments.

Because of limited supplies, not every student will be able to play a secondary instrument. Playing of a secondary instrument one year **does not** guarantee its use in other school years.

PRACTICE ROOMS

Our band room is equipped with small practice rooms. These rooms are available to all band members most days from 2:30 until 3:20 for individual or small group practice. This is especially beneficial to students who are unable to transport large instruments to and from school, or for students who may have difficulty finding a convenient place to practice at home. Practice rooms are available on a first come, first serve basis. Students may also use practice rooms and the Band Room during Academic Support times.

GREAT EAST FESTIVAL

In late May, our 7th and 8th Grade Bands will participate in this annual festival. Bands will perform at a venue in Western Massachusetts for professional adjudicators. They will offer commentary on our performances and provide a brief clinic, as well as a ranking. Immediately following, students are rewarded with a trip to Six Flags New England in Agawam, and then return to school later that evening.

Students are responsible for a portion of the registration fee, which includes admission to Six Flags. Specific information with regard to payment schedule, other details, etc. will be distributed to 7th and 8th Grade Band members in November.

NORTHEASTERN DISTRICT JUNIOR FESTIVAL

Each year, a select group of music students, grades seven through nine, from schools across the North Shore perform a concert as part of the Northeastern District Junior Band, Chorus, and Orchestra. To be a part of these groups is indeed an honor, but just to audition is a tremendous experience for the serious young musician.

Auditions for these groups involve performance of an advanced piece of music, and several scales. Needless to say, being accepted into these groups is no simple task, but we have several students who are more than capable, and we certainly hope to have representation from Higgins in this year's Junior District Band and Orchestras.

Auditions take place at the end of January, in Methuen. Students will be recommended for auditions by the director early in the school year so that ample time may be spent preparing for auditions. Students planning to audition will need to purchase the audition piece, which will be posted in September, and attend extra help sessions to prepare for auditions.



Higgins Performing Arts Parents Group

The Higgins Performing Arts Parents Group was established during the 2010 - 2011 school year. With the assistance of fellow parents, we raise funds, purchase equipment, coordinate volunteers, create programs, and keep everyone informed about the fabulous shows and concerts our children participate in at the Higgins.

In a time when financial resources are limited, we are lucky to have a thriving Arts Program thanks to the School Administration, the School Committee, and the City of Peabody. We are especially thankful for our outstanding Performing Arts teachers. Their skill and dedication make these programs possible, and their genuine enthusiasm makes them fun!

We know that Performing Arts programs are critical to the success of many children and, for some children, are as important as academics. The positive lessons learned by students in the Arts are carried with them throughout their lives. These programs may even help develop the interest and talent of a budding star in our midst.

Please consider volunteering on our committee or even just donating an hour of your time whenever you can. We're accessible via meetings, FB Messenger or email (listed below). We look forward to another wonderfully artistic year here at the Higgins!

Sincerely,
The Higgins Performing Arts Parents Group (HPAPG)

2025-2026 Officers

Co-Chairpersons – Maria Beaulieu and Diana Stuart
Treasurer – Judy Miranda
Co-Secretaries – Laura Poplawski and Kelsey Scherzinger

Where to find us:

- Like *Higgins PAPG* on Facebook – (public page)
- Like *Higgins PAPG (Drama Club, Chorus, Band)* on Facebook – (private group where we post pictures & videos)
- HigginsPAPG@gmail.com

Please read our band handbook at www.higginsband.org/handbook. While you're there, please check out and familiarize yourself with the entire site!

Please see that your child returns this form to Mr. Giannopolo no later than **Friday, November 21.**

After reading through the handbook, please check all:

- I understand that participation in the Higgins Middle School Band program is for the *entire academic year*. **(page 6)**
- I have read the Higgins Middle School Band calendar and understand that attendance is mandatory at performances. **(page 3)**
- I have read and understand the Band Room Expectations and Consequences. **(page 6)**
- I have read and understand which materials my child is responsible for acquiring and maintaining in order to be a successful and contributing band member. **(page 9)**
- I have read and understand how my child will be graded. **(page 7)**
- I have read and understand what my child will wear for performances. **(page 12)**

Student Name:

Grade:

Instrument:

Parent/Guardian Name(s):

Parent/Guardian Signature