



**Higgins Band**  
**2023 - 2024 Handbook**  
**Online at [www.higginsband.org](http://www.higginsband.org)**



## Higgins Middle School Band

Mike Giannopolo, Director

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www.higginsband.org

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Dear Families and Friends:

It's been a great ten weeks working with our returning Brass and Percussion players and getting to know our incoming 6th Grade musicians. With the second quarter beginning, I'm excited to start full rehearsals daily with our Bands at all three grade levels. I have an exciting year of music-making planned for our students and am looking forward to sharing the fruits of our labors throughout the year at the many performances that we have scheduled.

Thank you encouraging our students to make music here at Higgins. Playing an instrument is a rich and rewarding experience that has been proven to enhance the lives of young people in so many ways – socially, emotionally, academically, artistically – and it is truly a life changing experience.

***Support and encouragement from the folks at home is absolutely essential to the success of our young musicians. Like so many endeavors that we undertake, enjoyment will be directly proportional to the amount of effort that we put into it. This activity will be a lot of fun if students work hard and practice regularly. Few students will reap the rewards of playing an instrument if they are not committed with their full hearts and minds – it requires a strong work ethic, dedication, and commitment. Gratification is not instant, so it's important to remember that mistakes are just part of the process. As your child's Band director, I promise to always offer 100% of my support, commitment, and effort, and I ask the same of students and caretakers. I promise: it will be well worth it.***

The first 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 17.

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", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr. Giannopolo

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# 2023 – 2024 HIGGINS BAND CALENDAR

[WWW.HIGGINSBAND.ORG/CALENDAR](http://WWW.HIGGINSBAND.ORG/CALENDAR)

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5:** FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 :** JAZZ ENSEMBLE OPEN REHEARSAL, 2:30 - 3:20

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20:** JAZZ AUDITIONS, 2:30 – 5:00

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11:** FIRST JAZZ ENSEMBLE REHEARSAL **JE**

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17:** HANDBOOK CONTRACTS, SECTION LEADER APPLICATIONS DUE

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29:** PVMHS/HIGGINS BANDS COLLABORATIVE  
REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE , PVMHS AUDITORIUM, 7:00 PM **7GB/8B**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22:** “DECK THE HALLS...WITH JAZZ,” 7:30 AM **JE**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 16:** 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE WINTER CONCERT, 7:00 PM **6B/JE**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17:** 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE WINTER CONCERT, 7:00 PM **7B/JE**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 18:** 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE WINTER CONCERT, 7:00 PM **8B/JE**

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 19:** WINTER CONCERTS SNOW DATE

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2:** FIRST GREAT EAST PAYMENT DUE **7B/8B**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15:** 6TH GRADE BAND PIZZA AND GAMES NIGHT, 6:30 PM **6B**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27:** “AN EVENING OF JAZZ CONCERT,” 7:00 PM , LOCATION TBA **JE**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 28:** #BANDPRIDE DAY

**-CALENDAR, CONTINUED-**

**FRIDAY, MAY 10:** GREAT EAST FESTIVAL, PALMER HIGH SCHOOL/ SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND  
**7B/8B**

**THURSDAY, MAY 30:** SELECT ENSEMBLES SPRING CONCERT, 7:30 PM **JE**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 4:** 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE SPRING CONCERT 7:30PM **6B**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5:** 7<sup>TH</sup> AND 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE SPRING CONCERT, 7:30 PM **7B/8GB**

**7B:** 7th Grade Band

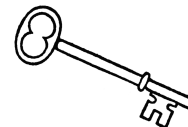
**8B:** 8th Grade Band

**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](http://WWW.HIGGINSBAND.ORG)

- A SEPARATE PAGE FOR EACH ENSEMBLE THAT INCLUDES SOUND CLIPS OF CURRENT MUSIC FOR STUDENTS TO LISTEN AND PRACTICE ALONG WITH; IMPORTANT DATES; PHOTOS; AND SECTION LEADER INFORMATION
- A COMPREHENSIVE YEAR-LONG CALENDAR THAT INCLUDES ALL PERTINENT DATES
- A "CONTACT THE DIRECTOR" FEATURE THAT ALLOWS STUDENTS AND PARENTS TO QUICKLY AND CONVENIENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH MR. G

## 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**:

- **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Band: @ag7dk3k**
- **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Band: @hig7gb**
- **8<sup>th</sup> 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.
- Electronic devices should be silenced and put away unless otherwise instructed.
- 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 whose 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 semester (every other quarter) based on the system that Higgins Middle School has adopted for exploratory subjects:*

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

*Students who maintain a grade of "N" or "U," both of which prohibit a student from earning Principal's List, will be notified mid-term.*

Rehearsal Contribution (class preparation, participation, and binder check).....40%  
 Performance Participation (Second and Fourth Quarters).....60%  
 Playing Test (Third Quarter).....40%

- All band members will take a performance assessment (playing test).
  - Students will perform an excerpt from the performance repertoire.
  - Students will be notified well in advance when playing tests 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](http://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 pencil
- 3) A ½ inch three-ring binder with view front and at least ten sheet protectors
- 4) A method book (for the appropriate instrument):
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Band: Essential Elements for Band, Book 1
  - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Band: Essential Elements for Band, Book 1
  - 8<sup>th</sup> 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...\$1.75  
Bass Clarinet...\$3.00  
Alto Sax...\$2.50  
Tenor Sax...\$3.50  
Bari Sax...\$4.00

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

## Misc

Sax/Clarinet Mouthpiece Cushion...\$2.00  
Instrument Identification Tag...\$2.00  
Sheet Protectors...5 for \$1.00

## Woodwind Care

Silk Clarinet Swab...\$14.00  
Silk Alto Sax Swab...\$14.00  
Clarinet/Sax Mouthpiece Brush...\$2.00  
Flute Cleaning Rod...\$5.00  
Cork Grease...\$6.00

**The Higgins Band Store is open every day from 8:00 until 8:20.**

**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.

Only instruments – not binders or other materials – may be store in instrument lockers.

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 **Wednesday 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 Thursdays 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 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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)

## **2023-2024 Officers**

Chairperson – Pamela LeDuc

Treasurer – Kaitlin Moses

Secretary – Katie Cerasale-Messina

## **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](http://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 17.**

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):**

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Parent/Guardian Signature