Swanson Band
Course and Ensemble Descriptions

Welcome to the Swanson Music Department! Swanson is dedicated to giving each student the opportunity to experience a well rounded middle school vocal or instrumental music program. The Swanson Bands contribute to this opportunity by giving each student a chance to learn, rehearse and perform in one or more of several ensembles geared to that student's individual musical experience and abilities.

As you can imagine, it is necessary for the student to meet the playing and behavioral expectations of the ensemble in order for the group as a whole to grow musically and achieve common goals. Swanson Band members are expected to practice at home. A thirty-minute session, five times per week should be enough for most students to experience success in their ensemble and contribute to efficient classes/rehearsals at school. Class/rehearsal time spent on behavioral issues is not musically productive. Swanson Band members are often reminded that, "Great bands don't have more talent than other bands. They just use their time more wisely!"

Cadet (Beginning) Band: ("Act II," Mondays from 2:30-4:00) This is one of the entry level bands at Swanson. It is comprised of students with little or no playing experience or students wishing to explore a second instrument. They perform on the Winter Instrumental Music Concert, the End of Year Band Concert, and may possibly participate in a music festival in the spring.

Because some of these students have NEVER played an instrument before, the beginning of the year (about a month) will consist of an overview of fundamentals and basics. Students with some prior musical training should use this time as a "refresher course." They will be given opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with the new musicians, while at the same time reinforcing their own musical foundations.

Cadet Band Grading Benchmarks

-Preliminary assessment (no grade)
-Instrument care and naming parts of the instrument
-Names of lines and spaces on staff
-Basic music notation (note/rest values, time signatures, etc…)
-First five notes of the Bb major scale
-Bb concert chromatic scale one octave (play fingering chart from Bb concert to next Bb concert)
-Bb major concert scale one octave
-Eb major concert scale one octave
-Ab major concert scale one octave
-F major concert scale one octave
-C major concert scale one octave
-G major concert scale one octave
-Key signatures of Bb,Eb,Ab,F,C, and G major concert scales (by memory)
-Individual understanding and growth in regard to achieving appropriate posture, breath control (stick control) and tone production
-All music that is being prepared for upcoming concerts should also be considered "testable material."
-All concerts/performances will be considered a test grade. Contributing to the performance will result in a test grade of "A." Excused absence (illness, etc… with letter from parent/guardian) from performance will result in student making up grade by performing concert music in class for grade. Unexcused absence (didn't feel like coming) will result in a test grade of zero. *"No ride" is not an excuse for missing a performance. There are many parents willing to help get students to concerts. We just need to know that there is a need so that arrangements can be made.*
-Each student will also earn a separate grade for understanding and demonstrating appropriate rehearsal etiquette. This includes: arriving on time, having supplies (instrument, music folder, **PENCIL**, reeds, etc…), participating in discussions, not talking or playing at inappropriate times, being considerate of others, and responding appropriately to the conductor.

CONCERT BAND: (7th and 8th mod) This is also an entry level band at Swanson. It is comprised of 6th graders. The two classes will combine as one band for performances. They will perform on the Winter Instrumental Music Concert, the End of Year Band Concert, and may participate in a music festival trip in the spring.

The beginning of the year for this group will consist of a quick refresher of one octave scales and basic musical notation. The main thrust of this class will be to learn musical concepts by the rehearsal and performance of a wide array of grade level appropriate band literature. Selections will introduce students to a variety of time signatures, key signatures, rhythms, and musical styles.

Concert Band Grading Benchmarks

-Preliminary assessment (no grade)
-Instrument care and naming parts of the instrument
-Names of lines and spaces on staff
-Basic music notation (note/rest values, time signatures, etc…)
-Bb concert chromatic scale one octave (play fingering chart from Bb concert to next Bb concert, by memory)
-Bb major concert scale one octave
-Eb major concert scale one octave
-Ab major concert scale one octave
-Db major concert scale one octave
-F major concert scale one octave
-C major concert scale one octave
-G major concert scale one octave
-D major concert scale one octave
-The order of sharps and flats (by memory)
-The circle of 5ths (by memory)
-Key signatures of Bb,Eb,Ab,Db,F,C,G,& D major concert scales
-Individual understanding and growth in regard to achieving appropriate posture, breath control (stick control) and tone production
-All music that is being prepared for upcoming concerts should also be considered "testable material."
-All concerts/performances will be considered a test grade. Contributing to the performance will result in a test grade of "A." Excused absence (illness,

etc… with letter from parent/guardian) from performance will result in student making up grade by performing concert music in class for grade. Unexcused absence (didn't feel like coming) will result in a test grade of zero. *"No ride" is not an excuse for missing a performance. There are many parents willing to help get students to concerts. We just need to know that there is a need so that arrangements can be made.*
- Each student will also earn a separate grade for understanding and demonstrating appropriate rehearsal etiquette. This includes: arriving on time, having supplies (instrument, music folder, **PENCIL**, reeds, etc…), participating in discussions, not talking or playing at inappropriate times, being considerate of others, and responding appropriately to the conductor.

Symphonic Band: (3rd mod) This is the third level band at Swanson. It is comprised of 7th and 8th graders with at least one full year of large ensemble playing experience. This group performs on the Winter Band Concert, the End of Year Band Concert, and may participate in a music festival trip in the spring.

The beginning of the year for this group will consist of a quick refresher of one octave scales and basic musical notation. The main thrust of this class will be to learn musical concepts by the rehearsal and performance of a wide array of grade level appropriate band literature. Selections will introduce students to a variety of time signatures, key signatures, rhythms, and musical styles.

Symphonic Band Grading Benchmarks

-Preliminary assessment (no grade)
-Instrument care and naming parts of the instrument
-Names of lines and spaces on staff
-Basic music notation (note/rest values, time signatures, etc…)
-Bb concert chromatic scale one octave (play fingering chart from Bb concert to next Bb concert, by memory)
-Bb major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-Eb major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-Ab major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-Db major concert scale one octave (by memory)

-F major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-C major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-G major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-D major concert scale one octave (by memory)
-The order of sharps and flats (by memory)
-The circle of 5ths (by memory)
-Key signatures of Bb,Eb,Ab,Db,F,C,G,& D major concert scales (by memory)
-Individual understanding and growth in regard to achieving appropriate posture, breath control (stick control) and tone production
-All music that is being prepared for upcoming concerts should also be considered "testable material."
- All concerts/performances will be considered a test grade. Contributing to the performance will result in a test grade of "A." Excused absence (illness, etc… with letter from parent/guardian) from performance will result in student making up grade by performing concert music in class for grade. Unexcused absence (didn't feel like coming) will result in a test grade of zero. *"No ride" is not an excuse for missing a performance. There are many parents willing to help get students to concerts. We just need to know that there is a need so that arrangements can be made.*
- Each student will also earn a separate grade for understanding and demonstrating appropriate rehearsal etiquette. This includes: arriving on time, having supplies (instrument, music folder, **PENCIL**, reeds, etc…), participating in discussions, not talking or playing at inappropriate times, being considerate of others, and responding appropriately to the conductor.

Wind Ensemble: (2nd mod, and possibly some after-school sectionals on Wednesdays from 2:30-3:30 in Jan. & Feb.) This is the most advanced band at Swanson. Members of this group are expected to already possess advanced middle school playing skills and be eager to step up to the next level! The Wind Ensemble performs advanced middle school band literature and sometimes even music written for high school ensembles. Of course, this requires that a high degree of effort and dedication be expected from the students and director alike!

At this level the band is concerned not only with playing the right notes and rhythms, but also conveying the **exact** intent of the composer. Because of this, the Wind Ensemble enrollment (number of players) is driven by something called "instrumental balance." In order for the group to produce

an authentic "symphonic sound," the ensemble must adhere to a general instrument to instrument ratio. For example, too many flutes and not enough low brass would produce a thin and unsupported sound when the group plays music written for "full band." Members are placed in Wind Ensemble with this in mind. Obviously, placement in some sections becomes more competitive than others. We usually have many (25+) Alto Saxophones vying for 4 to 6 spots versus very few (sometimes only 1 or 2) French-horns vying for 4 to 6 spots. This is not just the way it is at Swanson. The same trend is present at all schools at all levels (including college and the professional music world). While this is unfortunate for some instrumentalists, it is opportune for others just selecting an instrument or who might consider switching to an instrument that is less known or popular to the general public. These instruments would include French-horn, oboe, bassoon, bass-clarinet, the lower saxophones, and low brass instruments (tuba, euphonium, and trombone). Sixth grade is a great time for making an instrument change. It's never too early to begin planning for Wind Ensemble!

The Wind Ensemble performs on the Winter Band Concert, the VBODA District XII band festival, and on the End of Year Band Concert. This group has a rich history of performing "on the road" as far away as Toronto, Canada, and receiving countless awards and recognition for superior musicianship and professionalism. Because of this, the Swanson Wind Ensemble is often invited to perform for special events that can not be foreseen ahead of time. It is also possible that the Wind Ensemble will participate in a music festival trip in the spring.

Wind Ensemble Grading Benchmarks

-Bb concert chromatic scale full range of instrument (by memory)
-Bb major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-Eb major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-Ab major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-Db major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-F major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-C major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-G major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-D major concert scale multiple octave scale sheet (by memory)
-A major concert scale multiple octave (by memory)

-E major concert scale multiple octave (by memory)
-B major concert scale multiple octave (by memory)
-F# (Gb) major concert scale multiple octave (by memory)
-The order of sharps and flats (by memory)
-The circle of 5ths (by memory) -Individual understanding and growth in regard to achieving appropriate posture, breath control (stick control) and tone production
-Key signatures Bb,Eb,Ab,Db,F,C,G,& D major concert scales (by memory)
-All music that is being prepared for upcoming concerts should also be considered "testable material."
-Wind-Ensemble members will choose *at least* one of the following events for a test grade: Participation in the Arlington, Co. Jr. Honors Band, audition for All-District (Arlington/Fairfax) Band and score 80% or better, Prepare a solo or ensemble and perform it at the District XII Solo & Ensemble Festival. **Participation** (no matter the result) in any of these events will constitute a test grade of 100! This will be part of the fourth quarter grade.
- All concerts/performances will be considered a test grade. Contributing to the performance will result in a test grade of "A." Excused absence (illness, etc… with letter from parent/guardian) from performance will result in student making up grade by performing concert music in class for grade. Unexcused absence (didn't feel like coming) will result in a test grade of zero. *"No ride" is not an excuse for missing a performance. There are many parents willing to help get students to concerts. We just need to know that there is a need so that arrangements can be made.*
- Each student will also earn a separate grade for understanding and demonstrating appropriate rehearsal etiquette. This includes: arriving on time, having supplies (instrument, music folder, **PENCIL**, reeds, etc…), participating in discussions, not talking or playing at inappropriate times, being considerate of others, and responding appropriately to the conductor.

Pep Band: (Wednesdays from 2:30-3:30 Sept.-Oct.) The Pep Band is a group open to <u>all</u> Swanson band members regardless of grade level. This group has performed in area parades/events and also plays at some of the sporting events here at Swanson. This band usually plays the fun kind of music you hear in the stands at high school football games! The Pep Band rehearses one day a week after school (2:30-3:30) September through October. Some of the Pep Band music may be rehearsed in band class at the beginning of the year. Since this band meets only once a week, it is important for students to attend ALL rehearsals.

Jazz Ensemble: (Act II, Tuesdays, from 2:30-4:00, for credit) The Swanson Jazz Ensemble is a group of advanced musicians selected by audition at the beginning of the school year. This group rehearses throughout the entire year. Since this group only meets once a week, ALL rehearsals are important. This should be taken into consideration BEFORE auditioning! The Jazz Ensemble includes alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone, trombone/euphonium, trumpet, piano, bass, drums, and vibes. Students in the Jazz Ensemble will have the opportunity to play many styles of Jazz and start to learn the basics of improvisation. The Swanson Jazz Ensemble has an award-winning tradition and is often called upon throughout the area to perform at school and community events.

Together we can make this a year of great music and great times. I look forward to being a part of your musical experience at Swanson.

Paul J. Norris
Director of Bands
Swanson Middle School
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Required Materials for Band at Swanson

Everyone:

-Instrument or sticks/mallets (percussion)
-Luggage tag on instrument case or "Stick-bag" (percussion)
-Pencil (everyday, for taking notes and marking reminders/changes in music) in music folder

Wood-winds:

-At least **THREE** good reeds at all times
-Cork grease
-cleaning swab with cleaning rod (flutes) or string

Brass:

-Valve-oil, slide-oil (trombones), Rotor-oil (French-horns)
-tuning slide grease
-cleaning brush

Percussion:

-Stick-bag (any brand)
-Snare-drum sticks, (2-B or Vic Firth SD-1)
-Xylophone, Marimba, or Bell Mallets (not the Musser mallets with hard black on one end and yellow rubber on the other)

-Timpani mallets are optional but encouraged (any general purpose timpani mallet will do)

*Please print and sign this portion of the packet and return it to Mr. Norris by "Back to School Night." This will count as a TEST grade!

Swanson Bands Member/Parent Agreement

We have read and discussed the "Swanson Band Course and Ensemble Description" packet and the "Swanson Band Syllabus." We understand the grading procedures and the behavioral expectations as they apply to students enrolled in the instrumental music courses offered at Swanson Middle School and agree to these conditions.

Student Signature_____ Date_____

Parent/ Guardian
Signature _____ Date_____

*Parent/ Guardian email address_____

__Printed**__ Name of student: _____

It is important for us to be able to share information with you. Please subscribe to the band list serve by sending an email to:
swanson-band+subscribe@googlegroups.com

Confirm you have subscribed by checking this box: ☐