

**DOWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL  
BEGINNER BAND HANDBOOK  
2008-2009**

Dear Band Parents,

Welcome to the Dowell Middle School Band program! We are hopeful that the first few days of the year are pleasant ones for you and your child. Soon you will be treated to some sounds in your home that you will be hard-pressed to describe. Trust us, it will get better, and quickly!

Music is basic, and we consider it a privilege to share this wonderful experience with our beginning band students. As your directors, it is our desire to provide a quality instrumental music experience for every student. Additionally, it is our goal that our young musicians develop facility on their instruments, learn more about the “language” of music, and experience the thrill of performance.

This packet serves as a handbook for the Beginner Band program. It should help you understand the policies, guidelines, and expectations for Dowell band members. Please take a few minutes to read through this material with your son or daughter and return all forms with your signature.

Respectfully,

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DMS Band Staff

Dowell Middle School Administration  
Logan Faris, Principal  
Alan Arbabi, Assistant Principal  
Jamie Thomas, Assistant Principal

## A. OVERVIEW

Beginner Band is an experiment. At first there is the BIG QUESTION – “Will I ever learn how to play my instrument?” Understand that it will take time for that question to be answered. However, meaningful progress **will** take shape if, 1) there is a three-way partnership comprised of the teacher, child, and parents, 2) parents are INVOLVED in their child’s musical life and, 3) the parents help guide their child’s **home practice** habits. The student will need to understand that EVERYTHING will be new at first – like learning to walk, ride a bike, tie one’s shoes, etc. It cannot be learned instantly. Patience and persistence will be required by everyone involved.

Students must also realize that band is a yearlong course and requires commitment to the class for the entire year. (Except in isolated or individual circumstances as determined by the band director(s) and/or the Dowell Middle School Administrative staff.)

## B. ORGANIZATION

Mr. Eacker

Trumpet

French Horn

Euphonium

Tuba

Miss Moy

Flute/Oboe

Clarinet

Saxophone

Bassoon

Mr. Brannan

Percussion

Mr. Nunez

Trombone

## C. PRACTICE

Practice is a necessary element for success on any musical instrument. While it is true that the sounds will certainly be amusing at first, the student must learn to “hang in there” and try to **address, solve, and master** specific problems during each practice session. Repetition will be necessary to train the fingers, learn the valve combinations, sticking rudiments, improve music reading, etc. **CONSISTENT DAILY PRACTICE** will be the key to mastery and improvement.

Beginner Band students will NOT have to practice hour after hour in order to make progress. It is BEST if practice sessions are short at first, with a specific goal in mind. To that end, we will try to make the individual assignments as specific as possible.

In an effort to reward home practice, weekly grades will be assigned for individual practice time. Practice time will be recorded on a **daily** basis by the student or parent, totaled, and verified with a parent/guardian signature. Every **WEDNESDAY** the student will turn in their signed practice record to their instructor for the previous week. Students should begin practicing about ten minutes a day five to six days a week and gradually increase practice time until a daily routine of thirty minutes is established. The important factor, though, is that they practice **FIVE TO SIX DAYS** a week – on a consistent, daily basis. Practice reports will not be accepted after **Thursday**, except in cases of illness or other excused absences. It is the student’s responsibility to communicate with their director to verify if their absence is considered excused or unexcused.

**A blank practice report is provided for you. Make 16 copies to use throughout the year. Copies may also be downloaded from charmsmusic.com**

**“THE MORE YOU PRACTICE – THE BETTER YOU GET –  
THE BETTER YOU GET – THE MORE YOU ENJOY IT!”**

## D. PRIVATE LESSON STUDY

We are fortunate to be able to offer our students a fully professional faculty from whom private lessons are available. Each member of the faculty is approved by the McKinney ISD, and is an authority on his/her instrument. The private lesson program is offered as a non-required supplement to our program. We strongly recommend private lessons as a way of achieving increased musical growth. Most students take advantage of this opportunity because of the personalized assistance that they receive. The private lesson program is a minimum semester-long commitment.

Scholarship Program: Students requiring financial assistance to help pay for private lessons can apply for scholarship aid. Scholarships are awarded on a case by case basis. It is the student's responsibility to pick up the necessary form(s) from their director. All information received is strictly confidential. Students may receive assistance for up to ½ the cost of each private lesson. In rare circumstances, full scholarships may be awarded as deemed necessary by the band director(s).

Note: Please be aware that this program is a privilege and not a "right." Therefore, if the student does not maintain acceptable progress, it is within the rights of the directors and the BPO to cancel assistance at anytime. We appreciate your understanding in this matter.

### **E. BAND GRADING POLICIES**

The nine-week grade is an average of the following:

1. Playing, chair, written tests, pop quizzes (playing and written)
2. Practice reports – See section C (must be turned in no later than Thursday)
3. Bandsmanship/Participation – daily effort, attitude, materials brought to class
4. Concert Performances (Winter Concert, Solo & Ensemble, Open House, Spring Concert, etc. See DMS Band Calendar)
5. Band Notebook kept organized with pencil pouch for pencils and metronome/tuner. **\*You must have a separate notebook just for band.**

We promise to maintain realistic expectations. It is our hope that the students will commit to daily practice and outstanding citizenship/bandsmanship.

### **F. SCHOOL-OWNED INSTRUMENTS**

If you are fortunate to have been entrusted with a school-owned instrument, do not forget the special responsibility that accompanies its use. Any damage to the instrument, its case, or other provided materials, due to student carelessness or abuse will be charged to the student(s) responsible. A non-refundable \$100.00 instrument use fee is charged by the McKinney ISD to maintain normal wear and use of the instrument for the school year. Those students whose behavior becomes problematic or who exhibit carelessness with the instrument/supplies, etc. will be denied further use of the instrument. Please understand the importance of properly caring for these expensive school items. **Make checks payable to DMS Bands.**

### **REPAIRS AND SUPPLIES**

If an instrument should need repair, please consult with your director. If we are unable to deal with the problem, please take it to the dealer from which the instrument was purchased. School-owned instrument repairs should ALWAYS be handled through your director.

Supplies (reeds, valve oil, slide cream, sticks/mallets, cleaning cloth, etc.) are essential items for band class and can be obtained from a local music store. All single & double reed players are to have at least **THREE PLAYABLE REEDS** at all times. (Reed guards are excellent for preserving the longevity of your reeds.) Music, book, pencil, band binder/folder must also be brought daily.

## **G. CARE OF THE BAND HALL, LOCKERS, PRACTICE ROOMS & EQUIPMENT**

It is the responsibility of each band member to help keep the band room, instrument locker, and practice room areas neat and orderly. The chairs and stands are to be kept in place

Instrument storage lockers will be assigned to every student. (Combination locks are available for a **\$5.00** user fee. All students are responsible for keeping track of their own combination number. Students will be charged a \$10.00 replacement fee should the lock become lost, damaged, or stolen. **Personal locks are not permitted.**

Instrument lockers are for the storage of band related materials only (instrument, book, etc.). However, students may TEMPORARILY place their books, space allowing, in the locker until the end of band class. It is HIGHLY encouraged that students store other class books/materials, especially backpacks, in their personal school locker whenever possible. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter as space is very, very limited in the locker storage area.

**Percussion equipment is for the use of our percussionists only.** Just as nobody but yourself is to play on your instrument, the same is true for the percussion instruments. Due to limited space, most of this equipment is left in the rehearsal area at all times and it can be a temptation to touch it. Treat percussion equipment as if it were someone else's property. In a matter of speaking it does belong to somebody else – the school.

The band director's office is PRIVATE and students must knock before entering. Student use of the phone is frowned upon. If it is not a band-related issue – don't even ask. Students should use the phone in the front office whenever possible. Use of the band hall or director's phone is by permission of the director(s) only. There will be consequences for inappropriate, unexcused use of the band hall or band director phones.

The use of the practice rooms is a privilege. Only one student at a time will be allowed in the practice rooms unless approved by the director. Space is limited due to private lessons and the practice expectations of our low brass students (see section C.) At the same time, we **do want** to encourage use of the practice rooms when not in use as stated above.

(Note: Practice rooms are for practice only – they are not a “hang out.” Space is limited and must be utilized appropriately. Don't misuse this privilege. There will be consequences!)

Finally, there is to be NO food, drinks, candy, gum or horseplay in the band hall. This policy will be strictly enforced as stated in the DMS Student Handbook. The only exception regarding food & drink consumption is by permission of the band director(s). Also, only students participating in private lessons, low brass practice, or sectionals will be permitted in the band hall before or after school. Please see your director if you have special circumstances in this regard. Any student that is not a band member will not be permitted to enter the band hall. Please make your friends aware of this important policy. Make arrangements to meet your friends someplace else after you pick up or return your instrument and music to the band hall.

## TOWARD AN AWESOME COMMON GOAL!"

### H. DOWELL BAND T SHIRT

All band members will need a Dowell Band T Shirt. This shirt will be worn at our end of the year concerts, and may be worn to school, too. Be aware that we ask students to wear nice “dress-up” clothes for our Winter Concert, so please plan ahead. The cost is **\$12.00** per shirt; more than one shirt may be purchased if desired. All shirt sizes are adult and are available to students, family, friends and relatives! **\*Please make checks out to DMS Bands.**

### I. DEVELOPING GOOD PRACTICE HABITS

Students are expected to practice on a **daily** basis in order to improve and maintain acceptable progress in the course. Below are some tips to help you develop good practice habits:

1. Practice Period: Students should establish a consistent practice time and place each day. Up to 30 minutes, 5 days a week is best, never taking more than 1 day off at a time. Be sure that you consider this in your weekend preparation.
2. Environment: A well-lit room with a straight-backed chair is necessary. Avoid the distractions of stereo, TV, etc.
3. Music stand: A music stand is necessary for your music and to help ensure an upright posture.
4. **Each practice session should involve:**
  - Warm-up (5 min.)
  - Long tones and lip slurs (5 min.)
  - Practice scales and other technical exercises (5 min.)
  - Practice challenging passages from band class and private lessons (15 min.)
  - End with something fun – brass players should finish with a warm-down
  - Practice each lesson SLOWLY at first
  - Practice the challenging things, this is how you improve
  - Use your metronome and tuner
  - Always strive for excellence and concentrate on making your BEST SOUND!
  - Find creative ways to make practice sessions fun – play mini concerts for friends and family, record yourself, memorize a long piece, compose your own music, etc.
  - Have a specific goal for what you expect to improve in each practice session
  - Be patient and believe in yourself – consistent practice WILL pay off!

***Remember, merely playing through a piece, or practicing only the “fun stuff” is not considered appropriate practice!!!***

## PRACTICE REPORT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday \_\_\_\_\_

Thursday \_\_\_\_\_

Friday \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday \_\_\_\_\_

Monday \_\_\_\_\_

Tuesday \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

### MAKE 16 COPIES FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR

#### Grading (total minutes per week)

180 min. = 100

150 min. = 95 \*Minimum 5 days per week

120 min. = 90

90 min. = 85

60 min. = 80 \*Due every Wednesday. Not accepted after Thursday (-10 pts.)

30 min. = 75

15 min. = 70 unless approved by director.

10 min. = 50

No practice turned in = no credit

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(must have parent signature for credit)

\_\_\_\_\_ Days (most important element - See section C)

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday \_\_\_\_\_

Thursday \_\_\_\_\_

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No practice turned in = no credit

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(must have parent signature for credit)

\_\_\_\_\_ Days (most important element - See section C)

## McKINNEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT PRIVATE LESSON PROGRAM

The McKinney ISD private lesson program is an enrichment opportunity available to all Dowell band students. Qualified specialists, who will strengthen the fundamentals and knowledge of literature your child is learning on his or her instrument, teach these lessons. Though not required, participation in the private lesson program is highly encouraged. Students will not be penalized for electing not to participate. Lessons will be taught at Dowell during the scheduled band class, before school, or after school. Specific times are assigned by the order in which the forms are received. However, please discuss any potential schedule conflicts with the private instructor. The private lesson program is a minimum semester-long commitment.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Prepare** all assignments for each lesson
2. **Contact** your private teacher at least **24 hours** in advance of an absence. The Instructor will also extend this courtesy to you.
3. **Supply** method books and materials as required by the private teacher
4. **Discuss** any concerns you have regarding your lessons with the private teacher
5. **Promptly** turn in your check to the private teacher. \*(Prefer one month in advance)

### **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The cost of each music lesson is **\$16.00** per week or **\*\$64.00** per month. Parents will send a check for the specified amount with the student who will give the check to the private instructor at the time of their lesson. Checks are to be made out to the private lesson instructor. Any billing concerns should be discussed with the private instructor.

PLEASE HONOR YOUR FINANCIAL OBLIGATION TO THESE INSTRUCTORS.  
REMEMBER THIS IS HOW THEY MAKE THEIR LIVLIHOOD FOR THEMSELVES  
AND THEIR FAMILIES.



Date of Submission \_\_\_\_\_ (Director must verify submission date)

**SIGN AND RETURN PAGE**  
**TRAVEL RELEASE FORM**

**MCKINNEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
Permission for Members of Student Groups to Participate in  
School-Sponsored Trips

Group Name:           Dowell Middle School Band          

School Year of Group Activities: 2008 – 2009

I desire my son/daughter be allowed to travel to and from the events attended by the group listed above during this school year and to participate in these events.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent/Guardian                      Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Student                                      Signature of Student                                      Date

**NOTE:** Student Medical/Emergency Information Card must be on file in the school office.

**STUDENT AGREEMENT – PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN**

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This is to certify that I have received and read the 2008-2009 Dowell Middle School Beginner Band Handbook and hereby agree to abide by all stated policies and procedures, including participation at all required performing events (see calendar). I understand that band is a “team” activity and as such requires the full cooperation of each and every member in order for the band to realize its’ full performing potential. I agree to do my part to help the band achieve this goal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT PRINTED NAME                                      STUDENT SIGNATURE                                      DATE

**PARENT AGREEMENT**

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This is to certify that we have received and read the 2008-2009 Dowell Middle School Beginner Band Handbook and agree to its stated policies and procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT(S)/LEGAL GUARDIAN(S) SIGNATURES                                      DATE