

Onalaska Middle School

Band Syllabus

2025 - 2026

(Updated 8/20/2025)



Directors

Ms. Karen Keil, Mr. Christopher Meunier

Families and Students,

The OMS Band Department would like to welcome you to a new school year. We cannot wait to start making music with you! This packet is meant to serve as a guide to parents and students about everything concerning performance music at OMS.

Music is FUN! Music is something that you have to experience to appreciate. Your hard work and dedication will lead to great experiences throughout the year. A lot of what we do will be hard work, however, you will also reap the benefits of that hard work for some time to come. Like anything worthwhile, your success along the way will be a reflection of the time, energy, and effort you put into music!

If, at any point in the year, you feel like you are not getting the most out of your experiences, please feel free to come and talk to us, and we can discuss how to make your time in music fun and productive. We look forward to our experiences together this year! GO HILLTOPPERS!!

Musically yours,

Karen Keil and Christopher Meunier

Guidelines For Success

1. **RESPECT** for self, peers, instructors, & guests
2. **RESPONSIBILITY** for materials, equipment, and actions
3. **POSITIVE ATTITUDE** when exploring and working on new music
4. **BEST EFFORT** in rehearsals and performances
5. **PODIUM LAW!** (All playing and talking stop when the director is on the podium or at the piano.)
6. **COMMUNICATE** concerns or conflicts with your music teacher

Band Overview

Sixth Grade Band Overview

Sixth-grade band is the beginning level of instrumental music at Onalaska Middle School. All students are **first-year players** on their chosen instrument and begin building a strong musical foundation.

Students participate in two types of instruction each week:

- A **full band rehearsal**, where they play as part of a large ensemble and learn to listen, blend, and follow a conductor.
- An **individual or small group lesson**, where they receive focused instruction on technique, tone, note reading, and rhythm skills tailored to their specific instrument.

Throughout the year, students will:

- Work through the **introductory band method materials**
- Develop **fundamental skills** such as posture, breath support, embouchure, and hand position
- Learn to read standard music notation, rhythms, and musical terms
- Build ensemble skills, including playing in time, dynamic contrast, and listening across sections

Performance Opportunities:

- **6th Grade Informance** (October)
- **Winter Concert** (December)
- **All-District Band Concert** (February)
- **Spring Concert** (May)

After the school year begins, students may **apply and audition** for opportunities to switch to "color instruments" such as **oboe, bassoon, saxophone, horn, and percussion**. These instruments help create a full and balanced band sound and are matched carefully with each student's abilities and interests.

Seventh Grade Band Overview

Seventh-grade band is the second year of instrumental study at Onalaska Middle School, where students continue developing their musical skills and begin playing **more advanced music** as an ensemble. With one year of experience, students are expected to demonstrate increased independence, musicality, and responsibility in

their playing.

Students continue to receive **two types of instruction each week**:

- A **full band rehearsal**, where students refine ensemble techniques such as balance, blend, intonation, and interpretation of more complex pieces.
- A **small group or individual lesson**, focused on advancing technical ability, tone production, rhythmic accuracy, and expressive playing on their specific instrument.

Throughout the year, students will:

- Progress through **intermediate band method books and concert literature**
- Expand their understanding of musical styles, key signatures, and time signatures
- Continue building strong fundamentals, including articulation, phrasing, and tuning
- Learn how to practice effectively and develop individual musicianship

Performance Opportunities:

In addition to the **required concerts**—

- **Winter Concert** (December)
- **All-District Band Concert** (February)
- **Large Group Festival** (March) (during the school day)
- **Spring Concert** (May)

— Seventh-grade students may also participate in a variety of ***HIGHLY encouraged***, but optional opportunities, including:

- **Middle School Field Show Night** (a showcase event highlighting our marching and field show skills)
- **Pep Band** (one performance in January or February with the High School Pep Band and another in March at the staff versus student basketball game)
- **Jazz Band** (an extra-curricular auditioned group that rehearses outside of the regular school day)
- **Solo & Ensemble Festival** (students prepare and perform solos or small group pieces for adjudication)
- **Honor Bands** (WSMA, WCBA, WWHB) are auditioned opportunities throughout the year. The director will provide information as it becomes available.

These opportunities allow students to further explore their musical interests, develop performance confidence, and take on leadership roles in the band program.

Eighth Grade Band Overview

Eighth-grade band is the culminating year of the middle school band experience at Onalaska Middle School. Students build on the skills developed in sixth and seventh grade, performing more advanced repertoire and demonstrating a deeper level of **musicianship, leadership, and ensemble responsibility**.

Students continue to receive **two types of instruction each week**:

- A **full band rehearsal**, where students work on advanced ensemble skills such as precision, musical expression, interpretation, and stylistic accuracy.
- A **small group or individual lesson**, which focuses on refining technique, tone, rhythmic precision, and preparation of concert and solo literature.

Throughout the year, eighth-grade band students will:

- Work through advanced band method materials and concert band literature
- Explore a wider variety of musical styles, genres, and performance practices
- Strengthen core skills, including phrasing, tuning, dynamics, and ensemble listening
- Develop confidence as independent musicians and peer role models
- Prepare for high school band by building strong practice habits and accountability
- **Connect with the Onalaska High School Band program through joint events, performances, and mentorship opportunities, helping ease the transition to the next level of musical growth**

Performance Opportunities:

In addition to the **required concerts**—

- **Middle School Field Show Night** (September)
- **OMS Winter Concert** (December)
- **All-District Band Concert** (February)
- **Spring Concert** (May)
- **Beyond the Notes** (May)

– Eighth-grade students may also participate in a variety of ***HIGHLY encouraged***, but optional opportunities, including:

- **Pep Band** (one performance in January or February with the High School Pep Band and another in March at the staff versus student basketball game)
- **Jazz Band** (an extra-curricular auditioned group that rehearses outside of the regular school day)
- **Solo & Ensemble Festival** (students prepare and perform solos or small group pieces for adjudication)
- **Honor Bands** (WSMA, WCBA, WWHB) are auditioned opportunities throughout the year. The director will provide information as it becomes available.

These experiences give students the chance to explore their musical interests, grow as performers, and prepare for a successful transition into the high school band program.

Intro to Band Overview

Rehearsal Schedule

There are a few combinations of how your student may participate in music at the Onalaska Middle School. This depends on how many music classes (and which music classes) they are in.

- Students in the Band will only rehearse once every other day.
- Students in multiple music courses will follow the [Multiple Music Rotation Schedule](#). By referencing this schedule, students in multiple music classes will know which performance ensemble they are having each day, what classroom to go to, and what instrument to bring!

Extra-Curricular Ensembles:

The success of our extra-curricular ensembles—such as Jazz Band and Pep Band—relies on each student's **consistent attendance and commitment**. These groups function as a team, and each member plays a critical role.

We understand that unforeseen events may affect attendance. However, if attendance becomes a recurring issue, the student may be asked to step down from the group.

Important guidelines:

- **Absences due to school attendance** (i.e., being absent from school for illness or other excused reasons) will not count against a student's participation.
- **Routine tardiness** to rehearsals may be considered an **unexcused absence**.
- **Being removed from a rehearsal for behavior** will count as an **unexcused absence**.
- **All performances, contests, and festivals are required.** These are essential to the ensemble's purpose and should be treated as priority commitments.
- Students and families will receive **advanced notice** of all competitions, community performances, clinics, and sectionals to help plan accordingly.

Participation in these groups is both an honor and a responsibility. Students are expected to uphold a high standard of professionalism, commitment, and teamwork.

OMS Jazz Band

The OMS Jazz Band is an exciting after-school ensemble that explores jazz, swing, blues, and popular styles of music. Students grow as musicians while performing challenging and fun music together. Open to **all band students** and **all band instruments!**

The band meets on **Mondays after school from 3:05 pm to 3:55 pm.**

Performances:

- **Onalaska Jazz @ Rotary Lights** (December)
- **Jazz Band @ OMS Lunch** (December & April)*
- **Solo & Ensemble Festival** (February)
- **Onalaska Jazz Festival** (April)

For more information, please contact Mr. Meunier (meunier.christopher@onalaskaschools.com)

Concert Attire

ATTIRE:

Concert dress for ALL students (**6th-8th Grade**) will be black pants, black shoes, black socks (provided by students), and a purple music polo shirt that will be issued to students before the first concert. Students will be held responsible for the upkeep of the shirt and returning it at the end of the 8th grade. Replacement cost is \$20.

Students may exchange for a larger size at any time.

Families in need of financial assistance are strongly encouraged to contact either the music director or the main office to ensure that your child has what they need.

Participation Expectations

- A yearly band calendar is available on the [OMS Band Website](#) and emailed each fall. Please use it to plan your family schedule.
- Students are expected to:
 - Arrive on time
 - Wear proper concert attire
 - Demonstrate appropriate concert behavior
 - Assist with clearing the performance area afterward

Attendance Policy:

- 100% attendance is expected at all rehearsals and performances.
- Absences affect the entire band's success—band is a team activity.
- Excused absences:
 - Family emergencies (email/call directors ASAP: 608-783-5366 ext. 4129)
 - Major family events (weddings, graduations, etc.) → Makeup assignment required.
 - Makeup work must reflect performance skills (not written papers) and be arranged with the director no later than 7 days before the event.
 - Makeup work must be completed within the set timeframe, or the performance will be graded as a "0."
- Not excused: Student job commitments, club sports, or other athletics or activities. Many students successfully balance both; communication is the key!

***** If a band student has an absence from a required performance, they will need to make up the grade with alternate work, provided there was previous communication with the directors. *****

Attendance and Participation Policy

Band is a team activity—we succeed together, not as individuals. Every student plays an important role, and **full participation in all rehearsals and performances is essential** to the group's success.

Absences will only be excused for reasons recognized by the **Onalaska School District's attendance policy**. Conflicts due to club sports or other non-school activities are **not excused absences**.

If you anticipate an absence, please contact the band directors as early as possible. In the case of an excused absence, students will be assigned a **makeup assignment** to ensure continued progress and accountability.

Required performances:

For a complete list of all band performances throughout the year, check out our [Google calendar](#) or the [OMS Band Schedule \(spreadsheet\)](#)

Protocol for athletics, school activities, and band activities

Practice vs. Practice Split time if possible

Practice vs. game/performance Game/Performance takes precedence

Game vs. Performance

Try to make both work, or choose one. Communicate with both the coach/advisor and band directors (makeup work for band performances reflects the performance-based class)

Grading

A student's band grade is broken down into four main categories: Rehearsals, Lessons, Assignments/Assessments, and Performances.

Rehearsals (30%)

- **Attentiveness:** The student will be an active and involved member of the Band, ready to respond to the instructor or play when directed.
- **Instrument Readiness:** Students will have instruments at rehearsal and in good working order, music, and other materials at the start of each class.
- **Music and Materials:** Students will have proper music and materials (reeds/pencil, etc)
- **Rehearsal Protocol:** Students will properly store their instruments and music and showcase respect for their classmates, instruments, and performance area(s).

Lessons (20%)

- All students must have a lesson at school or from a private teacher.
- The lesson schedule is posted online and in the music hallway.
- Should a lesson be missed for any reason, THE STUDENT is responsible for signing up for a make-up lesson or completing the lesson make-up assignment on MakeMusic Cloud.
- **MAKE-UP LESSONS** - All lessons can be made up for full credit; lessons may also be made up during blank lesson slots on the teacher's lesson schedule.

Assignments (10%)

- Students will be asked to complete playing assignments on MakeMusic Cloud and perform rudimental exercises/music excerpts on a formal and informal basis.

Performances (40%)

- Students will be expected to attend and participate in required co-curricular(concert/field show/parade) performances.
 - Should a student need to be absent for a performance, THE STUDENT AND PARENT must contact the director via email before the performance. A reason must be given.
 - Students will need to meet with their director before the concert date to arrange for an alternative assignment to make up the points for the missed concert.
- All performances can be found on the [OMS Band Website](#).

Band Lessons

Band Lesson Policy

All students in the **OMS Band Program** are required to participate in an individual or small group lesson each week. These lessons are designed to build individual musicianship and technical skills, reinforce and extend skills learned in rehearsals, and provide targeted support on tone, rhythm, and reading.

Lesson Expectations and Scheduling

Students are expected to attend their weekly lesson and come prepared with their instrument, music, and materials (reeds, sticks, pencils, etc.). The lesson schedule is posted in several locations:

- The [OMS Band Website](#) and Google Classroom
- The band room bulletin board

If a student needs to reschedule a lesson due to a class conflict (like a test or presentation), they should stay in their class and follow the make-up process. Students with a known conflict can also email their teacher to request a reschedule.

Private Lessons

Students who are already taking private lessons on their primary instrument are not required to attend the weekly OMS lesson. However, they are encouraged to attend grade-level sectionals during Topper-Time to stay connected with the ensemble.

Lesson Make-Up Policy

If a lesson is missed for any reason, students must make it up to receive full credit. All missed lessons should be made up within one week to stay on pace, but can be turned in until the end of the current quarter. **Lessons not completed by the end of the quarter will remain a zero in the gradebook.**

Students can choose one of the following methods to make up a missed lesson:

- **In-Person Make-Up:** Sign up for a make-up lesson before or after school or during a designated Make-Up Lesson Week.
- **MakeMusic Make-Up:** 10 minutes of button time. Play button (green) or record button (red) MakeMusic excerpts from the designated folder and complete the OMS MakeMusic Lesson Make-Up Form.
- **Pep Band Club:** Attend a Pep Band Club meeting (7th and 8th graders only) on Tuesdays from 3:05 p.m. to 3:55 p.m.

To receive credit for the lesson make up students must Complete the [Middle School Band Lesson Make-Up Form](#).

Students are responsible for communicating their absence to their teacher and completing one of these options. Lessons that are not made up in time will be marked as "missing" and entered as a zero at the end of the week, but they can still be made up until the end of the quarter.

MakeMusic

What is MakeMusic?

MakeMusic is an interactive software that provides students with access to our method books, along with many of the songs we work on throughout the year. It offers students the opportunity to practice and receive immediate feedback. As their teachers, we can listen to their recordings, track their progress, and provide personalized guidance to help improve their performance. In addition to being a practice tool, **MakeMusic will**

be used for formative and summative assessments, allowing us to evaluate student progress and mastery of musical skills over time.

Why MakeMusic?

- **Interactive Learning:** MakeMusic helps students strengthen their musical skills through engaging practice activities, whether they are just learning a new piece or refining a more advanced one.
- **Personalized Feedback:** We will be able to listen to each student's progress and give specific feedback tailored to their needs.
- **Practice at Home:** Students can explore music at their own pace, reviewing lessons and practicing outside of our regular band rehearsals.
- Link to the website: [MakeMusic Website](#)

Getting Started

If your student still needs to get a MakeMusic account, please check their school email account for an email from the MakeMusic company. Search for an email from team@makemusic.com.

For additional information, you can view our guide here: [MakeMusic Guide](#).

How can you help?

- Encourage your child to explore MakeMusic and use it regularly for practice. This tool will allow them to deepen their musical understanding and improve their playing skills in a fun and interactive way.
- Ask questions about the program and what they need to complete for class.
- Set a goal: playing a piece they find or practicing time.
- Ask them to play along with something they find in MakeMusic. There are thousands of titles, including pop music.
- You can be attached to the account to get emails about upcoming assignments.

School-Owned Equipment

Students using school-owned music and/or equipment are responsible for making sure that it is maintained properly. Any damages incurred to school-owned equipment beyond normal usage will be the responsibility of the student. Band students who use a school instrument will be required to purchase their own mouthpiece.