

SAM HOUSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

GOLT BAND



2232 Sussex Drive

Garland, TX 75041

972-926-2640 (Ext. 50410)

Dear New & Returning Band Students and Parents:

Welcome to the 2026-2027 school year. We are very excited about the many possibilities ahead of us. It is EVERYONE'S responsibility to be engaged in this process. Please know that we are thrilled that you have chosen to be a part of the Sam Houston Band!

It is our desire and responsibility to provide our students with a great foundation for instrumental music.

Many of you are first-time members of our program. You will want to know how things work in the Sam Houston Band Department. This handbook is your guide to our procedures and policies. We hope you will take some time to look through our handbook and familiarize yourself with our guidelines. Making expectations clear at the beginning of the school year can really help us to have a smooth, productive, and exciting year in the band program. This is the beginning of what should be your student's journey in the South Garland High School cluster band program.

Each student needs to understand the necessity for cooperation and mature behavior in, and around, the Band Hall. As teachers, we are here FOR the students. We need the students to help us, help THEM, when we are instructing them. Our beginning students need to learn the special responsibilities that come with being part of a band program. Our returning members need to remember what they learned as beginners, or as second year students, not only on their instruments, but about the proper behavior and conduct that will make our bands SUPERIOR!

Thank you for making it possible for your son or daughter to begin, or continue, the study of music through an instrument. If ever you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,

Rachael Whipple
Director of Bands
rawhipple@garlandisd.net

Dwight Cook
Assistant Band Director
dccook@garlandisd.net

As you e-sign the forms regarding this Handbook, you will be making commitments that include:

1. Being a member of the band for the entire school year;
2. Student will give his/her best effort to improve as a musician; and
3. Maintaining a positive attitude toward band and school throughout the year.

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Band Department

Rachael Whipple – Director

Dwight Cook – Assistant Director

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BAND INFORMATION HANDBOOK

PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to inform band members and their parents/guardians of the expectations of the SHMS band program. The following guidelines are designed to promote the constructive teaching and learning environment needed to maintain a successful program.

SAM HOUSTON BAND PHILOSOPHY

The Sam Houston Middle School Band Department is dedicated to helping students become responsible individuals through participation in musical ensembles. The cornerstone and legacy of the Sam Houston Band program is excellence through dedication, education, experience, and a team effort from students and staff. **As a member of the SHMS BAND, you are a part of one of the school's most important, respected, successful and consistent teams.**

DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES OF BAND COURSES

BEGINNING BAND is divided into instrument specific classes as much as possible. There is no prior prerequisite knowledge to join this group. Directors will assist those interested in selecting instruments.

Students will:

- Be able to understand and interpret musical symbols, note and rest values, and other musical terms.
- Be able to know the parts of the assigned instrument, and the proper care for it.
- Develop proper instrumental playing fundamentals (Posture, Hand Position, Embouchure, Breathing, Articulation, etc.)
- Develop the ability to produce a good sound (tone quality) and demonstrate proper intonation.
- Develop proper practice and rehearsal habits that will lead to a better sense of style, tempo, blend, balance, and phrasing.
- Develop self-discipline skills from all of the above.

Beginner Band students will also participate in 3 mandatory concerts for the year, may choose to participate in the Beginner Solo Festival and could qualify for NRH₂O Music Festival during the spring semester .

After successful completion of Beginning Band, students can be placed in one of the following groups by an end of the year audition and director's consent.

SYMPHONIC BAND is the intermediate performing ensemble at Sam Houston. Emphasis is on improving individual fundamentals and playing skills, which enables students to perform at an even higher level. They perform at formal concerts and interscholastic contests (UIL Concert & Sight-reading evaluation & the NRH₂O Music Festival). Students are encouraged to prepare themselves for All-District and All-Region Band auditions, which will happen in November. They are encouraged to take private lessons.

WIND ENSEMBLE is the advanced band at Sam Houston. They perform at football games, pep rallies, special performances, interscholastic contests, and formal concerts during the school year. Time will be required outside the regular school day for section rehearsals, contests/evaluations, and other possible performances. Attendance is required at all performances. Students are expected to prepare themselves for All-District and All-Region Band auditions. They are also encouraged to take private lessons.

**For both the Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble, time will be required outside the regular school day for these performances and trips. Attendance is required at all performances. One, weekly, 50 minute sectional (tutorial) will be held before or after school, at which tests are performed, and emphasis on instrument specific topics will be covered. Students are also expected to take part in the Solo-Ensemble contest in April.*

JAZZ BAND is an advanced extra-curricular band at Sam Houston. They perform at different events during the school year. Time will be required outside the regular school day for rehearsals (Fridays after school), contests/evaluations, and other possible performances. Students can join this group after successful completion of Beginning Band (unless they have functional piano, guitar, or bass guitar experience), and by director's consent. Students learn to improvise on their own and play all styles of popular music.

GRADING

Band is a unique course at Sam Houston Middle School. Music is considered a core academic subject but it also has extra-curricular requirements. Every band member is held accountable for his or her attendance, punctuality, materials, and most importantly, preparation.

Student grades are grouped into TWO categories:

1. Major Work (30%) – *Minimum of 3 assignments per cycle*
 - Scales & musical exercises (including some Objectives)
 - Some Performance Music
 - Vocabulary/general music knowledge tests
 - Quarter/Semester/Final exams (written or performance)
2. Minor Work (70%) – *Minimum of 12 assignments per cycle*
 - Practice Logs which can be a weekly grade for all students.
 - Scales & musical exercises (including some Objectives)
 - Music theory &/ rhythm assignments.

ELIGIBILITY

State law requires that students pass all of their classes in order to participate in extracurricular activities. If a student fails a class (grade below a 70) for a grading period, he/she will become ineligible for three weeks following a seven day grace period. At the end of the three week period, following the seven day grace period, if a student is passing all of his/her classes he/she will regain his/her eligibility. If not, the student remains ineligible for the remainder of the grading period and eligibility will be based on the next report card.

The band program participates in two kinds of activities; curricular and extra-curricular. An ineligible student may still participate in curricular activities such as rehearsals, sectionals and concerts. Extra-curricular activities include pep rallies, contests, region auditions, and trips. Ineligible students are not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities.

BAND PROCEDURES

All students will have:

- ❖ 3-ring binder with pencil bag, index dividers, loose-leaf paper for notes/reminders This is what we call our **Band Specific Binder**. Only Band related materials should be in this binder.
- ❖ Pencil – a pencil is part of your instrument A pen is NOT a pencil. A pen is not used for marking music.
- ❖ Individual instrument supplies (reeds, mouthpiece, valve oil, slide/cork grease, swabs, stick bags, etc.)
- ❖ Band Method Book

Band members must bring their instrument/equipment and keep it in good working order for every class, rehearsal and performance. Brass players should have lubricants at all times. Reed players should have at least three, and up to five, spare reeds at their seat.

Percussionists should each have a pair of concert snare drum sticks and keyboard mallets. Always make sure you have all of the required equipment needed to perform on your assigned instrument.

In General:

- Cell Phones are to be kept in backpacks (not in pants or jacket pockets).
- Avoid leaning on music stands. This will prolong their life.
- Avoid writing on stands, chairs, walls, etc. This is considered vandalism!
- You should not borrow any materials from anyone else, you must use your own materials.
- There will be no tolerance for ANY GUM, CANDY, or DRINK in the Band Hall or Ensemble Room! Gum on chairs & music stands or spilled drinks causing messes are very difficult to clean up. Keep OUR Band Hall clean! It's another way to show pride in the SHMS BAND. Students that are reminded more than one time to spit out gum will be assigned detention.
- Avoid playing your instrument any place other than at a performance, in the band hall, or your home. Do NOT allow others to TRY it just for fun, or use it as a toy, even if it's another band member. Be responsible with your instrument and give it the best care possible!

Before/After School:

- You may only be in the Band Hall if a Band Director is present for assigned sectionals, or for individual practice. You will need a pass in the morning, unless your instrument is in your possession. (You may get a pass from a band director). Remember: **The Band Hall is not the place to socialize!**
- Carefully put/take your instrument in your assigned slot in the instrument storage lockers. For your protection, cases must be clearly labeled with your name. Clothes and other articles should not be kept in these shelves; there is simply not enough space! DO NOT leave your money, purses, wallets, or other valuables UNATTENDED during rehearsals or during the school day. Sam Houston MS is not responsible for valuables left in unsecured areas that are later lost, stolen or broken. Clothes and shoes left in the Band room at the end of each semester will be donated to charity.
- ONLY CURRENT SHMS BAND STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED IN THE BAND HALL.

During Class:

- Enter the Band Hall QUIETLY as directed by the teachers. Place your backpack (with your cell phone inside, if you have one), neatly on one of the metal shelves at the front of the room. You will need to be in your assigned chair, with your instrument fully assembled & supplies/music necessary for the class, one minute after the bell rings. Our goal is to begin class at this time. If you are not in your seat with your instrument assembled at this time, you are late. Bottom line: we can't operate efficiently if people are tardy for our class. You are important and needed!
- Please stay in your seat during class. If you need something, or have a question, raise your hand high, and patiently wait to be called on.
- Talking during class must be kept to a minimum.
- When the teacher's hands are up, instruments should be up and ready to play.
- Please follow the teacher's directions the first time.
- If the teacher is working with students or sections, others will quietly finger their parts and not talk.
- Band members must bring all their required supplies to every class and performance. Problems of an individual nature (music missing, problems with instruments, etc.) should not take class time. These issues should be dealt with either before school, after school, or just before class as a last resort.

BEHAVIOR & CODE OF CONDUCT

Students who have a positive mental attitude, regardless of their individual skills, will always have a place in the Sam Houston Band. Once you have become a Colt Band Member, you are always representing the school and your family. Our band program holds students to an even higher standard, which is supported by the *GISD Student Code of Conduct* (pg. 58). Specific school and class procedures will be given to students on the first days of class. In addition, school district discipline procedures, dress codes and bus rules apply for all events and will be observed at all times. One student's poor conduct affects the entire class, and will not be tolerated. No conduct will be permitted that restricts the learning of others. When traveling, band members are expected to be respectful of all bus drivers, chaperones, sponsors, and any other person that may be helping at any event.

Two simple rules to follow:

“You take care of Yourself; Let the Teacher take care of the Class.”

Students that receive time in the Reassignment Center (RAC), are not allowed to participate in events during the quarter the infraction occurred. Suspended students will lose all extra privileges for the semester during which the infraction occurred. Any student sent to the district alternative school (AEC), will lose these privileges for the entire school year. Poor conduct by a band member during daily rehearsals, band functions or trips may result in the suspension of that individual from extra-curricular band activities. Serious infractions may lead to possible dismissal from the band program. The director reserves the right, along with the principal, to make these decisions.

SCHOOL OWNED INSTRUMENTS & EQUIPMENT

Select school-owned instruments and equipment can be checked out to students during the year at a small fee. The District Fine Arts Department will assume responsibility for normal maintenance and repair of any school-owned instrument. Any loss, theft or damage due to neglect or improper care, will be the responsibility of the student and his/her parents.

INSTRUMENT CARE

All students are taught proper instrument care. School-owned instruments become the responsibility of the student to whom they are issued. Any damage other than normal wear and tear will be repaired at the student's expense. Individual instruments must always be maintained in top playing condition. Always show the director your instrument if you feel it is in need of repair. Remember that horseplay, or carelessness, can cause damage to instruments and equipment.

INSTRUMENT INSURANCE

It is strongly suggested that all instruments have proper insurance coverage, whether school-owned or personally owned. Neither Garland ISD, nor Sam Houston Middle School is responsible for any damage, theft, or loss of student property. School-owned instruments are covered by the school district while on campus. You may want to check with your homeowner's or renter's insurance company to see if it provides coverage for musical instruments in the case of accidental damage, fire, or theft. If your insurance company does not cover musical instruments, there are reputable insurance agencies in the area that specializes in this type of coverage. Please contact the directors for more information.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

We ask all band students to please pay a yearly activity fee of \$30. Activity fees are used to help pay for the costs of the Band T-Shirt, additional competitions, travel, etc. Fortunately the school will provide our band students the following items:

- Band binder with dividers
- Sheet music
- Pencil & pencil bag
- Music instruction book/packet
- Startup supplies for student's instrument as needed

Please make payment by ***Friday, August 28***

Students playing a GISD owned instrument will be charged an instrument general maintenance & use fee of \$50.00 per semester (Due by 8/28 & 1/29). All other instrument upkeep and repair is the students' and parents' responsibility.

If you want to pay online, be on the lookout for an email/text invite to our "Store"
Sam Houston Middle School will accept payments by check* or cash.
(*Only at the beginning of the school year.)
THIS FEE IS NON REFUNDABLE

****If a student has financial hardship concerning any of these items, he/she is encouraged to privately contact a Band Director for help finding a solution.**

FUNDRAISING

We like to have social events, go to additional music competitions, etc. To do all these extra activities requires extra funds. The school district does not cover the expenses for all our activities that we want to participate in throughout the year. Therefore, Sam Houston band students are asked to fundraise to help cover many costs. Money that is collected through fundraisers is kept in the school fundraising account, which is monitored by the school's secretary.

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

Informal Uniform

All Sam Houston bands will have an informal uniform consisting of the current year band shirt, and non-torn blue jeans. Beginning Band members will wear this uniform for all performances. Pep Band members will wear this for their performances, and all performing bands will wear it for the NRH₂O Contest. Students must wear the current year's band shirt for such performances, as to look uniform!



Band shirts may also be worn to school with jeans as a spirit/organization shirt when permitted. Previous year's band T-shirts are also permitted as spirit shirts.

Formal Concert Uniform (Only Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band)

In addition to the informal uniform consisting of band shirts and jeans, the performing bands will also wear a more formal uniform for concerts and competition. This uniform will be referred to as *Concert Black* and will consist of:

- Black Band Polo
(Issued to each student for use during the school year)
- Black dress pants
- Black socks
- Black dress shoes

Shirts must be worn tucked in at all times. Students will need the rest of the uniform by February.



A high quality performance demands appropriate dress.

Black jeans, shorts, or sneakers of any kind are not permitted. Each student is responsible for providing the components listed. Please make plans now to secure these items of clothing.

PRACTICE HABITS

Practice will sometimes be fun, sometimes frustrating, and ALWAYS NECESSARY. CONSISTENT PRACTICE **will** be the key. Assignments will be very specific. A great deal of repetition will be essential to train the fingers, learn the valve combinations, improve music reading, etc. It will be best if the student will practice at home in the same order as we conduct class. Always record what you work on in a practice log.

Don't practice until you get it right.



Practice until you can't get it wrong.



PRIVATE LESSONS

Private instruction is offered as enrichment, not as remedial instruction. It is encouraged for the complete development of each student's potential as a musician. Private Lessons are not required. A student's placement in the band program, and his or her grades, are not dependent upon participation in private lessons. This program is supported by individual parent payments that cover the cost of the program. Lessons may be taken during band class, before or after school. HOWEVER, lessons that are taken during class may be several minutes shorter, due to the class period. The cost for each lesson is \$25 and is payable directly to the instructors. The instructors on our "Approved List" have been selected by interview/audition and represent some of the finest teachers available. As students who take lessons improve, their excitement towards practicing increases, they continue to improve, and they become a stronger contributor to the overall success of the band. If interested, please let the band directors know.

INDIVIDUAL BETTERMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following activities provide students with the opportunity to excel individually on their instrument and to receive recognition for their musical achievements. Students must be eligible for these contests. There are always outstanding musicians in the Sam Houston Band, and we strongly encourage participation in these activities. Often, colleges and universities use membership in these organizations as partial criteria for scholarship consideration.

ALL-DISTRICT BAND AUDITIONS (Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Band)

All-District Band auditions provide the students with the opportunity to compete with students from within the Garland ISD for the honor of performing in the All-District Band. All members of the Wind Ensemble are required to work on the audition music, and should be prepared to audition. Symphonic members are encouraged to work on it. The required audition music will consist of a couple of short etudes, which the students will have several weeks to practice before the audition dates. The All-District Band auditions will be in November. It is expected for ALL Wind Ensemble members to audition for this. Those who do not audition will most likely be moved to Symphonic Band for the second semester. If a student wins entry into the All-District Band, he/she will attend the clinic and concert in December.

ALL-REGION BAND AUDITIONS (Wind Ensemble)

Region Band auditions provide the students with the opportunity to compete with students from other schools in Region 3 for the honor of performing in the Region Band. All members of the Wind Ensemble are required to work on the audition music, and many will be encouraged and invited to audition. The required audition material is the same as All-District, so the students will have several weeks to practice before the audition dates. The Region Band auditions will be in November. If a student wins entry into the Region Band, he/she will attend the clinic and concert in January.

SOLO & ENSEMBLE FESTIVAL

All students in the Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band are expected to perform a solo and possibly an ensemble at this important festival in April. Beginner Band students will prepare a solo and may participate at the contest later in March at the discretion of the band directors. Students who are academically ineligible will be required to perform their solo for the band directors for a rating and grade. The experience of playing solos and ensembles is much different than everyday band rehearsal. It gives the student an opportunity to do individual work on a solo or ensemble work with a small group of students (trio, quartet etc.). The skills learned through this are invaluable. Depending on their rating at the contest students may earn a medal or a ribbon.

ADVANCED PRACTICE HABITS

Success on an instrument will depend on what you achieve during DAILY HOME PRACTICE. It is a habit; it's up to you to instill a good habit of consistent practice. It is up to you to decide what you want to get out of your band experience. Give yourself the best chance to improve.

Students are expected to take their instruments home every day. Yes, there will be days that you don't feel well or simply have too much other homework or perhaps have a major project due. I understand that! One of my most important jobs is to help you understand HOW to practice, and HOW to get maximum results. HOW & WHAT you practice is almost more important than how long you practice. Make certain you listen for improvement -- don't just "put in time". When your playing improves, then all the time spent will have been worthwhile. Your instrument doesn't play itself; nobody can play your instrument for you. If you want to improve -- then YOU make it happen!

Many times, students get frustrated because they don't hear themselves getting better. They don't know how to practice in order to "break through" their barrier. Some suggestions for successful practice are as follows:

- Practice daily. Persistence = results = self-satisfaction! Life is good!
- Warm-up properly, just as a good athlete would. Playing an instrument is very physical; we just use different muscles.
- TONE IS ALWAYS THE #1 PRIORITY. Never play without your ears on.
- IMPROVE THE BASICS -- long tones, lip slurs, scale patterns, arpeggios, and technical exercises that are instrument specific. The value of working on BASICS is that your improved skills transfer to ANYTHING and EVERYTHING else that you play. Stuff gets easier. Learning comes a little faster. Pretty cool!!
- DO NOT JUST PRACTICE BAND MUSIC!!!!!! Challenge yourself by working on music that actually helps you to become a better player. It makes no sense to practice things that you can already play well. Don't play Peruna, or Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star for 20 minutes, Grrrr!! ☹
- Practice & IMPROVE small sections. (You'll learn more practice techniques as you play longer.) Small chunks/goals give you the confidence to go on & tackle the next chunk. In time, you're doing pretty darn well on the whole tune!
- Never sacrifice accuracy for speed. If you are having trouble with a spot, slow down. Don't learn anything WRONG -- YIKES!!! Only when you can play something correctly, should you attempt to increase the speed. Playing well means that you're doing it automatically. Lots of repetition is necessary to train your eyes as well as your hands.

***BTW: There are NO SHORTCUTS
to become an awesome musician!***

The students should memorize the following adage:

**THE MORE I PRACTICE (PROPERLY) - THE BETTER I'LL GET...
THE BETTER I GET - THE MORE I LIKE IT!!**

(IT IS WAY-COOL THAT YOU'VE SIGNED UP FOR BAND & THAT YOU WANT TO LEARN TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT!)



INFORMATION UPDATES

Please make sure to your accept emails and texts from the band program management app called



so that Ms. Whipple or Mr. Cook can send you any updates that they may have for you.

Click on the above logo to access the login screen.

(New members will be sent an invitation to create an account)

The directors can send you text messages with important updates through it. You will also be able to see your financial balances, and have a record of any inventory your student may have checked out.



ParentSquare™

Also, please create a ParentSquare account for quick communication with ALL your teachers!



Band Calendar

Keeping everyone updated when things change is our goal!

SAM HOUSTON MS BAND SOCIAL MEDIA

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