

Dear Grade 4 Parents,

As the year winds down, it is time to start thinking about next September and your child's participation in the Westmount Band Program. Our school is special, in that Westmount offers a Beginner Band level in Grade 5, creating a fantastic early-start opportunity for your child to join our strong and vibrant instrumental program.

Your child will be attending an orientation to the Band program, including a review of the instruments available to them next year. We invite you to review the following information package with your child and complete the *New Band Student Background Info* sheet.

What is the Westmount Instrumental Program?

Westmount typically offers instrumental music in the following levels and categories:

Beginner Concert Band Gr. 5's (Level 1) - Mrs. Mah
Grade 6 & 7 Beginner Entry Class (Level 1) - Mrs. Mah/Mr. Green
Junior 6 and Junior 7 Concert Band (Level 2) - Mr. Green/Mrs. Mah
Intermediate Concert Band (Grade 8 & 9) (Level 3) - Mr. Green
Senior Band (Instrumental Music 10/20/30 - Grades 10 - 12) (Level 4+) - Mr. Green

Beginner String Orchestra (Grade 6+) - Mr. Green
Intermediate String Orchestra (Grade 6+) - Mr. Green
Instrumental Music (Strings) 10/20/30 (Grades 10 - 12) - Mr. Green

In addition, Jazz Band is offered as an extra-curricular program after school, one day a week. The Jazz Band is open to Grade 7-12 band students who play the alto, tenor or barisaxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, or drum set.

Goals include:

- to teach an appreciation of music
- to build a quality, collective musical experience for our participants and our audiences
- to teach the students the responsibility required to properly play an instrument, appropriate to their affiliation
- to explore music history and theory

Program Expectations

- (a) Supplies:
- Instrument: each student is expected to rent/purchase their instrument from an independent retailer, unless they already own their own instrument. A

- limited number of the larger instruments are available for rent from the school, but are typically made available to experienced players.
- **Music Books:** each student is given the *Standard of Excellence* method book and theory workbook.
 - **Uniforms:** Westmount band students wear uniforms consisting of a band shirt with black pants, black dress socks and black shoes for concerts and performances. Grade 5 Beginner Band wears a burgundy t-shirt. Shirts are sized and ordered in late September of the new school year. The cost for the uniform is added to your child's school fees in September. If you already have a uniform shirt (perhaps from when your older child went through our Beginner Band), please let us know via email and we will remove the shirt charge from your Grade 5's student fees. We will also have a selection of used uniform shirts available at the AGM in September.
 - **Instrument Supplies:** each student is expected to purchase their own reeds, cork grease, valve oil, slide grease, and any other items necessary for the maintenance of their instruments. Percussionists require a set of concert snare sticks.
 - There will be a mandatory Beginner "Head Start" Clinic in combination with the WMA Annual General Meeting on September 14 at 6:30pm. More information will follow with the Instrument Confirmation Form.

(b) Practicing

Students are expected to practice a minimum of 60 minutes for Grade 5's. They should have a quiet room, away from distractions. Practice time should be recorded daily on a *Beginner Band Practice Journal* (monthly calendar) which is then signed by a parent before handing it in on the first band class of the following month.

(c) Marks and Report Cards

Student progress is monitored through achievement tests, theory assignments, performance evaluations and reflections, participation and attitude. As per school policy, a report card mark is issued 3 times a year.

Annual Activities

Students can expect to perform in 3 evening concerts each year: November 23, February 8, and May 9. In addition, Grade 6-12 concert bands attend music festivals in February/March. Grade 6-12 Band students attend Band Camp in the Fall. Grades 8-12 students participate in a Band tour in alternate years. Clinicians are made available to further enhance specific learning on individual instruments at all levels.

Facilities

The Band Room consists of a large rehearsal area, several practice rooms, and an instrument storage room that is locked every night. Students may leave their instruments in the storage room during the day for security if they so wish.

Westmount Music Association

All Band parents are members of the Westmount Music Association. This parent association is a vital part of our program that supports and enhances our activities throughout the year. Elections for executive positions take place early in September at the Annual General Meeting. Parents are asked to volunteer to assist in at least one activity throughout the year (Concert concession and/or clean-up, etc., or even a WMA Exec position!)

Communication

The Music program does not send written communication home with students, other than fundraising forms, permission forms, etc. There is a bi-weekly "Westmount Music Update" email that is sent to all parents in the Music program. You can also visit us at www.westmountmusic.com A link is also provided on the Westmount website.

Instrument Selection

Once you and your child has completed and submitted the Background Information Sheet, the information is reviewed carefully and every consideration is given to awarding your child their first or second choice of instrument. Occasionally, we must offer a child their third choice. Many factors influence instrument assignment, including:

- a balanced sound achieved through proper proportion of instrumentation in the total ensemble (ie. we can't have a band of flutes or we'd have nothing but high melodic sound with no harmony or depth of sound). We have to place limits on certain instruments due to their role in the Band and nature of their sound. In a Band of 95 Grade 5 students, we have limits of **10 flutes and 6 percussionists.**
- your child's musical background and previous experience

FAQ'S

1. When is instrument selection?

The students hand in their forms on or before June 17th, and the confirmations go home before the end of June.

2. Is my child allowed to carry his/her instrument on the bus?

Yes! In the past, Southland drivers have been very co-operative in allowing even our larger instruments to be transported by bus.

3. Why are saxophones not on the list of choices?

Saxophones are typically too big for our Grade 5's to manage. If a student has a strong desire to play saxophone, we recommend they choose a woodwind instrument to start on (flute, oboe, clarinet), and they may be able to change to the sax in the following year, depending on availability.

3. Can my child play an electric bass in the concert bands?

No. Electric bass is not a Concert Band instrument.

4. Why must my child have previous keyboard experience to play percussion?

We do not have drummers in concert band - we have percussionists. This means that students must be able to play all the instruments in the percussion section, especially the mallet instruments - bells, xylophone, etc. Students who have prior piano/keyboard experience are better able to keep up with the challenging mallet percussion parts than other students.

We look forward to the opportunity to introduce your child to the fun, exciting and challenging world of concert band. Please return the Background Info sheet to your child's homeroom teacher as soon as possible . Your child will receive a confirmation letter containing our final choice of instrument for him/her in late June.

Thank you, and welcome to the Westmount Band family!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Wendy Mah & Mr. Graham Green
Directors of Bands
Westmount Charter School

New Grade 5 Band Student Background Information

Name (first, last) _____ male / female

Name of parents/guardians: _____

Parents' primary email address: _____

Please list the instruments the student has already studied (with lessons or in school), how many years each instrument has been studied, and what level was attained (ex. RCM Grade 3, or other)

Identify your top 3 interests by placing a 1, 2, or 3 beside the instrument name in the appropriate ensemble(s).

- Students are NOT guaranteed their first choice, or in some cases, even their second choice; students are chosen for specific instruments based on the needs of the Band and the experience of the student. The director's decision is final. Assuming a Band of 95 students, we will have numbers in our instrument sections as follows:
 - maximum 10 flutes (high-demand instrument)
 - 6+ oboes
 - 20+ clarinets
 - 8+ bass clarinets
 - 20+ trumpets
 - 15+ trombones
 - 10+ baritones/euphonium
 - maximum 6 percussion (high-demand instrument)
- Grade 5 students wishing to pursue **saxophone** later in the year should enroll as **clarinet or bass clarinet** students. Grade 5 students wishing to pursue **French Horn** later in the year should enroll as **trumpet** students. Please write "sax" or "horn" next to the instrument choice to indicate your child's desire to move to the sax or Horn. Auditions are usually held in March and successful students are then allowed to switch to the new instrument.
- **Percussionists** will be piano students with strong treble and bass clef music reading skills. Students must have completed their Grade 3 Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) exam prior to enrolling in Band. No other instrument experience is considered.
- Students who select bass clarinet, trombone, and/or baritone/euphonium with their 1st choice always get their choice as these are vital instruments in the Band.
- No preference is given to students who already own the instrument; problems have arisen where the student is not physically suited to the instrument but is forced to play it anyway (or in extreme cases, a parent buys/rents the instrument in advance to insure their child will get to play the instrument).
- As a balanced sound is important, students may be allowed to change instruments after the year has begun only in extreme circumstances and only with the permission of the director.

Woodwinds

___ flute
___ oboe
___ clarinet
___ bass clarinet

Brass/Percussion

___ trumpet
___ trombone
___ baritone/euphonium
___ percussion

DO NOT RENT/BUY THE INSTRUMENT BEFORE YOU RECEIVE CONFIRMATION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!