

- VMHS -
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM



HANDBOOK

(951) 894-5750 – 28251 CLINTON KEITH

Building People through Performance

The VMHS Instrumental Music Program:

The Vista Murrieta High School Instrumental Music Program provides an opportunity for students to develop an appreciation for music and encourages the skills and discipline necessary for achieving musical excellence throughout a lifetime of experiences. Students can learn the importance of a cooperative team effort while working with fellow members to accomplish the shared goals of the program. Music students have fun meeting new friends and traveling to new and exciting places. In addition, the program challenges students in areas of personal growth and musicianship.

The Vista Murrieta High School Instrumental Music Program offers a comprehensive music experience through its course offerings. The program offers four different levels of concert band, three different levels of jazz band, percussion ensemble, pep band, chamber ensembles, color guard, and a number of student leadership opportunities. The VMHS Instrumental Music Program makes up an essential part of the culture of Vista Murrieta High School and is one of the school's most successful and publicly recognized programs.

A Note from the Instrumental Music Directors

The mission statement of the Vista Murrieta Instrumental Music Program is "Building People Through Performance." This is achieved through musically challenging our students and helping them to use those musical experiences to enhance every other aspect of their life. The success of the music program centers on both the personal and musical development of our students. We have a great concern for each student's musical and personal values and growth, both during their stay in high school and beyond. As a member of our music program, you will make long lasting friendships and develop a sense of camaraderie that is unique to our organization. By accepting membership in the VMHS Instrumental Music Program, you understand that we expect you to agree to perform to the best of your abilities and to work together with the music staff to make this year's group the finest musical organization that our combined efforts can produce. The Vista Murrieta Instrumental Program has developed a reputation for being one of the elite programs in all aspects of our activity. The opportunity of performing at this level requires students to commit to being excellent in performance and being excellent in life.

The information provided here is designed to help you understand the concepts and policies of our program. We hope that the handbook can be used to answer questions for both parents and students and will prove to be a helpful guide for defining the boundaries that are important for Vista Murrieta High School to have quality performance ensembles. If utilized properly, the concepts of responsibility, teamwork, character, and good citizenship will develop as each student experiences the world of music. If you need information that does not appear here, please call the Vista Murrieta Instrumental Music Department. We will try to assist in whatever way possible.

Musically,

Donald Wade & Brent Levine

Responsibilities of a VMHS Instrumental Music Program Member:

The instrumental music program at Vista Murrieta High School forms a vital and important part of the total high school experience. This group represents a large, colorful, visible, and highly disciplined segment of the school. School life, and many of the programs and traditions of the school, would seem dull without this presence. Our appearances at sporting events, concerts, community, and civic events, add a great deal of color and life to the community.

The Vista Murrieta Instrumental Music Program aims to build people through performance by living by our core values. We are **passionately** committed to our culture of **integrity, respect, discipline, and musical excellence**. It is the pride of a job well done and the accomplishments achieved that make the sacrifices worthwhile. The success of the organization will lead to the success of the individual and vice versa. Band is a win/win situation!

As a member of the VMHS Instrumental Music Program, you have the unique opportunity to create and continue the tradition of high standards that will pave the way for excellence for years to come. Maintaining our culture of excellence requires us to constantly be aware of multiple areas of responsibility.

Responsibility to Ourselves:

It is vitally important that we remain true to ourselves. Living our lives with integrity and respect for ourselves and for others will lead to a full and positive life. We can do this by having “Observable Self Discipline”. Give yourself the opportunities for improvement. Take the initiative when given the chance to interact with those who have more experience than you or those who specialize in your area/instrument. Don’t take constructive criticism personally, but listen to the message being given. Constructive criticism is not meant to personally hurt you, but it is the way in which we improve ourselves. Be critical of your own performance and don’t settle for anything less than what you set out to achieve.

We owe ourselves the benefit of proper equipment and proper lessons. Whenever possible, you should avail yourselves of the best possible quality instrument you can afford and endeavor to take private lessons. The classroom lesson at school is only able to teach at a moderate level and does not make possible the one on one instruction that is so vital to musical growth and development. YOU have the primary responsibility for learning, developing, and contributing your talent to the group.

Responsibility to the School:

The school district provides the necessary setting and facilities for our performances as well as some of the larger, more expensive equipment. We therefore, have the obligation to provide the best possible performances for the school, community, and citizens in our area. **This means, you agree to GIVE UP SOME OF YOUR FREE TIME ON HOLIDAYS AND VACATIONS FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT OF OTHERS.** As students of the VMHS music program, you are a representative of the VMHS student body and the community as a whole.

Responsibility to Music as an Art Form:

The performing arts have always been a vital part of humanity. YOU possess a very special talent. You now have the obligation and responsibility to society to use that talent for the betterment of your community and your country. If you can, you must!

Responsibility to Each Other:

Getting along with each other in our complex society is indeed a difficult task in itself. You have the obligation and responsibility to respect the rights and feelings of others. Antisocial behavior will only breed the same from others. Excessive talking, rumors, and bad manners are all examples of antisocial behavior. This behavior violates our core values of integrity and respect. Always treat others as you wish to be treated.

Responsibility for Promptness and Commitment to the Program:

Band is a group/team activity. Every individual member is important and essential to the group’s success. In this activity, it is very obvious when you are late or not present. YOU MUST arrange your schedule so you are able to honor your commitment to the performing groups. Call times are the times that you are to be in your position, ready to perform. Call times are not the times when you just arrive. **Remember – to be early is to be on time – to be on time is to be late – to be late is inexcusable.**

Responsibility for School Instruments, Equipment, and Facilities:

If you are using a school instrument, you accept the responsibility for maintaining it and taking all precautions to see that the instrument is returned to the school in the same condition it was issued. Any student using a school instrument will need to complete the “Music Instrument Rental Agreement.”

When hosting or attending events/rehearsals, any area (on or off campus) you/we may occupy should be left **cleaner** than how you/we found it, even if it is not your/our mess.

Responsibility for Excellence:

Musical excellence on the part of individuals affects the performances of the whole ensemble. Private instruction during the year is strongly suggested for all students.

Responsibility for Attendance:

You have made a commitment to be in the instrumental music program. In order to have a successful rehearsal and performance, it is essential that we have full attendance. Attendance at scheduled rehearsals and performances is required for membership in the program.

Attendance at Performances

It is impossible to “make-up” the experience of a performance. Furthermore, the other members carry an extra burden because of someone else’s inconsideration. As a member of the VMHS Performing Arts Department, understand that the performance culminates everything we work so hard for during the year. It is therefore essential to your fine arts education that you experience the performance of your art.

Absences from performances are only permitted in the event of an emergency: SEVERE PERSONAL ILLNESS OR DEATH IN THE FAMILY. ALL requests for excused absences must be electronically submitted on an “Absence Excuse Form” to the appropriate director, as soon as the schedule for the semester is received. Any absence after the schedule is presented would have to fall under the “emergency” category. All other absences will be considered “Unexcused.”

“Absence Excuse Forms” can be found on the band website on the “Resources” page. Verbal approval, email, or handwritten notes are not sufficient – the “Absence Excuse Form” MUST be filled out.

Unexcused Absence from Performance: Being absent from a performance or leaving early due to work, homework, birthday parties, other non-essential school activities, non-emergency doctor appointments, tutoring, and vacations, are not excused. An unexcused absence from a performance is **unacceptable** and will result in the student’s grade being lowered to an “F” for that grading period and may result in automatic dismissal from the ensemble.

Attendance at Rehearsals

Absences from rehearsals are only permitted in the event of SEVERE personal illness, death in the family, or other special circumstances that are PREAPPROVED by your appropriate director. Absent students will be replaced temporarily whenever possible in order for the group to have a successful rehearsal. If there are problems with leaving early or unexcused absences from a rehearsal or performance, the appropriate consequences regarding performing opportunities will be enforced by the directors. Families should schedule appointments and other events on non-rehearsal days.

Unexcused Absence from Rehearsal: An unexcused absence from a rehearsal is unacceptable and will result in the student’s grade being lowered one letter grade per infraction, for that grading period. Excessive absences, even for the above reasons, will cause severe problems and could result in loss of position or rank within the organization.

Tardiness: Rehearsals and performances are scheduled at specific times and it is expected that you are there before the required time. Attendance will be taken promptly at the scheduled time. If there are problems with tardiness, the appropriate consequences regarding performance opportunities will be enforced by the directors.

“To be early is to be on time. To be on time is to be late. To be late is inexcusable.”

In case of an emergency or sudden illness just prior to an after school rehearsal or performance, please email the appropriate director.

blevine@murrieta.k12.ca.us

dwade@murrieta.k12.ca.us

The Performance Groups:

CONCERT GROUPS

The band is divided into several smaller performing groups based on ability and/or grade. Throughout the year, these groups perform individually in music festivals and in scheduled concerts.

THE VARSITY MARCHING BAND

The Varsity Marching Band and Color Guard join together during the fall season to perform as a combined competition performance unit. They perform at all home games, local parades, and in numerous competitions throughout Southern California and beyond. Members of the Varsity Marching Band are pulled from the Junior Varsity Marching Band by audition.

JUNIOR VARSITY MARCHING BAND

The Junior Varsity Marching Band meets in the fall season to perform as a combined performance unit. They perform pregame at all home games, pep music during football games, at selected pep rallies, and community events.

JAZZ BAND

Jazz Ensembles will be formed based on ability level, which will be determined by audition. The Jazz Ensembles will perform at Jazz Festivals, home concerts, and at various community events.

WINTER DRUM LINE

At the discretion of the instructional staff, the Winter Drum Line will perform at various competitions sponsored by the Southern California Percussion Alliance (SCPA) and/or Winter Guard International (WGI). At the end of the first semester, the Percussion Staff will select, by audition, the students who will perform in the Winter Drum Line. Competitions are held in gymnasiums throughout Southern California with the possibility of traveling throughout the United States.

WINTER COLOR GUARD

During the marching season, the tall flags (usually referred to as the Color Guard) participate with the Golden Alliance at all rehearsals, field shows, home football games, and parades. At the end of the first semester, the Color Guard Staff will select, by audition, the students who will perform in the Winter Guard. The Winter Color Guard will perform at various competitions sponsored by the Winter Guard Association of Southern California (WGASC) and/or Winter Guard International (WGI). Competitions are held in gymnasiums throughout Southern California with the possibility of traveling throughout the United States.

Band Room Rules:

There are a lot of students that pass through the band room every day, and for everyone to co-exist there must be some guidelines.

1. Do not leave anything lying around; put all of your belongings in your locker or designated area. Anything left out will be put in lost and found, thrown away, or confiscated.
2. Gum, food, drinks, and hats/hoods are not permitted in the Band Room.
3. No horseplay.
4. No throwing objects.
5. No skateboarding or bike riding.
6. Only VMHS Instrumental Music Students and Parents are allowed in the Band Room.
7. Keep your instrument in its assigned slot/locker/room. Do NOT use other people's instruments.
8. Pick-up trash and keep the room clean - even if it isn't yours.
9. Ask the Director(s) before using the telephone.
10. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be set to "silent" or "off" while in the Band Room.

General Policies for Special Situations:

1. **TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, DRUGS, DANGEROUS OBJECTS:** All school guidelines are in effect for all Band, Drum Line, and Color Guard activities. Violations could lead to immediate dismissal from the program.
2. **CANDY, GUM, SODA, SNACKS:** At **no time** will these items be permitted in the Band Room. **NO FOOD OR DRINK** is permitted on the bus unless students are specifically instructed differently.
3. **ONLY PLAY ON YOUR INSTRUMENT:** You are **NOT** permitted to play another student's instrument or other equipment.
4. **REFRESHMENT PERIOD:** Performers are usually permitted a portion of each event where they may obtain refreshments. This period will be designated at each event. ***There is to be no eating or drinking while in uniform. Only water is permitted.***
5. **ASSEMBLING TO PERFORM:** The group will assemble together and move in an orderly manner to the designated area.
6. **NO VISITORS AT FOOTBALL GAMES:** We will sit together at football games. No visitors will be allowed in the band seating area. We are there to support the team and provide a service to our school.
7. **MUSIC:** All music must be turned in or paid for.
8. **MAKE-UP, JEWELRY, PIERCINGS, FACIAL HAIR, AND UNNATURAL HAIR COLOR:** Are not permitted for performances unless it is part of an approved costume. Appropriate grooming for performances is always expected and enforced.
9. **GENERAL CONDUCT:** Foul and/or abusive language or gestures will not be tolerated. Any actions considered being disrespectful by the staff, parent volunteer, or other persons will be dealt with firmly.
10. **PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION (PDA):** The basic rule is **DO NOT DO IT!** While personal standards may vary from family to family, and from peer group to peer group, it is essential that we maintain a policy that can serve all parties. We must maintain an atmosphere that does not encourage inappropriate behavior and which does not infringe upon the rights of others. Some personal behavior can be embarrassing to others and often times gives a bad impression of our group to others. It is easier to maintain a reasonable atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie without the pressures of dealing with inappropriate public displays.
11. **MAKE-UP WORK:** Performances are **NOT** excuses for missing schoolwork. If you miss a class due to a performance or other band event, it is your responsibility to make up that work immediately.
12. **ARRANGE TO HAVE A RIDE HOME:** Please arrange to have a ride home after all performances and rehearsals. Make sure you inform your ride of the correct pick-up time and location.

Travel Procedures:

1. A **MEDICAL RELEASE FORM** must be signed and on file with the Head Chaperone before any student may participate. Special health problems should also be noted so that adequate care can be provided when away from home. Please update the form during the year if necessary.
2. **ADULT SUPERVISION** is provided on all Band, Drum Line, and Color Guard trips. Students traveling to an event with the performance group must return in the same manner, with the following exception: **only in the event of a family emergency**. In such a case, students may return with **their own parents or guardian** if a note has been given to the Director/s, relieving the District and the Director/s of all responsibility and liability.
3. **BOARDING AND EXITING THE BUSES:** Students will not board the bus until instructed to do so. Students will remain on the bus and stay seated until instructed otherwise (except in emergency situations.)
4. **PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION:** All rules regarding PDA apply to riding the bus as well. PDA will not be allowed at any time. The Band staff or chaperone may ask you to change seats or busses if they feel the need to do so.

5. **GENERAL CONDUCT: YELLING IS NOT PERMITTED AT ANY TIME.** Yelling can startle the driver and cause serious accidents. All body parts must stay inside the bus. Moving from seat to seat is not permitted. Quiet talking is permitted. No screaming. No flash photography.
6. **BUS ASSIGNMENTS:** All students will be assigned a specific bus prior to departure. Switching busses is NOT permitted. Return to your seat quickly so that attendance may be checked. We are usually in a hurry and this can be very time consuming. You are **required** to obey the driver, staff member, chaperone or person in charge of the bus in a courteous manner.
7. **VALUABLES:** The Music Booster organization or Director(s) assume no responsibility for any personal items. It is suggested that valuable items be left at home.
8. **QUIET ZONE:** Talking is allowed only while the bus is traveling on the freeway; students must be silent when the bus is on surface streets or upon entering any parking lot.
9. **CLEANING THE BUS:** Busses are to be cleaned and free of trash at the end of all of our trips. All windows are to be rolled up as well.
10. **LOADING EQUIPMENT:** Students are responsible for loading and unloading **their own** equipment, personal belongings, and instruments before and after all events.
11. **PICK-UP TIMES:** At the conclusion of all events, students should arrange to be picked up at school **promptly at the designated pick-up time.** Pick-up times are listed in the itinerary that is sent home with students prior to the event.

Members Must Travel With the Band:

The Band frequently travels and participates in activities away from VMHS. All band members are required to travel to and from band functions in vehicles which are provided or approved by the school officials. Any exception to this must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. A written request may be made **IN ADVANCE** from the parent/guardian and approved by the Band Director.
2. Arrangements for the member's equipment must be made before departure.
3. The member **WILL NOT** be surrendered to anyone other than his/her parent/guardian unless the written request signed by the parent/guardian directs that the member be surrendered to a specifically named, responsible individual.
4. Before a member may leave the Band, the parent/guardian, or other individual to whom the member is to be surrendered, and the member must be together to report their departure to the Head Chaperone or Band Director.

Parent Conferences:

Email contact is the best way to contact the Band Directors. Please **DO NOT** show up at the Band Director's office or at rehearsals/performance unannounced for a conference.

Concert Season Dress Code:

The Director's will advise all of the performing groups of the appropriate dress for each performance. Students are required to come to each event or performance properly dressed and groomed. The dress code for our concert ensembles is as follows:

Women: Solid black shirt with 3/4 - full length sleeves (no sleeveless or short sleeve tops, may have decorative beading, etc on the front, but must be black in color), solid black dress pants (no black jeans), black low heeled shoes, black nylons.

Men: Black tuxedo, white long-sleeved tux shirt, black bow tie and cummerbund, black socks, and black dress shoes.

Grading Procedures:

It is the belief of the VMHS Instrumental Music Staff that the “PERFORMANCE” culminates everything that we work for in class and is a VITAL part of the student’s high school music education! Missing a performance is the equivalent of receiving an “F” on a major test in any other academic class and is an experience that cannot be made up! Extreme special circumstances for missing a performance should be discussed with the appropriate director on an individual basis as discussed in the “Attendance” portion of this packet. If a student cannot make the commitment to attend performances and/or rehearsals, he or she should consider dropping their Instrumental Music courses.

Earning a Letter Grade: Performing Ensembles Offered During the School Day

A syllabus will be handed out at the beginning of each school year outlining each particular class grading criteria.

Earning a Letter Grade: Marching Band

The Marching Band meets as an 8th period class in the evening hours. Official attendance is taken and reported to the school. Students receive an academic grade that gets added to their transcript, just like all of their other classes. Grades are earned on the following basis:

Passing Off Music: Each student is responsible for memorizing and passing off music during the marching season. Each student will receive a “Music Pass Off Sheet”. The “Music Pass Off Sheet” will list what songs need to be passed off, what date the songs need to be passed off by, and the date of each attempt the student made to pass off the music. Students will have their grade lowered one letter grade for each song not passed off by the due date (for that grading period.) Students who do not successfully pass off music, but show continued effort towards passing off their music will not have their grade penalized. However, proof of effort must be shown through ongoing attempts at completion.

Attendance: Please see the “Attendance” portion of this packet.

The final semester grade will be an average of each of the trimester (progress report) grades issued.

Music Audition Procedures:

Within each group:

Any member of the music staff, including clinicians, or any other person deemed suitable by the Director(s) may audition individual sections at anytime for chair placement.

Auditions can consist of:

- Scales
- Portions of the literature currently in the Band’s repertoire
- Sight Reading
- Routines

Auditions for changing groups:

Individual auditions are normally scheduled at the end of the school year for the following year’s Fall Semester. It is mandatory that all students (except for seniors) audition for the following year’s Fall Semester in order for proper placement in the group most appropriately fitting their talent and work ethic. Some students may be asked to audition at the end of the Fall Semester for the following Spring Semester in some situations. *Proper instrumentation and overall balance of the individual Bands will be a primary consideration when placing students in the different groups.* Auditions can be held at any time at the discretion of the Director(s) and may include auditions for individual spots or for an entire section. Auditions may be held by any music staff member, clinician, or any person deemed qualified by the Director(s).

Auditions can consist of:

- Scales and arpeggios
- Prepared piece/etude
- Sight Reading

Auditioners will listen for the following:

- Tone Quality
- Rhythmic Accuracy
- Intonation
- Musicality
- Technique
- Range
- Endurance

Every effort will be made to place each individual in the appropriate Band. The decision of the Director(s) is final.

Marching Band Auditions:

Auditions for Marching Band will be held at the same time as the end of the year placement auditions.

Alternates: Some members of the Varsity Marching Band will be offered alternated positions and may be called upon to fill a vacancy in the Varsity Marching Band. Positions become available as varsity members encounter attendance problems, academic eligibility problems, performance inadequacies, physical injuries, or other problems.

Music Program Awards and Certificates: Twice each year, the Band Boosters host an awards banquet. The Fall Banquet is to honor the students who participated in the Marching Band. The Spring Banquet is to honor the students in the Concert Bands, Drum Line, Color Guard, and Jazz Band. The events are an opportunity to celebrate the students' achievements and reflect back on the events from that year.

Students will be eligible for the following recognition:

- Certificate of Participation – for one semester of participation in any IMD activity
- Bronze Patch – for two consecutive semesters of participation in any IMD activity
- Activity Varsity Letter – for four consecutive semesters of participation in any IMD activity
- Silver Patch – for six consecutive semesters of participation in any IMD activity
- Gold Patch – for eight consecutive semesters of participation in any IMD activity
- Jazz Patch – for two semesters of participation in Jazz Band
- Winter Drum Line Patch – for participation in Winter Drum Line
- Winter Color Guard Patch – for participation in Winter Color Guard
- Wind Ensemble Patch – for two consecutive semesters of participation in Wind Ensemble
- Leadership Star – for serving in a leadership position for two consecutive semesters

Students who wish to be recognized and receive their due awards and certificates will need to complete a "Recognition Application" that confirms that the student has met the following requirements to earn the above recognitions:

- Student was enrolled in an Instrumental Music program course
- Student must not earn a grade lower than a "C" in any of their band classes
- Student must not have any unexcused absences
- Student must not have had any "Code of Ethics" violations
- Student must not have had any school discipline issues
- Student completed at least one band sponsored community service project within the school year
- Student must have all school debts cleared

Student Leaders: Student Leaders are assistants to the Director(s), Staff, and Booster Parents. They are to be given your full attention when they are performing their duties. Most of the duties that they will be performing were at the request of the Director(s), Staff, or Boosters, so they are technically acting in our place. Leaders will be responsible for the MUSICAL PROFICIENCY of their sections, completion of ASSIGNED TASKS, and the GENERAL ORGANIZATION of the program. While Directors, Staff, and Boosters will be giving guidance every step of the way, to the outsider, our program should have the appearance of being entirely student run.

Leadership Selection Process: Each year there will be a number of leadership positions available for students to apply for. Student Leaders will be selected on the basis of musicianship, leadership, attitude, responsibility, maturity, past performance/behavior/dependability, and seniority. Students who are interested in a leadership position may be asked to complete the assigned leadership application and essay, and complete an interview with the director(s) and other selected staff. Students applying for Drum Major may be asked to conduct a marching rehearsal and music rehearsal as well. Once the application process has been completed and the leaders have been selected, students will attend a leadership retreat over the summer as well as be required to attend planning meetings with the director(s) and staff regularly throughout the year.