

Norwin Middle School Band



Fun Through Excellence!

2019-2020 Handbook

Welcome

Hello, and welcome to the Norwin Middle School Band! It is my pleasure to be the Band Director at Norwin Middle School and to welcome you as a student or parent to the program.

My motto as a music teacher is "Fun Through Excellence." I believe that the study of music makes students better people academically, socially, emotionally and, of course, musically. Students in our band program work hard to learn, improve and strive for excellence, which creates an atmosphere of personal growth and exciting music making. The policies laid out in this handbook are designed to guide the band program toward these goals.

We have a second teacher on our band staff at the middle school as well. Mr. Kandrack is the Associate Band Director at Norwin High School, and a percussion specialist. He will be at school every day this year to teach our 7th and 8th grade percussion classes. Both he and I will have opportunities to work with all of the students over the course of the school year.

I look forward to a fun and productive school year! Please feel free to contact me with any questions, or visit the Middle School Band page on the school website for more information.

Musically yours,

Ross Cohen
Band Director
rcohen@norwinsd.org
(724) 861-3010 ext. 4312

Ensembles

7th Grade Band/8th Grade Band

These are the main ensembles at the school, to include every band student in their respective grades. These bands are divided into class sections - organized by instrument group - that will meet on alternating days throughout the school year. Students' band grades will be based on these classes, as well as attendance at concerts and required activity period rehearsals on specified days. The 7th grade will be split into a "Blue" and "Gold" band in order to accommodate the number of students on stage at one time. The bands will be split arbitrarily by class section.

These bands will each perform at the Winter and Spring concerts. The 8th Grade Band will also perform on the field at the Homecoming football game, as well as on a combined concert with the high school bands in February.

Wind Ensemble:

The purpose of the Wind Ensemble is to provide an outlet for students who desire a greater challenge and more rigorous music instruction. The Wind Ensemble performs traditional concert band literature, and is open to all instruments (brass, woodwind and percussion) and students in both 7th and 8th grade. Rehearsals are on Wednesdays after school, and the Wind Ensemble will perform at the Winter and Spring Band concerts. Additional performances may be added as opportunities become available.

Jazz Band:

The purpose of the Jazz Band is to rehearse, perform and learn about jazz, commercial and popular musical styles. The Jazz Band is open to all instruments and students in both 7th and 8th grade. The Jazz Band will rehearse once per week during Activity Period, and will perform on the Winter Concert, as well as the Jazz Concert at the High School in May.

Auditions for Wind Ensemble and Jazz Band:

Due to the advanced nature of the music and the limited rehearsal time, students must audition in order to participate in these ensembles. Auditions will be held in September and again in January. There will be one audition for both Wind Ensemble and Jazz Band. Students may participate in both if they'd like.

Music will be given out approximately two weeks in advance of the audition. Students will receive some initial guidance on the music and how to prepare it, then will be expected to practice it on their own. Auditions will be scored on a

scale of 1-4 in the categories of Tone, Rhythm, Accuracy, and Sight Reading (playing a piece of music that you are handed on the spot). As a baseline, students should earn a score of 3 or higher ("Proficient") in Tone, Rhythm and Accuracy in order to be eligible for these ensembles, which would demonstrate a general comfort in reading music and playing their instrument. Musicianship, technique, range, and idiosyncrasies of each instrument will also factor into selection.

Auditions will be heard one student at a time. When selecting students for the ensembles, the directors will be as inclusive as possible, while also ensuring that rehearsals can be productive and efficient, and that each ensemble can satisfy their educational goal as stated above.

Instruments in the rhythm section of the jazz band - piano, bass, guitar and drum set - will be limited to one or two students per instrument. This is due to the nature of their role in the band, which only allows for one musician to be playing at a time.

Seats and Part assignments

8th grade: All 8th graders will take a seating audition in September and again in January. The audition music and grading rubric will be the same as from the Wind Ensemble auditions. This will determine what parts students will be assigned on the concert music. Only the first parts will be placed in chair order, if at all. Second parts will not be placed in chair order, so there will be no "last chair" student.

7th grade: 7th graders will not have a formal seating audition at the beginning of the year. Mr. Cohen will assign parts and seats as appropriate based on musicianship and technical ability as observed in class.

Part and seat assignments are made with the purpose of giving each student an appropriately challenging part to learn, establishing musical leadership, and creating cohesive units within a large ensemble.

Activity Period

Full Band

On the dates below, 7th and 8th grade will have full band rehearsals during activity period. These rehearsals are curricular in nature and allow for all of the instruments to rehearse together ahead of the concerts. Attendance at these rehearsals is required and will count for a participation grade. Students will be excused only with a pass from a classroom teacher for reasons such as tutoring or urgent makeup work, or a club advisor for a unique event or special activity.

Individual practice

A limited number of practice rooms are available to students each day for individual practice during Activity Period. Students must sign up for these rooms with Mr. Cohen or Mr. Kandrack. Only one student will be allowed in a practice room at a time.

Mr. Cohen or Mr. Kandrack may decide to hold rehearsals or sectionals for small groups of students, or ask individuals to come for specific instruction as necessary.

Students without a specific reason to be in the band room will not be permitted during Activity Period.

Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities:

In order to participate in extracurricular activities related to the band, students must display appropriate behavior and effort during their band class, and must meet academic expectations in their core classes. These activities include Jazz Band, Wind Ensemble, field trips, parties/social events, or any other opportunities that occur outside of class and required concerts. Decisions about eligibility for these activities will be made by Norwin Middle School administration in consultation with Mr. Cohen and Mr. Kandrack.

Instruments

In order to maintain continuity and develop the advanced technical skills required for band at the middle school level and above, it is generally considered best practice that students continue playing the instruments that they started on. Students will be allowed to switch instruments after Mr. Cohen consults with the student and the parents. The student and parents should understand both the potential benefits and challenges of switching instruments, then make an informed decision. Consideration should be given to the student's potential for success on one instrument or another, the need for given instruments within the band, and opportunities for the student to further their musical endeavors. If switching instruments would require switching classes, the guidance department and administration must authorize the schedule change as well.

Students should not switch instruments between school years without consulting guidance and/or Mr. Cohen first.

Concert Dates

Homecoming rehearsal (8th grade only)

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Norwin *High School*

Homecoming football game (8th grade only)

Friday, September 27, 2019

5:00 p.m. for pizza - must stay through halftime, approximately 8:30. Can stay with band or be dismissed at that time.

* There is a parent meeting in the high school auditorium at 5:00 where you can meet Mr. Daniels and some of the other high school staff. The meeting will last approximately 20 minutes.

Winter Band Concert (all band students)

Wednesday, December 11, 2019

Students arrive 6:30 p.m.

Concert 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Combined Band Concert (8th grade only)

Thursday, February 6, 2020

Students arrive 6:30 p.m.

Concert 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Norwin *High School*

Concert Band Camp (Wind Ensemble only)

Friday, March 6 & Saturday, March 7, 2020

Friday after school rehearsal, Saturday morning rehearsal and afternoon concert

Exact times TBD

PMEA – Music Performance Assessment (8th grade and Wind Ensemble only)

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

During school day, exact time TBD

Jazz Band Concert (Jazz Band only)

Monday, May 4, 2020

Students arrive 6:30 p.m.

Concert 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Norwin *High School*

Spring Band Concert (all band students)

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

Students arrive 6:30 p.m.

Concert 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Concert Attendance

Attendance at band performances is ***mandatory*** for all students, and will count towards their ***grade*** in the course. Students will be excused only for significant illness, medical or family emergencies, or major life events such as family weddings. Sports are generally not excused as there are multiple games in a season and only one concert during a semester, however these may be handled on a case by case basis by Mr. Cohen. In order for an absence to be excused, parents must provide written notice to Mr. Cohen at least one month in advance of the performance date for other scheduled events, and as soon as possible in case of emergencies or illness.

Students will NOT be excused from concerts for reasons including but not limited to social events, too much homework/studying or lack of transportation. Any case not specifically covered here will be handled on a case by case basis by Mr. Cohen. Students who miss the concert and are unexcused will be given a make up assignment in order to earn points towards their grade.

Concert Attire

Ladies should wear a black dress, or black pants or skirt with a white top. All dresses and skirts must go below the knees (consider seating positions on a stage). Please no tank tops, crop tops or tee shirts, and no colors or busy patterns (i.e. large black and white stripes).

Gentlemen should wear black pants or black suit and a solid white dress shirt. Ties and bow ties are optional, and may include colors or designs.

All clothes should be school appropriate and formal in nature. Please do NOT wear jeans or sneakers.

* For the Homecoming Game, 8th graders should wear a Norwin tee shirt OR blue shirt, jeans (pants, not shorts or capris) and tennis shoes.

Grades

Band grades will be based on the following items:

Class participation- 5 points per day

2 points – having instrument and music

3 points – actively participating and engaging in class

A student who does not have their instrument will still be expected to sit in their assigned seat and follow along during rehearsal. There is still learning that can happen without physically playing an instrument. If available, a practice instrument will be given to the student so at the very least they can practice fingerings, or play along if all necessary equipment is available. *Forgetting an instrument is not an excuse to do make up work for another class.*

Playing tests – Playing tests will be assigned throughout the semester. Students will assigned to a practice room to record an assigned exercise or section of concert music on an iPad.

Written work- Music theory/history assignments, listening journals or written responses to guided listening, etc.

Concert participation – 20% of overall points for that quarter. An unexcused absence will lower the student's grade by 2 letters. (See concert attendance policy above)

* Percussion students should refer to Mr. Kandrack's syllabus for specific grading information.

Honors Bands

There are various opportunities for students to audition for and participate in honors bands around the region. Information about these ensembles will be distributed ahead of application deadlines throughout the year. If teacher rankings and/or recommendations are necessary, students may be asked to play an informal audition for the teacher if they haven't done so recently for the purposes of demonstrating the criteria on the recommendation forms.

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Period: _____ Days: 1,3,5 / 2,4,6

I have read and understand the 2019-20 Norwin Middle School Band Handbook.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Name

Please return this page to Mr. Cohen by September 3rd for a grade.

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Period: _____ Days: 1,3,5 / 2,4,6

I have read and understand the 2019-20 Norwin Middle School Band Handbook.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Name

Please return this page to Mr. Cohen by September 3rd for a grade.