

Recruitment Letter

Dear Parent,

I want to tell you about a great opportunity available for your child at Harris Middle School. The Harris Middle School Band is one of the premiere groups on campus. According to many studies, students who participate in music and band have higher test scores regardless of socioeconomic background. Even today college admissions continue to cite participation in music programs as an important factor in making admission decisions. The studies go even more in depth about what your student will succeed in.

The band at Harris Middle School is our school's premier musical organization and is the largest student organization at our school. The band performs several concerts throughout the year, plays for many school and civic events, and even serves as a pep band for some of our school's athletic events. The band has also earned several awards during the last few years including high remarks as concert festival and solo and ensemble. Our school building is only a few years old and this gives us one of the largest and state of the art facilities in Bedford County and even Tennessee.

Most students who join the HMS Band continue to perform in the Shelbyville Central High School Band. The SCHS Band has developed an extensive list of awards and honors and during the last few years has traveled to perform in Washington D.C., Toronto, Canada, and New York City. The band performs for many community events. This past year they performed for the Vietnam Moving Wall Memorial and with the Nashville Symphony. Many band students go on to perform in college band and earn scholarships for their musical achievements.

It is my hope that your child will consider joining the HMS Beginning Band to start a wonderful musical journey. Sixth grade students who join the band do not need any prior musical experience. Band is also an academic course, so students earn a grade for participating. Band students can also participate in other student organizations including HMS sports.

Following this recruitment letter is important information for you to look over regarding the Harris Middle School Band Program. If your child is interested in becoming a band member, please fill out the form on page seven and return it to Mr. Callahan at Harris Middle School. To find out more about how your child can be a part of the HMS Band please visit our band website: www.harrismsband.weebly.com or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Callahan at (931) 684-5195 ext 1007 or Callahanr@bedfordk12tn.net. I look forward to hearing from you!

Musically yours,

Rontrell M. Callahan

Harris Middle School Band Program

The Band program is the largest and most visible representative of our school. As such, each band member, as well as the Directors, has the responsibility of being a positive ambassador for Harris Middle School. In order to accomplish this goal we must have a set of guidelines and procedures. Please study this information carefully.

♪Mr. Callahan's Expectations for Harris Middle School Band:

All Band members are expected to:

- come to rehearsal/ class mentally and physically prepared to participate.
- consistently practice at home.
- always strive to be a great person, student and musician.

All Band Parents are expected to:

- make sure your child has the proper equipment and supplies to participate.
- encourage consistent practice in an appropriate location at home.
- make every effort to support concert and fund raising events.
- make every effort to support your child musical growth.

Mr. Callahan is expected to:

- be prepared for daily rehearsal, set short and long term objectives, and steer the ensemble toward excellence.
- provide feedback to students regarding musical and behavioral objectives.
- always strive to model adults, musician and educator.
- respond to parents emails or questions in a timely manner.

♪Performances

All of the bands at Harris Middle School perform numerous times throughout the school year. Most of these concerts will occur outside normal school day however, all students are expected to participate in ALL performances. An informational letter and communication slip are always sent home at least 3 weeks prior to the event. In addition, the dates will be posted on the band website:
www.harrismsband.weebly.com

♪Concert Dress Code

For concert performances, students are asked to report in concert attire. Boys and girls are asked that they wear black slacks or dress pants, black socks, and black dress shoes with band polo shirt. For **pep band and drumline performances**, students should wear their band polo shirt with blue jeans.

♪Band Booster Organization

The growth of the Harris Band Program has necessitated the formation of an official Band Booster Organization. This group supports the funding and function of the Harris Middle School Band Program. This group also holds meetings periodically throughout the year to plan events and discuss program needs. Please plan on becoming an active part in this vital organization.

♪Grading and Assessment

Each student begins each nine weeks with 100 points. Deductions are made for missing class materials, and poor rehearsal technique. These deductions include 13 points for every day the student cannot

perform. This includes instruments, reeds, mouthpieces, etc. Other deductions include 3 points for missing accessories such as pencil, music, etc. No points will be deducted from a student's daily grade until a student has been warned and given a chance to address their lack of rehearsal technique.

- A. Daily Effort – 5 pts
- B. Materials – 3 pts
- C. Instrument – 5 pts
- D. Performances – 31 pts
- E. Skills Tests – see below

Skills Test Grade Nine -Weeks Point Deduction

A	93-100	no deduction
B	85-92	1 point deduction
C	75-84	2 point deduction
D	70-74	3 point deduction
F	69 or below	4 point deduction

For example, if a student earns an 87 on a skills test, he/she will have 1 point deducted from his/her nine weeks grade.

When determining playing test grades, much consideration is given to the individual student's experience and ability. Keep in mind that certain skills should be attained at certain times. Students who practice regularly should show improvement from day to day and week to week.

♪Pass-Off System

Pass-Off System is a list of assignments designed to cover a number of technical and musical fundamental.

RATIONALE-The pass-off system is a proven way to improve the individual musicianship of the school band. The pass-off system provides a vehicle for the individual student musician to progress at his/her own pace through a sequential course of study of individual instruction in instrumental music.

Some are easy and can be passed off immediately and gets progressively more challenging.

PROCEDURES-Pass-off lessons will be done during the regularly scheduled band class time as well as after or before school. These lessons will be done individually and completed by Mr. Callahan.

- The Pass-Off sheet will cover lines from the method book, scales, breathing exercise, lines from concert band music, etc.
- A new pass off sheet will be given at the beginning of every nine weeks.
- Pass- offs will count towards their grade.

SEATING-Pass-off completion will be used to determine seating within the HMS Band. The person who has progressed the most within the pass-off books will sit first chair within the section, the person with the next largest amount of completed pages will sit second, etc.

I may or may not cover the pass off lines in class - this creates an opportunity for individual motivation and learning! Students will be expected to play correct notes, rhythms, articulations, and dynamics in the correct key and time signature without any prompting from the band director.

♪Discipline and Academic Expectations

Each band member is to conduct him/herself within the rules and regulations set by the Bedford County Public School System. While with the band or on band activities, members are expected to behave in such a manner as to bring honor and promote pride to Harris Middle School, our community, and our band program. Band by its very name suggests oneness, teamwork, ensemble, and great cooperation, with everyone striving for a common goal. We are a team, and if one member of our team gets in to serious trouble, it reflects poorly on the organization. The opposite is also true; when one member of our team achieves greatness in any area, it reflects positively on the band program. Band membership is a privilege, not a right. Band members choose to join and therefore are expected to exhibit exemplary behavior.

All band members are encouraged to study hard and maintain acceptable grades. Students' academic progress is tracked regularly and teachers are free to express concern about any band member's behavior or academic issues. We recognize that band members are often involved in a number of activities, so it is essential that a balance be achieved between school, home, and organizational\team commitments. We want all of our band members to enjoy and excel in all of their endeavors.

♪Fund Raising

Each year the Harris Middle School Band participates in a fundraiser. The fundraiser will provide funds to buy music, instruments, equipment, and other necessary expenses for the band.

The purchases always benefit the entire program; therefore, we encourage 100% participation in fund raising efforts. We have numerous challenges and rewards planned for the students; for example, gift cards and prizes are offered as incentives for fundraiser participation. We have a large fundraising goal for the band this year. Because of this, we have set a goal to raise \$2,000 to \$3,000 this year. We have at least 3 fundraisers each year.

♪Practice

Like any life pursuit, practicing is an integral part of consistent development culminating in enjoyment through self-expression. To achieve this, students are required to practice a minimum of 15 minutes per day (1 hour 45 minutes a week). The quality and success of the band is determined by each member's dedication to pursuing excellence in their individual performance. Individual musical errors must be tackled at home in private so that our limited rehearsal time can be maximized. Productive band members should have a daily at home practice routine. A good practice session will include three sections: 1) warm-Up, 2) practicing new and/or difficult music, and 3) play something familiar and fun. Practice does not just include playing the instrument. Practice can also include rhythm counting and theory study.

♪Private Lessons

All band students have the opportunity and are HIGHLY encouraged to study privately with a professional teacher.

♪Rental Information

In September we will have a band night. During this, I will be there along with Music and Arts (who supply our musical instruments for rental) to answer questions. This is the night where you will be able to rent or purchase an instrument. **This night is required by all parents** and I will announce the date during the first days of school. Below is the rental fee for most instruments.

Most instruments: the rental fee is \$25 a month

Saxophones: the rental fee is \$39 a month

To get your rental started, Music and Arts requires the following:

- A. Present a check card, credit card, or debit card and agree to set your rental payments on autopay.
- OR
- B. Pay a deposit. \$110 for most instruments, \$220 for saxophones.

If you already have an instrument, you must still come to purchase your book (most instruments: \$10. Percussion: \$15). It is also highly recommended, but not required, that you purchase a portable music stand (\$13) at that time. Students who are using school instruments will need to purchase their mouthpiece (usually \$30-\$70). Damage coverage is available on all rented instruments for another \$4 per month.

♪Remind (Text Message Update for Students and Parents)

Remind is a texting service used by teachers throughout the country for added communication with both parents and students. Remind is also a one way mass communication tool using email or text messaging or both. It is safe and respects privacy by keeping all phone numbers and email addresses anonymous. Messages sent to you will not have other email addresses attached, or phone numbers attached with texts. The students are signed up with a class group. Students will get reminders for after school activities, homework, performances, concerts, etc. Parents will receive more broad news items to keep you up to date on what is going on in band.

Signing up is quick and easy. Please follow the directions below if you would like to sign up! Again, this is for both parent cell phones and student cell phones!

6th Grade Beginning Band Parents and Students: To subscribe to 6th Grade Band text: @4dff7d to: (615) 603-3717 or send a blank email to email 4dff7d@mail.remind.com

7th Grade Intermediate Band Parents and Students: To subscribe to 7th Grade Band text: @c5751 to: (615) 603-3717 or send a blank email to c5751@mail.remind.com

How do you sign up?

In May each year, the band director will make presentations at the feeder elementary schools for fifth graders for rising sixth graders. The preferred way to join band is to pre-register in the spring of the preceding school year.

However, students frequently join band at different times. Students new to Shelbyville after the start of the school year, or who wish to join later than their peers, should contact a band director to make necessary arrangements. Students who join after the late summer/early fall time may have fewer instrument choices since a balanced mix of instruments is considered as new students are enrolled.

Students may also sign up on the band website.

Who can join band at HMS?

All students, regardless of musical ability or background in music instruction are invited to join the band.

Beginning band is first offered in sixth grade at Harris Middle. Students in this class move into seventh grade intermediate and eighth grade advanced band classes as their skills advance to an appropriate level.

When do band classes take place?

Band is scheduled during the Related Arts class periods

Where do I get an instrument?

Parents: Beginners need instruments that play easily, and these will only be quality instruments in good repair! If purchasing a musical instrument is new to you, please call a band director for advice before buying an instrument from anyone other than a recognized musical instrument retailer. The band director is ready and willing to help parents understand what they are purchasing. Do not purchase an instrument on the internet unless you have specific, current knowledge of instrument brands and models. The band directors can provide you with a list of recommended instrument brands.

If purchasing a used instrument from a friend or relative, feel free to ask one of the band directors to evaluate its condition and quality. Bear in mind that hand-me-down instruments may need expensive repair and reconditioning to be suitable for a beginner to play. This can sometimes be as expensive as buying a quality used instrument. The band directors can competently evaluate a used or older instrument, but you should also consider having the instrument evaluated and a repair estimate made by a professional instrument repair shop. Both local music stores, Music Stop and Music and Arts Center, contract instrument repairs to a professional shop, and the band directors also recommend the repair shop.

Aren't instruments expensive?

You'll need to visit a music store, such as Music and Arts Center to get a specific answer to this question since makes and models of instruments, whether new or used, vary widely. In general, flutes, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, and percussion kits can be rented from \$20 to \$50 per month, depending on the instrument. (Saxophones are more expensive than others.) The large school-owned brass instruments, such as French horn, baritone, and tuba are supplied by HMS Band.

I don't know what instrument I want to play?

Not a problem - most beginning band students don't know what they want to play. Each student will have the opportunity to learn, hear, and try out many of the instruments.

What if I'm not successful on an instrument?

Mr. Callahan will evaluate each student on each instrument and help guide the student to the instrument that best fit them. Setting your child up for success means finding an instrument that is easy for them to produce a tone on, which makes practice and playing that instrument enjoyable. It also produces a well-balanced band. Each of the instrument sections needs an appropriate number of players to make a band complete.

What if I can't afford to be in band?

Financial limitations should never stop a student from participating in band. Parents may talk confidentially to the band directors when a student needs financial assistance of any level in order to participate. In addition to the regular school-owned instruments (French horn, baritone, tuba,) the school owns a number of flutes, clarinets, trumpets, and trombones which are available first for students who need financial assistance.

Do you have to be able to read music to be in band? What if you have never had music lessons before?

No previous musical experience or knowledge at all is necessary to participate in band. Students are taught everything "from scratch". How to read music is taught simultaneously with how to play the instrument.

Can I participate in a sport or be a cheerleader and be in the band?

Absolutely - every year members of all sports teams and cheerleaders can be found in band at all grade levels. Some students have participated in as many as three to four sports activities in the course of a school year while also successfully participating in band! Since band is taught during the school day hours, there is no regular conflict with extra-curricular activities.

Can I be in chorus and in band?

Many band students participate in chorus, an auditioned group, which meets after school one day a week. Contact Mr. Jon Brook, the choir director at Harris Middle School, for more information.

Is after school rehearsal is required?

Not much. 7th and 8th grade band students practice their instrument 3 or 4 days per week. These rehearsals are in preparation for concert festivals, concerts in December and May.

What else do I need?

Every student must purchase their own copy of the method book, Essential Elements, Book One, for their specific instrument. This book can be found at area music stores or even ordered through an online book seller like Amazon.com. Students are expected to have their method book in class at all times, replacing it when it is lost. Advancing students purchase Standard of Excellence Book Two of the same method.

Students who play a school owned brass instrument such as French horn, baritone, or tuba are encouraged to purchase their own mouthpiece. In addition, each instrument has specific needs such as reeds, neck straps, oils and greases, which students are expected to have on hand at all times.

In the first year, percussion students must have a practice snare drum or drum pad, a practice bell kit or otherwise suitable keyboard for practice, snare drum sticks and medium-hard keyboard mallets. Advancing students will be required to purchase other types of snare sticks, keyboard mallets of varying strengths and materials, and timpani mallets as they advance to the second year. Percussionists should have a stick bag which will accommodate their growing sets of sticks and mallets over the years.

Harris Middle School Band

Director of Bands, Rontrell M. Callahan

Student's Name _____

Address _____

City, Zip Code _____ Home/Cell Phone _____

Parent's Email Address _____

(This information will be used for frequent band and PTC communication only)

Father's Name _____

Mother's Name _____

Publicity Disclosure: All ensembles are photograph and recorded at most performances. These items are used for school program publicity and auditions.

[] Please check this box if you give permission for your child's name and picture to be included in any Harris Middle School Band Recognition and publicity.

What Instrument family you would like to play? (brass, woodwind, percussion) _____

Our signatures below affirm that our family has reviewed the Harris Middle School Band Procedure and Guidelines. We understand that our child must follow these procedures and guidelines in order to remain a member of the Harris Middle School Band Program.

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Band participation can be a major financial investment, but it is an investment in your child's future. It's my desire that no one miss out on this wonderful opportunity because of financial troubles. If you have considered all of your options but still have financial concerns, please contact me as soon as possible so I can help. Financial matters will be handled confidentially. Please do not deny your child this experience because band is "too expensive". Simply contact me and we will work something out. The opportunity to join band only happens once. Students will be unable to join band after their sixth grade year. Please do not miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

To find out more about how your child can be a part of the HMS Band please visit our band website: www.harrismsband.weebly.com or if you have any questions, please fill free to contact Mr. Callahan at (931) 684-5195 ext 1007 or Callahanr@bedfordk12tn.net.

HARRIS MIDDLE SCHOOL