Beginning Band Parent Night

-November 4th, 2026-

Presented by Mr. Machamer

Saxophone

1. Instrument Care and Maintenance

- **Daily Maintenance**
  - Swab out the instrument after every time you play. This removes the moisture that built up in the instrument while you played and prevents the pads on the keys from getting damp and moldy.

    Pull the swab through 2-3 times to ensure all moisture comes out.
  - DO NOT use a fluffy pad saver as a swab. Make sure your instrument is dry before you put a pad saver in it.
  - Keep a clean cloth in your case to wipe down the outside of the saxophone after you are done playing. This will help prevent damage to the finish.

    A polishing cloth can be purchased at reputable music stores where instruments are sold. Ex) Quinlan and Fabish, Sweetwater
  - When putting away the saxophone, keep the neck cap/plug on. It will protect the small rod located there while the saxophone is in the case.
- **Regular Maintenance**
  - The mouthpiece (the black plastic piece) should be cleaned about once a week with a swab or mouthpiece brush.

    A mouthpiece brush can be purchased at reputable music stores.
  - When brushing out the mouthpiece, use warm water and mild soap. Do not use abrasive cleaners or brushes and do not boil the water.
- **Reeds**
  - Only quality reeds should be used. We recommend Vandoren or Juno reeds.
  - Reeds also come in different sizes. Beginners typically play on 2 ½ strength reeds.
  - Students should always keep 4 reeds in their black reed guard.

    Label each reed 1, 2, 3, and 4. Students should rotate the reed they use every day. Ex) Monday use reed 1, Tuesday use reed 2, etc.
    - One cycle of reeds should last about a month
  - To prepare the reed for playing, soak it in your mouth for 30-40 seconds. It works well if the students soak their reeds while setting up the rest of their instrument.
  - Reed placement on the mouthpiece:

    Make sure the reed is centered on the mouthpiece. The tip of the reed should line up with the tip of the mouthpiece.

    If the reed is too high, low, or not centered, it will greatly affect your student's ability to make a good sound.

2. Producing a Quality Sound

- **Posture**
  - Sit on front half of the chair (back does not touch back of chair); feet flat on the floor in front of you; sit up tall
  - Deep breath, filling up your lungs from the bottom to the top
- **Embouchure** (the facial muscles used to produce sound)
  - Top teeth rest gently on top of the mouthpiece
  - Bottom lip covers bottom teeth
  - Lips close around mouthpiece like a drawstring bag. Corners firm.
- **Articulation (Tonguing)**
  - Used to separate notes while still maintaining continuous air.
  - Tip of the tongue touches the tip of the reed on the tip of the mouthpiece.
  - Think “Too”
- **Air**
  - Sustain your air for as long as you can while maintaining a steady, clear sound on the saxophone.
  - Activate abdominal muscles to provide air support.

3. Practice Procedures

- **Breathing Exercises**
  - Breathing exercises help students learn to control how much air they are expelling when playing an instrument. This skill is essential in producing a steady and sustained sound on the instrument.
- **Fingering Exercises**
  - Fingering exercises will help students develop the necessary coordination skills and dexterity to play a melody (having to switch quickly between different notes).
- **Long Tones**
  - Holding notes out for extended periods of time.

    This will help develop students’ tone quality and control.
- **Book Assignments**
  - Follow the “Practice Path” steps for each exercise in the book.
    - #1 Count and Clap the Rhythms Outloud
    - #2 Clap and Say the Notes Outloud
    - #3 Say and show the fingerings on their instrument
    - #4 Play and think step #3. **Always tap your foot!**

Students should now aim for 20-30 minutes of daily practice. We realize that on some days this will not be possible. However, the only way to strengthen the muscles of the embouchure is by playing the instrument. Remember that some practice is always better than no practice.

4. Private Instruction

- Regardless of whether your child is having a difficult time or progressing well, private instruction is an ideal way to maximize your child's musical development. If you are looking into private lessons, you should consult your band director before choosing a private instructor.

5. Listening

- It is beneficial for students to listen to professional musicians. By listening to great players, young musicians will develop an understanding of what their instrument should sound like when they play. YouTube is a great resource to use. Listen to saxophone players like Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, Michael Brecker, Lester Young, Grover Washington Jr., Stan Getz, Marcel Mule, Sigurd Rascher, Eugene Rousseau, John Harle, Amy Dickson, Virginia Mayhew, Christine Jenson, and many, many more. Find what you like to listen to and listen often!

We hope to have shed some light on the process of your students' first steps in their musical journey. Remember that learning to play a musical instrument is a lifelong endeavor that will provide your student with many incredible opportunities down the road. We never stop growing as musicians! Thank you for supporting your child's music education and we look forward to your continued participation in the Kirby 140 Band Program!

Thank you!

Mr. Machamer

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Extra Notes

Essential Elements Interactive

Please follow these instructions carefully to create an account and use the practice resources for Essential Elements Interactive (EEi):

1) https://www.essentialelementsinteractive.com/register/DistriBa42
   School: District 140
   Director: Mark Hodges
2) At the "Create Student Account" page, select **No, I do not have an EEi Student ID**
3) Please enter the information required and click Submit.
4) Enter your Book Activation Code. This is located at the bottom of the first page of your Essential Elements band book.

EEi contains background tracks for all exercises in the Essential Elements book and video tutorial lessons. This is a free resource!

