

# Saint Helens Middle School



## Band Handbook

Travis Freshner

[travisf@sthelens.k12.or.us](mailto:travisf@sthelens.k12.or.us)

### **SHMS Band Calendar**

<https://teamup.com/ksd401bf6b718a9282>

### **SHMS Band Website**

<https://shmsbands.weebly.com>

### **SHMS Band Facebook Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/649781522152161>

### **St. Helens Band Patrons Facebook Group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/468788153145257>

*If you are reading the PDF version of this handbook,  
just click the URL to be taken directly to the website.*

Dear Band Students and Parents:

Welcome to one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences in which you can be a part - the band! My name is Travis Freshner and I am very excited and honored to be your band director. Although I'm new to the district, this is my tenth year teaching band. I have been working all summer in preparation for this great year ahead of us and I am thrilled that it's finally time for us to get down to business!

Now, more than ever, we have information to justify why we participate in this demanding, yet rewarding, activity. Experts have concluded that the study of music helps with spatial reasoning, test taking, and overall quality of life. Factor in social skills, emotional development, leadership training, group interaction, aesthetic perception, music-making, and the discipline of being in a band program, and I don't know why anyone would not want to be involved in a successful band program like ours.

Everyone should read the information in the handbook, even veterans. My expectations and procedures may be slightly different than you are used to and you will want to be sure to be up to date. Many questions will be able to be answered by consulting this handbook, and policies will be adjusted from year to year as the need arises to clarify issues within the program. It is my hope that the information contained in this handbook will both inform and inspire!

The "How Parents Can Help" section is designed to give guidance to parents; please read it carefully to gain important insights. Our students need to know that we think that what they do is important.

This handbook was designed to answer questions you might have concerning the program and where we are headed. It is also designed to answer your most common questions, saving you time (and saving me from having to answer the same question 150 times individually). Please read all of the information carefully and sign the form in the back of the book. Again, I am honored to be your band director and am looking forwards to an awesome year together!

*Travis Freshner*

Travis Freshner  
Director of Bands  
St. Helens Middle School

---

**The point of this handbook is to put as much information in a readily available location for you to access quickly without having to ask me individually. 97% of all questions ever asked of band directors could easily be answered by consulting the band handbook and the band website.**

---

## Professional Mission Statement

My goal is to make a positive difference in young lives by fostering a lifelong love of music. All students will be challenged musically and intellectually with a curriculum that is both rigorous and relevant. The focus of instruction is on developing sound fundamental skills, both as individual musicians and as members of an ensemble.

## Program Objective

The St. Helens Middle School Band Program is dedicated to guiding its students to reach their highest possible level of excellence. The ultimate goal is to instill a life-long appreciation and love for music.

As a member of the Saint Helens Band, you are expected to set high goals and expectations for yourself and the program. The success of YOUR band program first requires that YOU be 100% dedicated and committed to doing your part in reaching our goals. The rewards of reaching those goals is immeasurable in the development of our students as well-rounded and productive members of our community.

I believe that the process is just as important as the product. This places the emphasis on the growth and development of each individual student, not just on specific performances. Members of the band develop musically, emotionally, mentally, and socially during their time in the program. Objectives include character-building, commitment, cooperation, dependability, discipline, leadership, respect, responsibility, self-control, and an appreciation for delayed gratification.

All students are encouraged to participate in as many musical opportunities as they can both through and outside St. Helens Middle School. Private lessons are strongly recommended. If a student is interested in continuing with music beyond high school, private lessons and involvement in as many musical opportunities as possible are essential for success.



## Overview of Expectations

*Each band member is expected to do the following:*

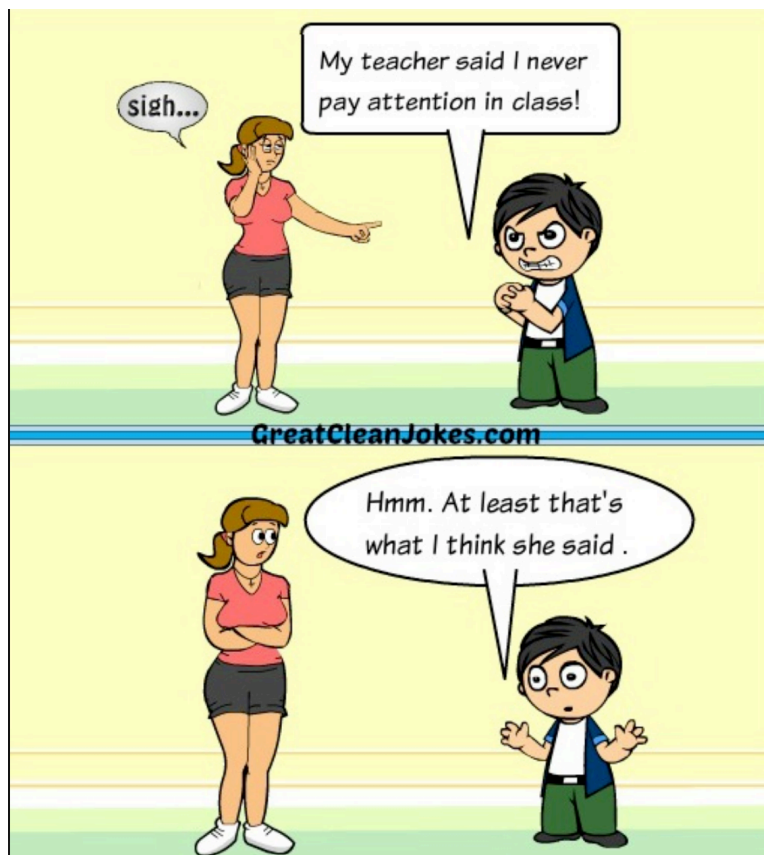
- Attend all rehearsals and performances. The minimum expectation is 100%.
- Be on time (early) and prepared for every rehearsal and performance with your instrument, music folder, pencil, extra reeds, valve oil, etc.
- Keep your instrument and equipment in performance condition.
- Practice regularly at home (at least 20 minutes per day / 4-5 days a week) and take private lessons if at all possible. Nothing can compare with the benefits of private lessons. Practice time should be spent on fundamentals (what we do in our warm-ups...long tones and lip slurs), technical studies, and your band music.
- Keep the band room neat, orderly, and free of clutter. Store your instrument and music in your assigned location, not just on the floor.
- When I hand you something, you will say "Thank you."  
If you fail to do so within five seconds, I will take it back.
- Give 100% (your best effort and attitude) at all times, not just when you feel like it.
- Treat others the way that you would like to be treated
- Any instrument or piece of equipment not belonging to or specifically assigned to you is strictly off limits. **If it is not yours, do not touch it.**
- No gum, food, or drink is allowed in the band room (except water).
- Students should not have their cell phones out and should never use them in class for any reason.
- No food or drink (other than water) is allowed in the band room.
- Do not leave your instrument unattended in the hallway or outside the building for any reason, regardless of how quick you think you will be. It is your responsibility to have your instrument in your own safe keeping when it is not being stored in the instrument storage room.
- During the regular school day, the band room is to be used for rehearsals, sectionals, and pre-arranged help sessions only. For security reasons, non-band students are not allowed to hang out in the band room.
- Maintain strong academic standing in all course work. I can't pull you out of school for a festival if you are failing your other classes.
- Try to learn something new and improve every day.

## Rehearsal Procedures

1. Enter the band room calmly and in control of your body. Once you enter the room you need to stay in the room. Do not ask to use the restroom, go to your locker, or to go get a drink. You pass each of these places on the way to the band room. Visit them on your way here.
2. Immediately go to the instrument storage area and get your instrument and music. Flutes, oboes, and clarinets may leave their cases beneath their seats, but everyone else needs to store their case neatly along the outside perimeter of the classroom or in your instrument locker.
3. Quickly assemble your instrument and check the agenda to see what is scheduled for today's rehearsal. Get everything you need out of your binder and onto your stand in the order listed on the agenda.
4. Intermediate and Advanced Band can begin warming up on their own by playing long tones and basic easy lip slurs (like in the beginning of our warm-ups)...low and soft. Beginning Band will not play on their own without my direction...not yet.
5. We will begin our full ensemble warm-up two minutes after the bell rings. If you are not in your seat, and ready to play, then you are tardy. When I step on the podium, all playing and talking will immediately stop and you will give me your undivided attention.
6. During rehearsal, if you have a question or need assistance, you will raise your hand and patiently wait for me to call on you. I may be in the middle of a sentence (or paragraph), so it might take a minute for me to call on you, but I will. Any comments or questions will be directly related to what we are talking about and working on (stay on task).
7. Approximately five minutes before the bell rings, I will dismiss you to pack up your instruments and will instruct you to have a great day and to make good choices. Do not raise your hand to tell me that there are five minutes left of class and that it's time to go...that makes me very angry. I am a grown man and am perfectly able to tell time.
8. Once dismissed, woodwinds will swab their instruments before putting them away. Brass will empty their spit valves. Check for loose papers or trash in your rehearsal space and put them away if needed. Remove all of your belongings from the rehearsal space.
9. Put your instrument back in its case, close and latch the case, and then place it in your assigned locker. Do not leave your case unlatched, trying to save a second of setup time tomorrow. That extra second will end up costing you hundreds of dollars in repairs someday.
10. This is the time to deal with missing music, repair needs, or any other quick discussions you need to have with me. Do this now instead of during the first few minutes of class.
11. Return to your seat and sit quietly until the bell rings. Do not line up (or bunch up...even worse) by the door. Keep your voices low enough that we can hear the bell ring or any announcements over the intercom.

12. After school, the band room will be open for a few minutes for students to get their instruments and music for practicing at home. After that, the room will be locked. If the room is locked and you need in, you will need to find a custodian and ask them very politely to let you in. If you have after school sports or activities, you will need to come get your instrument before going to your practice or meeting, as the room will be locked afterwards. Talk to your coach about finding a safe place to store your instrument during practice.
13. If you need help, or just some extra attention, I am happy to give it you. Just let me know and we'll set up a time to meet. Before school always works best for me, as I am not here after school (I teach at PCC in the afternoons). I am also often available during lunch and rec. to meet with you.
14. If you ever lose your music (which should never happen) you will be responsible for making the extra photocopies. Come see me after rehearsal and I will give you the original part and send you to the office, where you will ask them very nicely if they can help you make a photocopy, since you were irresponsible and lost your own.

## NOT TALKING isn't the same as PAYING ATTENTION



PAY

ATTENTION

## **Band Room and Rehearsal Space Expectations**

### **Be AWESOME To Each Other**

This includes all classmates (even ones who you may not be best friends with), teachers, and guests. Encourage and support each other. Be kind to each other. Always do your best and try your hardest, then try again with a great attitude. Do what you are asked the first time, without complaint.

### **Respect the Equipment and Facility**

Move equipment properly and with great care. We never run, chase, throw or play any games that could have even the smallest chance of causing injury to yourself or others, or (more importantly) breaking any equipment.

### **Respect the Instruments**

Do not touch, move, use, play, breathe on, or even look at an instrument that is not yours. Even if your friend said it's okay to play their clarinet...No, it is not. As for your instrument, put your instrument away in its case, in your assigned locker at the end of class every day.

### **Clean Up After Yourself**

I am not your mommy (I hope for her sake that your mom is better looking than I am). Clean up your trash without having to be asked. This is a beautiful band room and we will take care of it. Keep non-band items outside of the band room. The band room is not your storage locker for your science project.

## **Course Descriptions**

### **Advanced Band**

Advanced Band is designed for advanced musicians with emphasis placed on the musicianship skills required for sophisticated literature. We perform at various contests and festivals throughout the winter and spring. Advanced Band placement is by audition and auditions will be held in the spring for the upcoming year. Chair placement is ability-based, not seniority-based. Private study on the student's primary band instrument is highly encouraged.

### **Intermediate Band**

Intermediate Band is designed to serve as an intermediate-level ensemble designed to help prepare students for Advanced Band. Students continue to develop basic fundamentals, technique, and musicianship skills. This ensemble serves as a training ensemble for Advanced Band, building upon basic fundamental skills and exploring more advanced concepts and literature. Private study on the student's primary band instrument is highly encouraged.

### **Beginning Band**

Beginning Band is designed to develop basic fundamentals, technique, and musicianship skills that will serve as a building block for the next seven years of band in the St. Helens School District. From the very first day, we emphasize mastery of the basic fundamental skills, such as tone production, technique, and music literacy.



## The Importance of Attitude

The greatest single factor that will determine the success of any individual or organization is attitude. The kind of person you are is an individual choice, and how you feel about something is one of the few actual independent choices you have in life. Students should learn to discipline themselves to practice fundamentals daily. The right attitude must be present along with sincerity, concentration and dedication as the basic foundation. Such an attitude makes an artistic performance inevitable and is the difference between a program of the highest quality and a mediocre group. The band can do much for you. Make the most of it in every rehearsal and performance.

## What You Will Need

- A high quality instrument in working condition. A poor quality instrument will SEVERELY inhibit your ability to develop your skills to your reach full potential. See the website for more specific details regarding each individual instrument.
- ID tag for instrument cases. Luggage tags work great.
- Instrument accessories, such as reeds, cork grease, cleaning swabs, valve oil, slide oil. Reed players must always have at least 3 reeds within reach at all times.
- A mechanical pencil (or three).
- Your band book. This year we are switching to a new one called **Measures of Success**. Beginning Band and Intermediate Band will be using Measures of Success Book 1. Advanced Band will be using Measures of Success Book 2.  
*You must have a label on the front cover of the book with your name printed on it.*
- Black 3-ring binder (1 inch) with 5 dividers and at least 25 clear sheet protectors.  
*You must have a label on the front cover with your name printed on it.*  
Organize the dividers as follows:
  1. Warm-Ups
  2. Technical Studies
  3. Chorales
  4. Band Music
  5. Misc.
- Your school planner
- A lock for your instrument storage locker
- A music stand for practicing at home. These are easily found on Amazon for around \$15 and make a world of difference when practicing at home.
- A tuner and metronome app for your phone. There are free ones.
- Join the Google Classroom

## **Grading Policy**

### *Summative Assessments - 70% of overall grade*

Summative assessments will be given throughout the grading period to test students on knowledge and course content based on National Standards that have been introduced, studied, and applied in practical settings in rehearsal and at home. These assessments consist primarily of performances and individual recorded playing assessments submitted via Google Classroom every two weeks.

### *Formative Assessments - 30% of overall grade*

Formative assessment happens every day in rehearsal. These assessments are an informal check of understanding as students progress and review concepts that will help them become great individual and ensemble performers. These activities will help guide further discussions and practice towards helping us achieve our long-term goals. Concepts learned and reviewed during any typical rehearsal will include individual instrument tone and technique development, rhythmic development, music literacy, ensemble skills, music history, group and self evaluation, problem solving, and goal-setting. Also included in these formative assessments are evaluations of the students sense of individual responsibility and preparation, and how their individual contributions positively and negatively affect the large ensemble. In the grade book, these formative assessments are labeled as "Daily Grades." If the student is present and prepared and demonstrates appropriate rehearsal behavior and contributed positively in every way that is expected of them, they will receive full credit. Points will be deducted for unexcused tardies, unexcused absences, not having their instrument or music, not having necessary accessories (reeds, etc.) and for behavior that is detrimental to the progress of the full ensemble.

## **Concert Attire**

The first impression a band makes on an audience is how they look. When a band goes on stage with all of its members dressed in uniform the audience will know that the performers are proud and ready to perform. In order to achieve a good first impression and look professional, the following concert attire will be required. Unless you are informed differently, this is how we will dress for all performances.

### On top

White dress shirt or blouse (with sleeves at 3/4 length covering the elbow)

### On the legs

black dress pants or a long skirt (below the knees while seated)

### On the feet

long black dress socks or black or neutral colored tights  
black dress shoes

Not being able to afford to buy new concert dress clothing does not excuse you from being in concert dress. If you need help, we have a stockpile of clothing that has been donated over the years for this exact purpose. Let me know at least two weeks in advance of the performance and I can schedule a fitting with you and the Band Patron in charge of organizing our clothes closet. We completely understand that times can be hard and we are happy to help you, you just need to let us know in advance so we can make the arrangements. Letting me know the day of the performance is too late.

## **Concert Attendance**

Performance dates are important. Not only does performance attendance play a large role in your class grade, the band relies on the presence and musical strength of all its members. Excused absence from a performance may be granted only if the request is made at least three weeks before the performance and only if the reason for the absence is considered appropriate by the director. Excused absence from a concert will be granted in the event of a medical or family emergency, but make every effort to contact me prior to the concert. Once the concert dates have been established, every student will receive a concert schedule, which should be added to the family calendar.

## How to Practice

- Pick a set time to practice each day. You are much more likely to practice when it is part of your daily routine.
- Always practice with a metronome and tuner if possible.
- Increase your dynamic range (both soft and loud).
- Use our daily warm-ups and think "TONE."
- Break up your practice sessions with brief 5 minutes rests after every 10 minutes of practice. This actually helps build strength as well as keeps your brain from melting.
- Play your scale studies or patterns every day (Tonal Fluency).
- Start small and gradually increase your amount practice time.
- Have specific goals for each practice session. Don't just play through everything once and then put it away.

## Sample Practice Routine

5 minutes - Long Tones and Lip Slurs (our warm-ups)

5 minutes - Technical Studies (Tonal Fluency, etc.)

5 minutes - Rest/Break

10 minutes - Band Music

Take a 5 minute break in between every additional 10 minutes of practice.

Good players practice until they get it right.  
Great players practice until they never get it wrong.

## How Parents Can Help

When a band question arises, it is important that you get factual information before discussing it with others. We do more harm to ourselves and to the band family when we talk about things that contain one or more rumors presented as facts. If a question or concern arises, please contact me and ask me personally. I will be more than happy to help clear up any confusion.

- Show an interest in your child's musical study. Make sure they know that band is just as important as their other subjects. It isn't more important, but it also isn't less important.
- Listen to your child practice and encourage them. If you are not a musician and don't know what to listen for, then just ask them what they are working on and ask them to play their favorite song for you out of our book. Ask them what they need to be working on. Is there anything they are struggling with?
- Encourage (if not require) that they practice at home. You are paying good money for instrument rentals and they are getting world-class instruction in their classes, but they need to practice at home, too. Otherwise what are we doing?
- Make sure their instrument is in good working condition and that they have all the supplies they need (reeds). Musical instruments are delicate and can often need light repairs or adjustments in order to work correctly. Not getting their instrument fixed is like expecting them to ride a bike with two completely flat tires.
- Check the band website and Facebook groups regularly. Don't rely on your child to give you all the information for every event the day I tell them about it and send home fliers. Of course it would be great if they always communicated everything with you every single time, but they are still learning to be responsible and are works-in-progress when it comes to communication.
- Check in with your student about upcoming events. Doing this weekly as a family helps prevent last-minute realization of scheduling conflicts.
- Keep a family calendar. Either a hard copy kept in one location at home, or an online program like Google Calendar or iCalendar. Color-coding events by person is very helpful. Make sure every family member updates this regularly.
- Come to all performances and support your kids. They are awesome!

## **St. Helens Band Patrons**

The St. Helens Band Patrons are our band program's parent booster group and is open to anyone. The Band Patrons typically meet the first Thursday of each month at 7pm at the St. Helens High School Band Room. They occasionally meet at a different location, though, so it's important to check the calendar for details. They also have a Facebook Page where reminders are consistently posted and shared. The link to their Facebook Page can be found on the SHMS Band website and also on the first page of this handbook. This is a great organization that you will want to be a part of.

## **Parent and Student Contact Information**

Make sure your phone and email addresses are updated through the school as we send many emails through Synergy. If your email address is missing or is not current, then you will miss out on most of our communication and will not know what's going on.

## **Fundraising**

We fundraise year-round to financially support the band program beyond what the district is able to support. There are two different types of fundraising events we run: *General Fund* and *Benevolent Scholarships*. The Band Patrons work hard to create varied fundraising opportunities such as selling wreaths and popcorn, monthly can and bottle drives, running our annual STP biker support rest station (this is a BLAST), selling fireworks at 4th of July, etc.

*General Fund* events raise money to support (and fund) our programs beyond what the district is able to budget. This money is spent on large instrument purchases and repairs beyond what we expect from students (tubas, large percussion instruments such as timpani and bass drum, etc.), for purchasing new music to perform, new supplementary materials to use to better reach and teach our students, to pay for instrument-specific coaches to come in and work with individual sections (clarinet sectionals, etc.), or clinics from master teachers to come work with the full band, and for festival entry fees and adjudication fees.

*Benevolent Scholarship* events raise money to help students earn money to contribute to a fund that will help them with their individual fees and payments. The middle school band does not have any fees, but students can (and should) start now to build up money for when they are in high school. It is very easy for students to have all of their potential fees completely paid for through participation in the fundraising opportunities presented to them throughout the year.

# How To Be Awesome

Be the first, never the last, to be ready.

Always be at every rehearsal and sectional.

Always have everything you need (instrument, music, pencil, etc.)

Be one of those students that I can always count on.

Prepare and master your own part in advance. Only your best is good enough.

Do not talk during rehearsals...ever.

Use "High-Intensity Listening" (Listen and Silent are spelled with the same letters).

Stop and listen immediately whenever I cut you off.

Show enthusiasm and patience for practice - understand the need for repetition.

Turn work into fun - Enjoy rehearsing and practicing.

Do your best to make those around you look and sound better.

Be humble in your success. Demonstrate class in all situations.

## Contract of Mutual Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name),  
accept membership in the St. Helens Middle School Band and I understand that I am responsible for all  
policies set forth in the band handbook. I fully agree to carry out my responsibilities to the very best of  
my ability.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*student signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*date*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (parent's name), have  
read and understand the policies as set forth in the band handbook and agree to hold my child  
accountable for their actions. I also grant full permission for my child to be an active member of the St.  
Helens Middle School Band.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*parent signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*date*