

Dore Academy 2008–09 Music Class Handbook

Hello and welcome back to school! It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the music program here at Dore Academy. I know that you will have a great time learning about and making music with me this year. The purpose of this handbook is to provide both students and parents with an outline of required materials and class expectations for the current school year.

All students in music grades 5 and up are expected to rent or purchase their own instruments. Beginning in 5th grade, Dore Academy students will participate in an instrumental music program. We may be doing some vocal music as well, but that is not the emphasis. Instrument assignments will be discussed with the students at the beginning of the year. Once an instrument is designated for that student, he or she will be responsible for acquiring the necessary materials. Dore Academy has nylon string guitars available to rent for the classes that will be using them.

All students in music grades 4 and up will need the following:

- One of the pocketed folders in the students' binders should be designated and labeled for music. This is for any handouts they may receive in class.
- A pencil that they bring with them every day to music class. (They should already have pencils—but make sure to take them to music!)
- A folding music stand is recommended for practice at home.

In the 4th grade, the students will be learning to play recorders. Students are not required to purchase a recorder. We should have plenty of recorders here at school, but if the student loses or breaks the recorder that is issued to them, then they are responsible for buying a replacement. Some of the 4th graders may need to use instruments other than recorders at various points throughout the year. If there is a need for a particular student to acquire an instrument other than what we have here at school, I will contact their parent or guardian at the time that it becomes necessary.

The 5th, 6th, and 7th grades will be structured as beginning band classes, and the students will need the following supplies:

- Essential Elements 2000 method book (Book 1) for the students' respective instrument. Some returning students may already have a copy of this book from the previous year that they may continue to use until they are ready to move on to Book 2. New students and returning 5th graders need to purchase their own copy of the book. The school will acquire the books that are needed, and the students will be required to purchase these from the school.
- Extra reeds and cork grease (woodwind instruments), valve/slide oil and slide grease (brass instruments), or drum sticks and a practice pad (percussion).
- A digital metronome with built-in electronic chromatic tuner (not required, but highly recommended). *Please note—percussionists will only need a metronome, they will not need to use the tuner function.*

Band instruments are available for rent or purchase through many major local music stores. I suggest renting for the first year, as students often decide to switch to a different instrument after trying one for a while. For your convenience, I have also established a relationship with Sam Ash Music for instrument rentals. Please see one of the sales associates in the Band and Orchestra Department for further details. (Sam Ash's phone number is 704-522-9253, ext. 4 for Band and Orchestra.)

Upper School music classes will be structured as a guitar class. In my experience, most students in Upper School music here at Dore Academy have little or no background with playing other instruments. Staying true to the tradition of the school, nylon-string guitar will be taught in the Upper School music classes. If your child currently plays another instrument (such as piano, trumpet, cello, or percussion), then I will most likely find opportunities to use them on that instrument throughout the year. I will be working hard to find or create arrangements that will provide opportunities for students that have background on another instrument to play that instrument throughout the year. However, the primary focus of the classroom instruction will be learning to play the guitar. Students will be required to purchase their own method books from the school.

Maintain a record of the students' practice schedule through "practice sheets". In order to achieve success in music, each student must practice each week outside of school. Parental involvement plays a big role in ensuring that the student is working on the material that he or she is responsible for learning, and that they are being honest in the amount of time logged for their practice routine. Practice sheets will be provided and will be used as a portion of the grades assessed for each student. These will be available both in class from the teacher and online at the Dore Academy website. Practice sheets are to be filled out for a seven day week and turned in at the end of that week. (*Please note that a week of practice begins on Wednesday and ends on a Tuesday in order to coincide with the Wednesday packets. Date the sheet using the Wednesday beginning on that particular sheet.*) Practice sheets more than one week late will not be accepted, and a zero grade will be averaged in for any missing practice sheets. Please return these each week in the students' Wednesday packets. The practice sheets will be graded as follows:

180+ minutes = 100 A+
174-179 min. = 99 A+
162-173 min. = 96-98 A
150-161 min. = 93-95 A-
144-149 min. = 91-92 B+
132-143 min. = 88-90 B
120-131 min. = 85-87 B-
109-119 min. = 83-84 C+
90-108 min. = 80-82 C
75-89 min. = 77-79 C-
60-74 min. = 75-76 D+
46-59 min. = 72-74 D
31-45 min. = 70-71 D-
0-30 min. = 0-69 F

Grading in the music class is based on a combination of class participation/effort, graded worksheets/tests, playing assessment tests, and practice sheets. The biggest element in the students' grade in music is his or her level of participation and effort. What I'm looking for is a student who tries to take interest in what he or she is learning, who engages in classroom discussion (when appropriately called on by the teacher, not speaking out of turn), and who makes a solid attempt to play the music the class is working on. A few written tests and graded worksheets will be given throughout the year. The students will be notified if any of the written work that is given in class will be assigned a grade. Occasional playing tests will be used to assess how well the student is doing with particular techniques. If a student has put in the time and effort necessary to make sure he or she receives a high grade on the practice sheets, then there should be no reason for them to do poorly on a playing test. At the end of each quarter, I will tally up the total number of points received for each of these categories. Each student's overall grade will be broken down as follows:

Class Participation/Effort: 80%

Practice Sheets: 10%

Playing Tests: 5%

Written Tests/Worksheets: 5%

Daily class participation grades will be given on a scale of 1 to 10. On a good day the student will earn 10 points for that day's participation grade. Points will be taken off for lack of effort or participation in the day's lesson, or for creating classroom disruptions. Students that have a positive attitude and attempt to participate in creating and learning about music will maintain a high grade in this category.

Students must bring their instruments, music, and other necessary materials to class every day. In order to participate in the class, the students must have their instrument and other necessary materials every day, except on days that the teacher notifies the student that there will be no playing. Points will be taken off of the students' daily participation grade if they do not have their instrument and other required materials such as method books or sheet music.

Dore Academy does not require that the student take private music lessons outside of school. However, if you would like to have your child take private lessons I can provide you with contact information for a teacher for his or her instrument. Private instruction will help the student to improve on their individual instrument at a much faster rate than only doing it in the classroom. It also helps to reinforce what I am teaching them by presenting the material in a different way, and it provides the student with a role model for their instrument of choice. Simply put, finding a good private teacher can make a world of difference in a student's enthusiasm towards music and learning to play an instrument. If you are interested in private lessons and/or have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Students are required to be at all performances unless there is an emergency or the child is sick. Absences from scheduled performances will negatively affect the student's grade. If the child is sick or cannot attend a performance for any reason whatsoever, a written note from the parents or doctor is required. According to the NC Standard Course of Study:

“Performances are a culmination of the process of studying and/or creating music... Performing is a learning experience that helps students to define the roles of performers and audience members, teaches students to respond to and critique music appropriately, and helps students to build confidence and pride in their work. Performances also help foster an appreciation of music as an art form and as a form of communication.”

I believe that performing is essential for the betterment of the whole child. Two performances will be given at school—a Christmas program, and a Spring program. These performances will be scheduled with plenty of advanced notice, so make sure to read the School Notes (sent home every Wednesday) for those dates. Information on what each student needs to wear to the performance will also be sent home in the Wednesday packets. In addition, there may arise an opportunity to perform outside of school in our community or at other school events. If and when such an opportunity becomes available, I will inform the students and parents promptly.

I am looking forward to our musical achievements in the coming year. Welcome back to school, and if you have any questions or comments feel free to email me at dvergato@doreacademy.org, or call me at (704)365-5490, ext. 758.

Sincerely,
David A. Vergato, B.M.
K-12 Music Teacher at Dore Academy