

**Maple Ridge Secondary School
Music Department**

A Handbook for Parents and Students

Maple Ridge Secondary School

2015 - 2016

September 8, 2015

Dear MRSS Music Students & Parents,

Welcome back! We hope everyone is returning refreshed and full of energy and enthusiasm. We are looking forward to building on the successes of last year and sharing another exciting musical season!

This year you will have the opportunity to represent your school and community at concerts and festivals in Maple Ridge and beyond. You will also have the opportunity to showcase your talents in workshops, clinics and sharing sessions with other schools.

In order to operate smoothly, the music program at MRSS, has an organized set of policies and procedures. This handbook has been created to explain and define these policies for students and parents. It is very important that you familiarize yourself with the policies that pertain to you.

As a member of the MRSS Music Department, you will become a part of a program that has become known for far more than just musical excellence. You will become part of a community of students and parents who are known for their warmth and support. You will help lead the program, contribute new ideas to its improvement, and act as a role model for younger students in the program. Through your sense of responsibility to your ensemble, you will learn to be accountable for your actions, organized in your habits and committed to the work you are accomplishing. Because of the nature of creating art within a group dynamic, you will build relationships with depth and compassion. Most importantly, you will have the privilege of working with others to create something that moves and elevates people. What a gift. What a responsibility.

Best wishes for a wonderful year in music!

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ATTENDANCE

Prompt and regular attendance of classes and rehearsals is an important part of developing a strong ensemble. Students who walk in late miss out on important announcements, theory lessons, and warm up activities. Latecomers also disturb the class and detract from the momentum of the rehearsal.

FOR CLASSES INSIDE THE TIMETABLE

For classes inside the timetable, students will follow MRSS attendance policies. This means that late students check in at the office and get a late slip, which they hand to their teacher as they enter the classroom. Students who are marked absent from a class will be required to provide an explanatory note (or phone call or email) from a parent. Please note that parents must also contact the main office when a student is absent for the day.

FOR EARLY MORNING OR AFTER SCHOOL CLASSES

It is necessary for the music department to keep very close track of attendance for classes that occur outside the timetable. For this reason, the department has developed the "Doughnut Policy" to help encourage students to regularly attend every class on time.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Students who are absent will receive a "doughnut" (an empty circle) next to their name. A doughnut indicates an unexcused absence. If they arrive after attendance has been taken, the teacher will place an "L" inside the empty circle. This indicates an unexcused late. If the student brings in a note from a parent excusing their late (please note that sleeping in is not a valid excuse for being late), the teacher will put a slash through their doughnut and L. This indicates an excused late. Similarly, if a student brings in a note excusing their absence, the teacher will put a slash through their doughnut, indicating an excused absence.

There is no penalty for excused lates or absences.

At the end of each term, the teacher will count up all the unexcused absences and lates.

- If a student has more than one unexcused absence in the term, the mark will drop by a letter grade.
- If a student has more than three unexcused lates in the term, the mark will drop by a letter grade.
- IF A STUDENT HAS MORE THAN 4 ABSENCES, HE/SHE MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO PERFORM IN THE TERM CONCERT.

IF AN ENTIRE ENSEMBLE HAS NO DROPS IN LETTER GRADES OVER A TERM, THE TEACHER WILL PURCHASE DOUGHNUTS FOR THE CLASS!!

GET READY, SET, GO! – Practice

All students are required to practice and daily practice is best!

Get Ready! Assemble music stand, instrument. Soak reed, oil valves or slides

Set! Organize your thoughts and make a plan. What do you need to accomplish today? What did you notice that needed work last rehearsal? Were any specific passages assigned for practice? Are there any upcoming playing tests?

Go!

- 1) Always start with warm-up exercises.
 - Brass and Woodwinds: Long tones, lip slurs, slow scales
 - Ensure that you are taking proper breaths. Listen to your tone - can it be better? Are you in the proper playing position?
 - Percussion: Relax/exercise the wrists and arms. Check hand/wrist position. Practice basic rudiments slowly and evenly.
- 2) Review your music
 - Clean up trouble spots by taking the music apart:
 - Slow it down, check fingerings, work out the counting
 - Gradually speed up until it can be played comfortably at tempo
 - Never practice mistakes. Be accurate. Work out trouble spots immediately instead of skipping over them. Use a metronome or keep time lightly with your foot.
- 3) Play for fun. Play anything you like, but remember to always play your best.

Don't forget to clean your mouthpiece and instrument carefully. Reed players should always remove the reed from the mouthpiece and replace in the reed guard.

LUNCHTIME POLICIES

The band and choir rooms are open at lunch for students to eat and socialize. However, there are a few policies to be aware of:

Sectional rehearsals always have priority over available space. There are sign up sheets posted to reserve rooms. Band and choir room equipment is for the use of music students only. **The music office is off limits to students.**

If there is garbage or mess left after lunch, it will lead to the closure of the band and choir rooms for lunchtime socializing. Clean up after yourselves, please, and put chairs and music stands away after lunch.

MONEY ENVELOPES

When handing in money, whether it's for registration, fundraising, tour payments, or anything else, there is a procedure that must be followed:

- 1) Put the money into a designated money envelope, located on the bulletin board.
- 2) Fill in the blanks on the envelope with the required information. Do not forget to include the purpose of the payment.
- 3) Seal the envelope. Money missing from an unsealed envelope is the student's responsibility.
- 4) Deposit the envelope into the mail slot in the music office door. The mailbox is padlocked and can only be accessed by Music Department Staff.

Money will not be accepted in any other fashion. DO NOT deposit money into the assignment box located in the band room. Do not hand it to your teacher.

MRSS MUSIC PARENT COUNCIL

The Music Parents' Council meets the first Monday of every month at 6:30. It has several functions:

1. To organize student fundraisers for individual student accounts.
2. To plan events such as the Dessert Concerts and Snazzy Jazz which help the music department to raise money for equipment, instruments, etc.
3. To have input into Music Department policy.

All parents are encouraged to attend the Music Parents' Meetings. Each meeting also includes a run-down of current events and happening within the department.

PERCUSSION - Mallet and Stick Order

The Mallet and Stick order form contains the required equipment for each band. It is imperative that all percussionists purchase the proper sticks and mallets, and that all equipment is present at every rehearsal. Percussionists will be subject to stick bag inspections, and missing equipment is equivalent to having forgotten your instrument. Please ensure that your stick bag, and every single stick and mallet is labeled with your name.

PERCUSSION - SECTION CLEANLINESS

All percussionists are responsible for keeping the percussion section clean. It is your area. No one else in the music program is even allowed back there. Each term there will be a week assigned to each percussionist in the program. During our week you are responsible for cleaning and organizing the section. This will be part of your term mark.

PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE – READ THIS!!!

Music is a performance art. Therefore, in order for students to demonstrate that they have achieved the required musical objective, they must perform. In the same way that a math student will take an exam to demonstrate that he/she has mastered the concepts presented in class, so must a music student take an “exam” at the end of a sequence of rehearsals. This “exam” is a performance. If the student fails to show up for the exam, he/she cannot pass.

If a student misses a math test, the only person affected is the student himself. If a student misses a performance, the whole ensemble suffers. Imagine trying to play a jazz band concert with no drummer, or a choir concert with a missing tenor. It is not an exaggeration to say that even if only one student is missing, the whole ensemble suffers. It is for this reason that all concerts are considered MANDATORY. Unexcused absences will result in a drop of at least two letter grades.

Included in this package is a calendar of events for this year. It is essential that each student sit down with parents and go through this list of dates to determine if there are any conflicts. Students will have until the end of September to let the teachers know (in written form) of conflicts or concerns they have, after which they will be considered committed to the dates on the calendar. Because we give such advance notice, students are then able to pass on these commitments to soccer coaches, work supervisors, etc. well in advance of any conflicts that may arise.

Many students will actually give a copy of the music department dates to their workplace in September to make sure they are not scheduled during performance times. Extra copies of the dates list are available in the music department for this purpose. Parents can help by reminding their son or daughter to “check the calendar” when new commitments arise. This will help avoid “double booking” situations.

Ultimately our goal in the music department is to help students become good citizens through music. Part of being a good citizen is being dependable and living up to the commitments you have made to others. Staying firm on our commitment policy helps students develop into responsible and dependable young adults.

Please NOTE: Often new performance opportunities will arise during the year. When they do, students are always given at least one week to “check their calendar” and let the teacher know of any conflicts. After the week has passed they are considered “committed” to the event, and attendance is mandatory.

PRACTICE RECORDS

Students in Concert Bands are required to keep Practice Records. **Students must write their daily practice on the record, which must be signed by a parent.** Practice records are due before the marks cut off each term.

REGISTRATION AND FEES

All students must complete a registration package for any music courses they take. This package includes

- family contact information, including parent email – we use an email service called “MailChimp” to keep families informed about MRSS Music activities
- a local field trip permission form – students may not attend field trips, including local music festivals, without a completed, signed permission form
- fees and supplies order form

A large and varied music program like MRSS Music takes substantial funds to run. There are mandatory supplies and fees that must be paid for and obtained for each music course. These fees will be collected until the end of September.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

In order for our ensembles to have successful rehearsals, all students must always come prepared. Would you show up to baseball practice with no glove? Would you wear flip-flops to basketball practice? Do you expect another member of your sports team to bring enough equipment for everyone? Please ensure that you take responsibility for bringing your equipment to class. Do not rely on your neighbours to have music. What will you do if they are absent? The ability of the ensemble to have an effective rehearsal or performance is compromised if even ONE member of the band or choir comes ill prepared! Don't let the other members of your "team" down!

1) **All students must label their instrument with their name, address and phone #.** Please store your instrument on a shelf in the storage area in the band room. **Never leave your instrument in the hallway!** The school is not responsible for the security of your instrument. Please make sure your parents have made provisions for insurance for your instrument.

2) MRSS has some instruments available to rent. Students are responsible for any damaged or lost school instruments. Please see Mr. Dumas for all school instrument inquires.

- 3) All musicians are required to bring their own music folders, music, and pencils to all rehearsals. In addition, all instrumentalists are required to have on hand:
- Brass players are expected to have their own valve/slide oil and spit rag.
 - Reed players are expected to have a cleaning swab, cork grease, reed guard, and a **minimum of 3 reeds** in good playing condition.
 - Percussionists must have a stick bag with all required sticks and mallets.
- 4) All instrumentalists should have a wire music stand for home practice.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

The Music Parent Council presents graduating students with music scholarships at the graduation ceremonies in June. Applications will be available at the beginning of May each year.

The Music Parents' Council also offers summer bursaries to returning music students who wish to attend summer music camps or courses. Students are eligible for grants of up to 50% of their camp cost, to a maximum of \$100. The number of grants offered per year varies. Applications will be available mid-April.

SERVICE

A successful music program requires many people helping for the common good. In order to divide the workload evenly among the students, every student is required to complete one hour of service per course (up to a maximum of 2 hours) per term. Service will count for 10% of the student's overall grade.

Students may earn service hours anytime during the term. They may choose to file music, help set up for a concert, do some work on the website or tutor a younger student on their instrument. Whenever a student provides this type of service they will be given a service card signed by one of the music teachers. Students will fill out the service card with their names, etc. and hand it in to the yellow mailbox located in the Band Room. If there is more than one card to submit, students will collect these service cards in a "service envelope" provided by the music department. At the end of each term the student will fill out the appropriate information on the front of the envelope, seal the envelope and hand it in.

Students will have the opportunity to sign up for service jobs for particular events in the department. In the week before the event, the service sign up sheet will be marked "FINAL". After this point NO NAMES can be crossed off. If a student has signed up for a job and realizes they cannot attend, they must find a replacement. If a student fails to show up for the service they have committed to, they will lose the same amount of service that they would have earned.

STAFF

MRSS Music has two teachers: Ms. Denise O'Brien, a graduate of UBC, and Mr. Ed Dumas, a graduate of UVic. For this school year, Ms. O'Brien will teach all choirs as well as two general music/guitar classes. Mr. Dumas will teach all the secondary school bands, elementary band for three of our feeder schools and senior guitar.

STUDENT ACCOUNT FUNDRAISERS

For most of us, the most memorable experiences from school were unique, fun and educational. As part of our program, we like to give our students the opportunity to travel. Whether it is a local festival, a retreat or a major tour, these experiences provide invaluable learning opportunities for students. Most, if not all of these experiences cannot be duplicated in the classroom.

Students and parents have the opportunity to raise money to help offset the cost of some of these experiences. The Student Account Fundraisers include the sale of poinsettias, spring planters, chocolates and magazines. It is important to note that all fundraising is entirely optional. When a student takes part in a music department fundraiser, rather than allot all the money raised to a general account, the effort put in by the student is credited to that student for music activities. An individual account is kept in the student's name, to be used for music activities. Students may use this account to pay for registration fees, trips, supplies (reeds, etc.).

Please note that any money in a student's account is not to be treated like cash, but to be put towards expenses in the music department. In order to access your fundraising money you must fill out a "Fundraising Account Request Form". No exceptions will be made!

If a student leaves the program and there is money left in the account, the money will be transferred into the sibling's account. If the student does not have any siblings in the program, then the funds will be donated into the scholarship fund for Grad Scholarships and Summer Grants.

UNIFORMS

Our music groups are very much like sports teams. When a team plays a game, they wear their team uniform. The uniform gives them a sense of identity and pride, as well as an air of professionalism. The same philosophy applies to the students in our music program. When we enter festivals, uniform/appearance is one of the categories we are judged on. It is imperative that every detail of the

uniform is in order. Students who arrive to a concert in a sloppy or incomplete uniform may be asked not to perform.

Uniforms for each group are as follows:

FORMAL

Senior Concert Band/Senior Concert Choir/Chamber Choir (gr. 10, 11, 12)

Women: Black Formal MRSS Music Dress*, black nylons, black dress shoes. (low-heels or flats)

(Dress is purchased through the MRSS Music Dept.)

Men: Tuxedo*, black dress shoes, black socks, white tuxedo shirt, red bow tie. (Tux is rented through the Music Department, shirt and bow tie purchased through the Music Department)

Junior Concert Band/Intermediate Concert Band/Junior Concert Choir (gr. 8 & 9)

Black dress pants, black dress shoes, black socks, white tuxedo shirt, red bow tie (tuxedo shirt and bowtie purchased through the Music Department)

Junior Jazz Ensemble/Senior Jazz Ensemble

Performance blacks (dress shirt, dress pants, dress shoes, socks, ALL black)

Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Semi-formal black with red and/or white accents. Heels no more than 3 inches.

INFORMAL

Most students will purchase a red MRSS Music T-shirt for informal concerts, field trips, etc. See fee sheets for specific requirements.

WEBSITE - www.ridgemusic.org

We have a website for the MRSS Music Department. The website is a valuable resource for both students and parents. It contains valuable information about events, assignments, concerts as well as downloadable forms.

