

Forestwood Middle School Band

Instrument Selection Guide

Clarinet

The clarinet uses a “single reed” and mouthpiece to produce a beautiful sound. This is a very versatile instrument. It can play very high and very low. It has the largest range (the most number of notes) of all the instruments in the band! This is normally a large group of kids in the band with multiple parts so if you like playing solos there is a great part for you and if you like playing in a group there is a fabulous part for you too!



Physical Characteristics: The clarinet mouthpiece is held with your lips kind-of like holding a soda-straw in your mouth. Full lips are great. Curvy lips are great. Lots of lip-styles and faces are well suited for the clarinet!

Other Considerations: Willingness to purchase or rent a director-recommended clarinet is very important. Sadly, there are many clarinets on the market whose poor design and terrible craftsmanship make it **difficult to impossible** for a student to be successful on the clarinet. We are here to help you avoid a frustrating learning situation.

Trumpet/Cornet

The trumpet is the highest sounding instrument in the **brass** family. Sound is produced on the trumpet by blowing through a small mouthpiece. The trumpet often has the melody, so the band relies on trumpet players to get the job done! Natural-born leaders are a good choice for this instrument.



Physical Characteristics: There is nothing more fun than playing the trumpet if you are physically well suited for it! Unfortunately, because of the small size of the mouthpiece, **very full or curvy lips** or a top lip with a **teardrop shape** usually DO NOT work well. Not-so-large or thin lips that are **even** with a **flat top lip** are the very best for trumpet and are rewarded with gorgeous trumpet sounds!

Other Considerations: Students who choose and are selected to play trumpet begin on a cornet and later graduate to a trumpet. The smaller size and design of the cornet make correct fundamentals somewhat easier to achieve for most young trumpet players. If you already own a trumpet, don't worry; we can check it out to be sure it works for you.

Trombone

The trombone is a member of the **brass** family. Blowing into a large mouthpiece produces sound on the trombone; therefore, it is a **low** brass instrument, producing deep, rich and often extremely **powerful** tones. The trombone is unique in that rather than valves like the other brass instruments, the trombone changes notes by using a **slide**. Trombone players rely on their memory and listening skills to hear if they are “in tune,” with the slide in the perfect position (the slide is not marked or notched). Therefore, students with outstanding “musical ears” thrive on the trombone!



Physical Characteristics: Trombone players come in all shapes and sizes. Students should have a willingness to play “loud” at times! The instrument looks large but it is not heavy. The large trombone mouthpiece happily accommodates most lip shapes!

Euphonium/Baritone

The euphonium (you-PHONE-nee-yum), sometimes known as the baritone, is a member of the **brass** family. Blowing into a large mouthpiece produces the sound; therefore it is a **low** brass instrument, producing deep, rich and often extremely **powerful** tones. The sound is similar to that of a trombone, but it uses valves (like trumpet) instead of a slide (like trombone).



Physical Characteristics: Euphonium players come in all shapes and sizes. The instrument looks large but it sits on your lap (you do not have to hold it up!) so it is not heavy. Students should have a willingness to play “loud” at times! The large euphonium mouthpiece happily accommodates most lip shapes!

Other Considerations: ***Euphonium is a school-owned instrument.*** LISD provides Euphoniums for students at a cost of \$100 maintenance fee for an entire school year. This fee covers general maintenance and yearly up keep, and is collected at the beginning of the school year. Financial aid is available.

Private Instruction: Because there are a limited number of instruments available, students enrolled with a school-owned instrument are expected to participate in our outstanding private lesson program. Note: Students who participate in private lessons experience less frustration and statistically are more likely to continue their music education into high school. Lessons are \$20 per week and scholarships are available. It’s a great deal!

French Horn

The French Horn is a member of the **brass** family. Like the trumpet, the sound of the French Horn is produced by blowing into a small mouthpiece. The French Horn has the largest range (the most number of notes) of the brass instruments. It can play very low and very high. It has both a uniquely warm and beautiful sound as well as an ability to be exceptionally strong and powerful.



Because of the acoustical nature of the French Horn, one can play many different notes in the same position (fingering). Because of this special quality, students with highly developed musical ears find the French Horn very easy to master. If you have experience in music, a great “ear” or simply an uncanny ability to match pitch, French Horn may be the perfect instrument for you!

Physical Characteristics: Evenly shaped lips that are “not too full” are best on French horn. However, this instrument can accommodate a variation of lip shapes and sizes. Slightly curvy can work well. Slightly pronounced overbites are okay too.

Other Considerations: The French Horn class is an advanced class with the privilege of using school owned instruments. Students should be dedicated to their music education with the intention of working towards our advanced bands in middle and high school. This is a good instrument choice for students who have participated in piano lessons or honor choir groups. Students with a history of academic or behavioral problems are generally not considered for French horn.

A French Horn is provided for each student at a cost of \$100 maintenance fee for an entire school year. This fee covers general maintenance and yearly up keep, and is collected at the beginning of the school year. Financial aide is available.

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Flute (limited enrollment)

The flute makes the highest sound in the band. Because of the physical demands of playing in the upper register, this instrument requires a specific lip shape. It is necessary to create an extremely small aperture to play high notes on the flute. Unfortunately, **very full or curvy lips** or a top lip with a **teardrop shape** DO NOT work well. On the other hand, thinner lips that are **even** with a **flat top lip** are fantastic for playing the flute and are rewarded with gorgeous sounds!



After interviewing with the band directors, if you choose flute as your first choice, be sure to choose a large-class as your second choice (clarinet, trumpet, French Horn, trombone, euphonium).

Alto Saxophone (limited enrollment)

The Alto Saxophone is a member of the woodwind family and uses a single reed and mouthpiece (like the clarinet) to produce the tone. The alto saxophone plays the “middle tones” in the band, not low or high. Rather than playing the melody in the band (like clarinet or flute) it more often plays the harmony or accompaniment. This is one of the smaller instrument groups in the band and therefore has a limited enrollment. After interviewing with the band directors, if you choose alto saxophone as your first choice, please be sure to choose a large-class as your second choice (clarinet, trumpet, French Horn, trombone, euphonium).



Physical Characteristics: Since the balance of the saxophone is maintained by the use of a neck strap, it is extremely important that students be able to sit up completely straight. Saxophone enjoys a “cushy” bottom lip, a “puckery” rather than “smiley” lip shape and a slightly pronounced overbite. It is imperative that the mouthpiece anchor securely on the upper teeth.

Other Considerations: Saxophone players are responsible for maintaining a working stock of 4-6 quality reeds. A box of 10 reeds costs \$30.00 and can last (with proper care) up to 3 months.

Oboe (limited enrollment)

LESSONS REQUIRED

The oboe looks a lot like a clarinet but is played with a “double reed” instead of a single reed. The oboe produces a very unique, exotic and beautiful tone. It is a special “color instrument” in the band, considered a “solo instrument” at all times.

Oboe students should relish the opportunity to be heard, to “sing” their part in the band. Because of the extremely flexible nature of the oboe, students must demonstrate an exceptional ability to “hear” and produce correct pitch.



Physical Characteristics: Because the embouchure (mouth position) requires equal pressure on both sides of the reed, students with profound overbites or underbites are not successful producing quality sounds on the oboe. Full, “cushy” lips are wonderful on oboe.

Other Considerations: Each year, between **one and three** 5th grade students are selected to play the oboe in the 6th grade. After interviewing with the band directors, if you choose oboe as your first choice, please be sure to choose a large-class as your second choice (clarinet, trumpet, French Horn, trombone, euphonium).

This is an advanced class. Only students with high academic performance records are considered for oboe. Students should be dedicated to their music education with the intention of working towards our advanced bands in Middle School and High School.

Because of the extremely detailed nature of the oboe and the necessity of hand-made reeds, students who choose and are selected to play oboe are required to take weekly private lessons with the private oboe instructor at Forestwood (lessons cost \$20.00 per week). Students are required to maintain a supply of 3-4 high-quality reeds at all times. Reeds cost approximately \$17.00 each. Students with a history of academic or disciplinary difficulty are not considered for oboe.

Note: Students who participate in private lessons experience less frustration and statistically are more likely to continue their music education in high school. Because of the extremely low enrollment for oboe students, we expect a high level of commitment. This is an advanced class. The oboe is a prize!

Oboe is a school owned instrument. The financial trade-off for having to take lessons and keep a stock of working reeds is that the LISD provides the oboe (an extremely expensive instrument) for a cost of \$100 maintenance fee for an entire school year. This fee covers general maintenance and yearly up keep, and is collected at the beginning of the school year. It's a great deal!

Bassoon (limited enrollment)

LESSONS REQUIRED

The bassoon is the lowest sounding member of the *woodwind* family. It is similar to the oboe in that it uses a double reed to produce the sound. The bassoon produces a very unique, deep, rich tone. Like oboe, it is a very special “color instrument” in the band, considered a “solo instrument” at all times. Bassoon students should relish the opportunity to be heard, to “sing” their part in the band. Because of the extremely flexible nature of the bassoon, students must demonstrate an exceptional ability to “hear” and produce correct pitch.



Physical Characteristics: A slightly pronounced overbite works well (but is not required) for bassoon. A student with even a slight underbite should completely avoid this instrument. A medium or greater finger span is necessary and agile thumbs are a plus! Full, “cushy” lips are a plus!

Other Considerations: Each year, between **one and three** 5th grade students are selected to play the bassoon in the 6th grade. After interviewing with the band directors, if you choose bassoon as your first choice, please be sure to choose a large-class as your second choice (clarinet, trumpet, French Horn, trombone, euphonium).

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Percussion (limited enrollment)

LESSONS REQUIRED

In addition to drums (snare, bass, timpani), percussion includes the keyboard instruments (bells, xylophone, marimba) cymbals and accessory instruments (triangle, tambourine, maracas, etc.).

The percussion section provides the fundamental pulse (heartbeat) of the band. For this reason, percussionists are very carefully selected following a percussion “rhythm and coordination” evaluation.



Percussion is an advanced class. Students should be dedicated to their music education with the intention of working towards our advanced bands in Middle School and High School.

Only students with the highest grades, lowest discipline problems, and extremely high gross and fine motor skills are enrolled in the percussion class. After interviewing with the band directors, if you choose percussion as your first choice, please be sure to choose a large-class as your second choice (clarinet, trumpet, French Horn, trombone, euphonium).

Note: rhythm is integral to playing any instrument in the band. If you love rhythm, you will be a great band student on any instrument! Be sure to have multiple choices in mind!

Physical Characteristics: Potential percussionists must exhibit a great deal of coordination and control in gross and fine motor skills. A strong feeling of time (pulse) and the ability to coordinate rhythm and pulse is critical.

Private Lessons: Because of the extremely detailed nature of percussion and the necessity to learn more than one instrument, percussionists are required to take weekly private lessons with the private percussion instructor at Forestwood. Percussion is time-intensive. Students who participate in private lessons experience less frustration and statistically are more likely to continue their music education in high school. It is expected that students selected for percussion are planning to participate through high school. Lessons are \$20 per week and scholarships are available.

Other Considerations: Students with a history of academic or disciplinary difficulty are not considered for percussion.

A Review of the Percussion Discussion

- Percussion means keyboards too – Do you have piano experience?
- Solo instrument – you will be “singled out” in rehearsal. Are you okay with that?
- Waiting instrument – you must wait to play. Are you patient?
- Back of the room – furthest from instructor – Do you have self-control?
- Competitive environment – you don’t always get what you want (percussionists do not all play the same part and they do not “take turns”). Can you handle it?