Dear Students and Parents:

Welcome to **Beginning Band**! We hope you will find this an enjoyable and educational experience. Answers to many commonly asked question are included in the accompanying pages. **Please read them carefully**, and feel free to call us at 962-7551, ext. 3032 or email us at bfine@rfsc.k12.in.us or jwasmundt@rfsc.k12.in.us with any additional questions.

Band will be held during the school day. Students will need to make sure that Band is on their schedule at registration next year if they are interested in joining band. We will have a night to rent instruments on **Tuesday, August 21**.

Prior to that night, each student will be given the opportunity to try a variety of instruments in the first few days of school. We will then be able to help determine the proper instrument for your student. Please see the accompanying pamphlet to better understand what instruments are available. We will help your child decide which instrument to play depending on their abilities that they have illustrated.

**On Tuesday, August 21, 2018, Quinlan and Fabish Music Store representatives will be at the RF Band room from 3:30 to 7 PM to meet with you concerning instrument rental.** We both look forward to another successful year of Beginning Band and welcome you and your child to the River Forest Band program.

Musically yours,

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FAQ's ABOUT BAND
Frequently Asked Questions from Sixth Graders and their Parents

1. **Why Should I Join Band?**
   Instrumental music provides students with an opportunity to participate in a good, wholesome, group activity while receiving an excellent music education. Learning the skills necessary to master a musical instrument is a mentally challenging and emotionally rewarding experience. Studies show that students who participate in music performance groups score higher on SAT's and other standardized tests. Self-discipline, strength of character and stage presence are also gained, along with a life-long appreciation of music that truly cannot be learned any better way.

2. **What Does the Band Do?**
   The Bands in the Middle School and Senior High Schools are very active. They perform many times each year. The performances include the Homecoming Parade, the Fourth of July Parade, the football half-time shows, the basketball games and pep assemblies. There are Holiday, Winter and Spring concerts, District Band contests, District and State Solo and Ensemble contests, school Assembly Programs for the elementary schools as well as the Middle School. There is that little trip we take to...DISNEY too!!! We do, indeed, keep busy! We even roller skate, swim, and bowl together from time to time. We consider Band to be one big, happy, active family.

3. **Can I Play Sports And Be In Band Too?**
   **Yes!** Band meets during the school day, just like English, Math, or any other subject. **All Sports** meet after school; so there is no scheduling conflict. In fact, **Every Sport** at River Forest High School has at least one Band member on the team! There are several high school football players in Band at the present time. Furthermore, Band does not interfere with being a cheerleader. In fact, many of the current River Forest High School cheerleaders are Band members.

4. **Who Is Selected For Band?**
   The invitation to start Band is based upon the three major criteria outlined below:
   a. **Classroom Grades**
      A Student must have at least a "C" average in their core academic subjects. A student with a "D" or "F" would be better off concentrating on raising his/her other grades rather than investing time in an additional academic pursuit.
   b. **Attitude of the Student**
      An apparent personal desire to succeed is duly noted here, coupled with a strong desire to be involved in the Band program.
c. **Musical Aptitude**
   Everyone can learn to play a musical instrument, given the correct instruction and opportunities. Some students may find more success on one instrument vs. another.

5. **Will Piano Lessons Help Me To Learn A Band Instrument?**
   Yes. Students who have taken piano lessons often make the best Band members because they have a head start on counting, reading notes, finger coordination, etc. We recommend to any student who is doing well on piano to start Band, provided he or she meets the other requirements. Taking Band does not mean a student has to quit piano lessons. The two, in fact, compliment each other, thereby making a stronger, more knowledgeable musician. **However, previous musical experience is not at all necessary for membership in Beginning Band.**

6. **How Do I Go About Getting A Band Instrument?**
   The best way to be sure to get a quality instrument to begin with is to use the instrument rental plan. For your convenience, we have made arrangements with the Quinlan and Fabish Music Company of Valparaiso to provide an instrument rental program. There is no obligation, of course, to rent from Quinlan and Fabish. Their service is excellent and they make weekly trips to the school. The rental plan has two very important advantages: 1) The student has the use of an instrument in "mint" condition during the initial beginning period, when the struggle to learn to play properly is the greatest, and 2) The parent does not have to buy an instrument out-right only to find at the end of a few months that the student has not gained sufficient ground to merit continuing on the instrument. The vast majority of instrumental music programs in the country use a similar rental-purchase program because of its great success. A musical instrument is not mastered in a matter of days. It takes years of daily practice to achieve true mastery. We ask that each student (and their parents) make a commitment to stay with the instrumental program for the first semester. A more complete description of the rental purchase plan can be found later on in this pamphlet. Good equipment is a **must** in order to succeed in Band. If you already have an instrument at home or wish to purchase an instrument elsewhere (new or used), **PLEASE** let us help you by arranging for one of us to inspect and play-test the instrument prior to your child's first lesson. It is so important that a student's initial instruction with his/her peers not be delayed by having an instrument that, due to age or neglect, requires repair before it is playable. We would be more than happy to check out any used instrument you are considering because the cost to repair a used instrument to playable condition could far exceed its true market value!
4. **How Much Time Should I Put In Practicing?**

It does take effort to play an instrument! Unfortunately, there are no short cuts and no substitutes for home practice. We expect members of the beginning band to practice at home at least 30 minutes **DAILY**. With one thousand, four hundred and forty minutes in each 24-hour day, one should have no trouble setting aside a few of those minutes to practice! Fortunately, we have many dedicated students who enjoy practicing even longer than the required time. Just make it part of your daily routine (like homework). We have found, through the years, that students who do not practice do not succeed.

**PLEASE DO NOT START BAND IF YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO PRACTICE AT HOME!!!**
What Instrument Should I Choose?

This is an important decision! The following is a brief description of the various instruments.

**French Horn**

Students should have an above average musical ear for this one because it is one of the most difficult instruments to play. The Horn is a very important middle voice in the Band and frequently has opportunities for solos in much of today's fine Band literature. Students should have straight teeth and not overly large lips. It is possible to switch to this instrument from trumpet later on – perhaps during the summer before entering seventh grade.

**Trumpet**

The mainstay of the brass section, it plays melody much of the time and has occasional solo passages. We prefer the trumpet to the cornet (which is similar in many respects) because the trumpet sound blends better with the concert Band instrumentation. Trumpet players might easily "double" on (or transfer to) French Horn, Baritone or Tuba. Students should have even teeth without too much overbite.

**Trombone**

Another important instrument of the brass section, the trombone alternates between playing the bass line and the counter-melody with the baritones. It frequently has solo passages and its range of technical flexibility far surpasses the valved brass instruments both at the beginner and professional level. We have both boys and girls excelling on this instrument. Students should have fairly even teeth, medium lips and not too short of an arm length.
Baritone

Similar to the trombone, but with valves, the baritone plays the counter-melody (usually a beautiful, singing musical line) most of the time and spends the rest of its time high-lighting and supplementing other important lines in the music -- like the melody, for instance. It has the same fingerings as the trumpet, and therefore is easy to switch to from that instrument. We also start some potential Tuba players on this instrument.

Tuba

Tuba players sometimes begin on Baritone, a very versatile instrument (same fingerings), and switch them to Tuba after the first semester. Tubas are the backbone of the concert band. We need many good players here!

Flute

The smallest of the regular Band instruments, it usually plays the highest parts and is an important member of the upper register of the Band sound. It demands good finger dexterity and coordination. It is very popular -- so popular, in fact, that we must limit the number of beginning flute players we can accept. If the flute is your primary preference, please determine a strong second choice from amongst the other instruments.
Clarinet

As the mainstay of the woodwind section, and also a very popular instrument, there are more clarinets in Band than any other instrument -- which is as it should be. Choosing this instrument opens the possibility of eventually "doubling" on (or transferring to) one or more of a variety of other woodwind instruments, e.g. bass clarinet and possibly even bassoon or oboe -- all very important instruments in the Band. The clarinet frequently plays the melody and has solo passages.

Saxophone

The largest and most expensive of the woodwind instruments, this long-time mainstay of the dance Band frequently plays the counter melody and various harmonic passages. It comes in three sizes: alto, tenor, and baritone. Most beginners start on the alto, which is the smallest of the three.
Percussion

This is the most popular instrument and therefore must be regulated accordingly. Even though it is so popular as a desired instrument, it is indeed one of the hardest areas to learn and to master. The student must learn not only to play the basic instrument, the snare drum, but a host of others as well. Learning the rudiments of the snare drum is only the very tip of the iceberg! The Concert Band and Marching Band percussionist must also learn to count better than anyone else in the Band, to listen to the other parts better than anyone else in the Band, to develop better stage presence than anyone else in the Band, and they must learn to play dozens of different instruments and play them equally as well as anyone else in the Band plays their individual instrument! Therefore, only the Very Top Students will be chosen by the directors to be in the Percussion Section. Furthermore, most music calls for a rather limited amount of percussion, so we need only a limited number of players in the section. Students who are chosen for percussion will be outfitted with a kit that includes a set of bells and a drum pad. This will make it possible to teach keyboard percussion from the very beginning, thus making the transition from elementary to middle school much easier for the student.

**This has been a very brief description of the various instruments along with some brief indications of our priorities, preferences and departmental needs. To sum it all up, here is a priority list of the instruments, as we need them for balanced instrumentation:**

1. Horn  All hornists must be able to match pitch well. Must be willing and able to work!
2. Trumpet  We can use as many talented students in this area as we can get.
3. Trombone  A great instrument which we're a little short of at this time.
4. Baritone  This is a school instrument and we need many players here!
5. Tuba  Tuba players will begin on baritone or tuba.
6. Percussion  Fine for those who are willing and able to work!
7. Flute  Many fine players are needed here.
8. Clarinet  We need many clarinet players.
9. Saxophone  We have too many already, but I’m willing to start a few more
One Final Note

In order to play a percussion instrument, it is the established policy that the student must have an academic standing of a B+ or above and must pass a separate rhythm and dexterity/coordination exam for the Band director.

The Rental-Purchase Plan is described in some detail on the following page. If you have any questions concerning the financial arrangements, please contact Quinlan and Fabish Music Company at 2601 Cumberland Drive, Valparaiso, IN 46383. They are located just south of the County Seat Shopping Plaza off old Route 49, south of the K-Mart and the Northside Fire Station. Their phone number is 1-800-637-6872 (choose the Valparaiso store during the prompts).

SCHEDULE

Beginning Band will occur during the school day, as a regular class. Please be aware that since this is a performance based class, students are REQUIRED to attend and participate in all after school concerts. There are four concerts every year, at the end of the grading periods.

We communicate very closely with the classroom teachers who will let us know when a student is neglecting his/her schoolwork. Normally, students easily keep up with both Band and their classroom work. It simply requires diligence on the part of the student, but it is well worth the effort. If a band student is reported to be falling behind in his/her classroom work, we will make every effort to help that student understand the necessary steps to achieve his/her goals, thus providing an additional incentive for the child to excel in each endeavor undertaken.

A few final words on THE BEGINNING...

Please understand that every effort will be made to give the students the instrument of their choice, but there are reasons why this may not be possible. A student with a pronounced overbite would not be suited for brass, but would do well on woodwind. Limited finger and wrist flexibility would limit the success of a percussion student, etc. We have been very successful in matching students with the instrument appropriate to their physical capabilities. You are free to override that decision, but experience has shown that improper instrument assignment often leads to a great deal of frustration for the student. If cost is a concern please contact us at 962-7551, ext. 3032. We will do our best to work with you so your student can share in the Band experience.

***SELECTION NIGHT will be on Tuesday, August 21 from 3:30-7:00 PM. Student will have the opportunity to try an instrument or two and select their final choice on this evening!***