

Dear Parents of SLMS Band Students-

As we bring the 2017-2018 school year to a close, I want to share some things I've been doing behind the scenes. Since this does involve a small investment (like purchasing a method book), I want to make sure I communicate this before the start of the summer. I've been spending the last few weeks reflecting, evaluating and researching ways to continue to improve our program. I'm always looking at ways to grow and enhance what we do. Like many professional sports organizations, I look at the program from the bottom up. I think the time has come to make some changes.

### New Method Books – Tradition of Excellence



We will be using a new method book starting next school year. We will be using the **Tradition of Excellence Comprehensive Band Method**. Please do not confuse this book with the old Standard of Excellence books that we've used for the past 10 years. The book has modernized exercises and skills tests with fun accompaniments. Its inclusion of other academic disciplines (history, music theory and composition, etc.) is coordinated nicely with the exercises as the book progresses. It seems that this book is perfect for the way our band program is now set-up.

- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Band will use Tradition of Excellence Book 1 (red cover)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Band will use Tradition of Excellence Book 2 (blue cover)
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Band will use Tradition of Excellence Book 3 (green cover)

Please see the attached equipment list for your review.

### **Band Karate**

Unfortunately, whenever it's time for skills assessments in band, I feel that the students fear the testing part of it. As a result, the skills assessment has somewhat become a negative part of band. Some students seem to be apprehensive to the playing test. It shouldn't be that way. Instead, there should be positives taken from these assessments because it marks student progress on the instruments. Students should be excited and motivated to move up to the next level. We need to bring back the fun in moving up. Hence...**Band Karate**. Starting next year, skills assessments will become "belt tests" – much like in karate when you move up to the next belt. Students will be given an outline of skills to master in order to move up to the next belt. Colored zip ties will be given so students can show their level. Zip ties can either go onto their actual instruments or the instrument case. This has proven to be successful in other schools.

### **Grading**

No more SmartMusic - not that SmartMusic was a bad thing. It definitely has its benefits. Some students experienced frustration with a computer giving inaccurate feedback, but it was the best way to get recorded assignments to me. I will still use SmartMusic to teach class lessons. However, I will be utilizing Schoology more regularly. Student grades in HAC will show more specific mastery of categories like Note Reading, Rhythm Reading, Tone Quality, Musicality/Expression, and Overall Preparation.

### **Percussion**

In an effort to better prepare our percussion section, I am going to scale back and spend more time in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade bands to focus on note reading more than rudiments. 8<sup>th</sup> grade band members will shift focus to rudimentary work. Thus, the following changes will be in effect for next school year:

- Only 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students will need the Rudimental Etudes and Warm-ups (Easy) book in addition to the Tradition of Excellence Book 3.
- 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Graders will **only** need the **Tradition of Excellence** books.

Also, all percussionists are required to have their own sticks AND bell mallets.

I'm hoping that these changes will have a positive effect on our band program. Only time will tell, but it's June, and I'm already excited and motivated to work with the new material.