



Below is a list of Frequently Asked Questions for GPS Elementary Band and Orchestra classes. These are general questions. Some of these answers may not reflect the decisions of your specific school and teaching staff. If you have additional questions, please contact your school's Band or Orchestra teacher.

### **Do we have to buy or rent an instrument?**

Most Band/Strings parents rent or lease instruments from local music stores. When renting, you can build equity with the music store in most cases. All repairs are covered by the store when you have insurance on your rental. In addition, you can often get a better quality beginning level instrument and the correct size for String instruments. Please be careful of less expensive instruments. There is more information on this page regarding renting, purchasing or borrowing from the school.

### **How much does it cost to rent an instrument?**

Most instruments cost approximately \$20 to \$25 per month to rent. The advertised price should include tax and insurance. Please be careful of stores that advertise a low price, then add tax and insurance later. The instruments that rent for approximately \$20 to \$25 per month are Flute, Clarinet, Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion Kit, Violin, and Viola. Other instruments, including Saxophone, French Horn, Baritone, Tuba, Cello, and Bass can be considerably more expensive. Compare what each store covers with their insurance. Ask questions like: What if the instrument is lost/stolen? Are strings covered on string instruments? What repairs are covered? Are there loaner instruments while my instrument is being repaired?

### **Where can I rent an instrument?**

Both new and used name brand instruments can be rented from local music stores. Rates from one store to the next should be within a few dollars of each other. "Like New" and "Used" instruments will typically be \$5-\$10 less per month than the rental cost of a "New" instrument. Used instruments can

be very good if it's a quality brand. Be wary of stores that don't offer name brand instruments or that don't advertise a price that already includes tax and insurance. An instrument that is "New" isn't always better. Your school's teachers can provide you with a list of local music stores.

### **Is it better to buy an instrument instead of renting?**

This is a difficult question to answer since every student and situation is unique. If you choose to buy an instrument, please remember not all instruments are created equal. Look for name brand instruments. The quality of the instrument is a very important factor in your child's success. You will also be responsible for all repairs if you own the instrument. When you rent, repairs should be covered by the store if your rental plan includes Loss/Damage/Repair insurance.

### **I found a great deal on an instrument at a warehouse/department store. Should I buy it?**

It has been our experience that instruments purchased in this manner are often of lower quality. Students often struggle to produce a good sound and the instruments tend to have frequent mechanical troubles. They are usually instruments of unknown brands. This does not mean that you have to spend a fortune for a beginner level instrument. There are many high quality beginning level instruments on the market, many of which can be purchased for \$300-\$400 dollars, even less used. Quality name brand instruments are brand names that have proven themselves over time. They tend to provide a better learning experience for your child.

### **I found a great deal on eBay. Should I buy it?**

You can find many good quality new and used instruments on eBay. However, there are usually many off-brand instruments up for auction as well. A phrase like "Band Director approved" does not mean it's a good instrument. Again, look for name brand instruments. The old saying, "You get what you pay for" is very true for musical instruments.

### **What brands of instruments are considered quality name brands?**

Not all instruments are created equal. Look for name brand instruments, which are brands that have proven their quality over time. The quality of the instrument is a very important factor in your child's success. The following are commonly considered name brands for Brass and Woodwinds: Bach, Besson, Blessing, Buffet, Bundy (older models), Cannonball, Conn, Eastman, Evette, Gemeinhardt, Getzen, Holton, Jupiter, King, Reynolds, Selmer, Vito, and Yamaha. For Percussion, CB700, Ludwig, Mapex, Pearl, and Vic Firth are well known brands. For String instruments, Eastman, Glaesel, Klaus-Mueller, Knilling, Meisel, and Scherl and Roth are often considered to be of good quality.

**My child wants to play flute, but we already have a trumpet. Can he just play trumpet?**

In most cases, yes. The instrument choice is yours as a family, but keep in mind that beginners tend to be more successful on an instrument that they really want to play. It is recommended that you discuss instrument choice concerns with your child's teacher.

**Are there other materials or supplies that we will need to provide?**

Yes. In addition to the instrument, there are other low cost materials/supplies that need to be purchased. Most of the supplies are a one-time purchase. These include:

Band – book(s), cleaning cloth or swab, oil or grease, reeds for Clarinet and Saxophone, and a pencil;

Strings – book(s), rosin, shoulder pad, cleaning cloth, and a pencil. Your instructor will provide you with a specific list based on the instrument your child chooses.

**Can my child still participate if we can't afford to provide an instrument?**

Each school has an inventory of certain instruments. The instruments available vary from school to school. *You must apply to be considered for a school-owned instrument.* Eligibility is determined by a variety of factors including financial need. Applications are available from each school's Band/Strings teacher and are often available at the school office. Please be sure to adhere to application deadlines. Those chosen to receive loan of a school owned instrument are under

contractual obligation to take proper care of the instrument and to maintain a certain level of performance and responsibility throughout the year.

**Which instrument is the easiest to learn?**

The "Starter" instruments of Flute, Clarinet, Trumpet, Trombone, Baritone, Violin, Viola, Cello and Bass tend to be the best for beginners. However, all students require regular dedicated practice to be successful, no matter what instrument is being learned.

**Do Band/Strings classes meet during the school day?**

Yes. All students K-6 grades attend a music class. In grades 5 and 6 students are asked to choose which music class they would like to take. Band/Strings students attend Band/Strings instead of General Music. The schedule works a little differently at GPS Traditional School-Neely Campus. Contact them for more information.

**Are Band/Strings students given a grade?**

Yes. Since it is a class, students earn letter grades, A-F. General Music students also earn a letter grade.

**Do students have to miss other classes to be in Band/Strings?**

Band/Strings is scheduled as part of the Special Area schedule. Music classes rotate with PE, Art, and Computers on different days of the week. Band/Strings will not attend a Library "class," but will have a weekly Library access time scheduled. Those students not in Band or Strings will attend General Music and will also receive a Library "class."

**How often will my student attend Band/Strings class?**

Band/Strings classes meet an average of two and a half times per week for 40 minutes each time. Some weeks the students meet twice, other weeks they meet three times.

**Are private lessons required?**

No. Private lessons outside of school are not required, but are recommended if you're financially able. If a student joins late or switches instruments at a later date, private lessons may be necessary in order for the child to make proper progress. The Band/Strings teachers at your school can provide you with names of private instructors.

**Are there any commitments outside of the school day?**

Band/Strings classes meet during the school day. However, students are expected to practice at home to be successful. The expectation varies slightly from teacher to teacher, but averages approximately 10-15 minutes of at-home practice per school day. There are also two or three evening concerts each year that students are required to attend.

**Does my child need previous music experience to learn an instrument in 5th Grade?**

No. 5th Grade Band/Strings is a true beginning level course. (Your child is even taught how to open the case.) Prior experience is not necessary, but can be beneficial. Prior experience is highly recommended for Percussion students.

**What if my child wants to play an instrument that is not considered a "Starter"? Will they be able to change instruments when they enter 6th Grade?**

Students are able to change to a closely related instrument when entering 6th grade, if agreed by all involved parties (student, parent, teacher). The most common transfers are Clarinet to Saxophone; Trumpet to another brass instrument; any band instrument to Percussion; and Cello to Bass. The decision to change instruments is based on each individual student, including factors such as physical characteristics, student effort and responsibility throughout 5th grade, and musical skill. Summer classes or lessons before the 6th grade year are often recommended. Ultimately our goal is to do what's in the best interest of each student.

**My child didn't play an instrument in 5th Grade, but would like to start in 6th Grade. Is that possible?**

In most cases, it can be very difficult for a student to join as a true beginner in 6th Grade. Since they will attend class with students in their second year of instruction, it is recommended that new

students gain some experience through Summer School, summer music camps, and/or private lessons outside of the school day. The final decision is made at the campus level.