

West Des Moines

Elementary Band Guide Book

2025-2026



Valley MarchMasters 2018-2019

"If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music." - Albert Einstein

Joining Band

In the West Des Moines Community School District, students start band in 5th grade. This packet provides helpful information on how to participate in band. Some details of participating in band are dependent on which school your student attends for band. In August of 2025, an email will be sent to you, asking if your child is interested in joining band. If the answer is yes, here are the next few steps:

Instrument Demo

Band teachers will provide a demonstration for the incoming 5th grade class, showing them each of the instruments, and how they work. Here, students can think about what instruments they might like to try out at instrument “fitting”. Home school families are welcome to attend this instrument demo, to see what options are available in 5th grade band.

Instrument Fitting

After instrument demos, there will be an instrument “fitting” day, in which students can come to the band room, and try to play a few instruments that they are interested in. It is here that they make the decision of what instrument they would like to learn in band! Sanitation spray is used between instrument use. If you’d prefer to choose an instrument without trying them out, or would prefer to try out instruments at the local music store instead, those are both options as well.

Sign-Up and Parent Meeting

Once students have selected their instrument, a meeting for band parents will be held at each school, either in person, or on Google Meet. More information will be shared about lessons, band schedules, concert dates, and instrument rental. Once students have their instrument and other band materials, we hit the ground running with lessons and large-group band rehearsals!

Acquiring an Instrument

What options of instruments do we have?

There are a few ways to go about getting an instrument for your student. Here are the instrument options for your student in 5th grade:

Woodwind Instruments: Flute, Clarinet, and Alto Saxophone

Brass Instruments: Trumpet, Horn, Trombone, Euphonium/Baritone, Tuba

Percussion: Percussion is an auditioned instrument. Percussionists will learn both mallet instruments and drums.

How can we get an instrument?

To acquire an instrument for band, you can rent through the local music store, rent from the school, purchase one on your own from another source, or use a family instrument that you may already own. We recommend renting/buying from the local music store, if possible. The benefits of this include rent-to-own programs provided by many music stores, assurance of a quality instrument, trial periods, and repair insurance.

There is a rental night hosted by West Des Moines, in which Rieman music representatives bring instruments and supplies that can be rented/bought, and provide any advice or information you may be seeking about acquiring an instrument. This rental night usually happens within the first two weeks of the school year. It is in the PAC lobby at Valley High School. More information about this event is provided at the band director-hosted meeting at the beginning of the school year.

Can we rent from the school?

Yes! Although our inventory is limited, so we encourage you to rent from the store if you are able to. School instrument rental is \$65 a year (non-refundable). When tubas, euphoniums, and horns are rented from the school, students get an at-home instrument to practice on for no extra cost. This is so that they do not have to bring the large instrument back and forth. The only instrument that we do not rent out is alto-saxophone, due to the price. We do not have a large enough inventory of these instruments. If you qualify for free-reduced fees, you will not be charged the rental fee.

Which brands should we choose?

The suggested supplies list provides a “reputable brands” section for each instrument. Please try to stick to these instruments. Try to avoid “too good to be true” gimmicks when looking on websites, catalogues, and big-box stores. The helpful phrase goes like this: “New, High Quality, and Cheap: Only 2 Can Be True” Oftentimes, music stores will not repair instruments from non-reputable brands, because they do not have the standard parts. You will find the suggested supplies list under the “Beginning Band Supply List” section of this handbook.

Lessons and Rehearsals

Each student gets one 30-minute lesson a week. They will be either with a small group of like-instruments, or on their own. The timing of the lesson each week depends on which school you attend for band. Some schools provide a lesson time slot that is at the same time, on the same day, each week. Some schools have a rotating schedule, in which the lesson slot moves by 30 minutes each week. These schedules will become available in August.

Each school has one 5th grade band rehearsal during the week. The time and day of these rehearsals depends on which school you are attending. These schedules will become available in August.

Concerts and Performances

The 5th grade bands get to perform multiple times throughout the school year. Most schools have performances in December, February, and April. The dates for these concerts are shared at the beginning of the school year. It is exciting to have these opportunities to see all of the growth our young musicians experience throughout the year!



Practice and Parent Support

Practice is an essential part of playing an instrument. It is how we continue to make progress throughout the school year. Students should practice their instruments at least 10-15 minutes a day. Consistent practice is the biggest factor in student success. We encourage you to help your child establish a positive and productive practice routine.

There are many ways for parents to support their child in learning a new instrument. Here are some tips for that support:

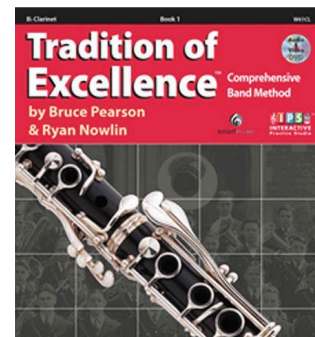
- Encourage your child to learn a band instrument, even if it's completely different than anything they've done before!
- Be open to whatever instrument your child wants to play. There is no instrument that's only for girls, or only boys, or too big or too small for your child. We do look at hand size for clarinet and saxophone.
- Beginning instruments will create some interesting sounds. There's SO much to learn in those first couple of months. Always be encouraging in your child's growth, even if you can't hear it right away! In a few months, you'll be amazed by their progress
- Help your child get all of the band supplies needed by the time school starts so that they are set up for success in the first days of learning.
- Create a quiet space for your child to be able to practice at home. Band kids should have a music stand and a straight-backed chair in a place without distraction for good practicing.
- Help siblings understand that only the band student is allowed to touch band equipment.
- If the instrument is not playing well, please bring it to your band director. Do not attempt to repair it yourself.
- Band is a performance based class. Concerts are exciting and a culmination of all of the learning that has happened prior to the concert. Please make every effort to have your student attend the scheduled concerts.

"Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good." - Malcolm Gladwell

Beginning Band Supply List

1. **Instrument** - See instrument rental page for details about renting or buying an instrument.
2. **Methods Book** - This is the main material we use in band class. We use it in almost every lesson, and also during our first concert.

We use the Traditions of Excellence (Book 1). Each instrument has its own corresponding book. These can be bought online, at our rental night, or at any local music store. Shown on the left is the clarinet book. ----->>



3. **Folding Music Stand** - Music Stands are needed to practice at home. There are many different options in the music store, and online.



4. **Instrument-Specific Supplies** - Each instrument needs certain supplies for maintenance and care. Some instruments, like clarinets and saxophones, need a reed to be played. These supplies can be found online, and in the music store. Here is a list of required supplies, organized by instrument. There is a version in English, and one in Spanish.

English: https://drive.google.com/file/d/15l7HjZdQh-jSg0tkurlu46DqsGAll_N/view?usp=sharing

Spanish: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z9lsTIXhR6VOuw4HADlGd3oAaRIEUQ8w/view?usp=sharing>

Local Music Stores

Rieman Music

Urbandale Location

Des Moines - Urbandale
6501 Douglas Ave
Urbandale, IA 50322
800-962-3658
(515)278-4685



East Des Moines Location

Des Moines - East
4420 E Broadway Ave
Des Moines, IA 50317
800-372-6051
(515)262-0365

Sleister Music

515-619-1439
support@sleistermusic.com
2201 W 1st Street
Ankeny, IA 50023



Up-Tempo Music

(515) 277-0145
info@UptempoMusicStore.com
2714 Beaver Ave,
Des Moines, IA 50310



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West Des Moines School Addresses

Clive Learning Academy

1600- 73rd Street
Windsor Heights

Crestview Elementary

8355 Franklin Ave.
Clive

Crossroads Park Elementary

1050 50th Street
West Des Moines

Fairmeadows Elementary

807 23rd Street
West Des Moines

Hillside Elementary

713 Eighth Street
West Des Moines

Jordan Creek Elementary

4105 Fuller Road
West Des Moines

Western Hills Elementary

600 39th Street
West Des Moines

Westridge Elementary

5500 EP True Parkway
West Des Moines

Indian Hills Junior High

9401 Indian Hills Drive
West Des Moines

Stilwell Junior High School

1601 Vine Street
West Des Moines

Valley High School

3650 Woodland Ave
West Des Moines

Valley Southwoods

625 S. 35th Street
West Des Moines

