

# **SUSD 5TH GRADE MUSIC**

*Be a part of the music!*

Dear parents and guardians,

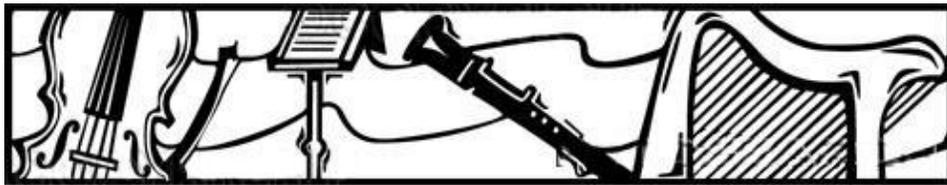
Welcome back to a new school year! We are thrilled to work with your students this year and the upcoming exciting weeks. One exciting option that your 5th grader has this year is a choice of two options for their in-school music time (almost like a mini-elective!).

Your student will now be able to choose between two music tracks for the year: General Music or Beginning Instrument Music Exploratory.

With the continued support of SEF, **General Music** will continue in the pedagogical explorations that your students have been exploring since Kindergarten, using methodology from the Orff Schulwerk, Kodaly, and general music theory practices to continue their progress of a survey, understanding and performance of music as a comprehensive art form.

In partnership with the Saratoga Music Boosters (SMB), the **Beginning Instrumental Music Exploratory** option will take students through the exciting and challenging first steps of learning to play one of our “Big Four” band instruments for part of the year (euphonium/baritone, trumpet, clarinet, and flute), AND on an upper string orchestra instrument (violin and viola) for the other half of the year. This track will offer students a small initial sampling into the band and orchestra program at Redwood Middle School and beyond!

While the General Music track will continue with music classes that students have been familiar with in the past few years, Beginning Instrumental Music Exploratory takes students through the process of learning an entirely new intellectual and physical skill, and thus does involve additional considerations and commitments. Please consult these below as you make a decision with your student.



## **COMMON QUESTIONS FOR BEGINNING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC EXPLORATORY**

- **How will I know what to play?** • Students will be taken through an instrument fitting and selection process during the first few classes of each semester. As each instrument has its own unique characteristics and is played differently, the fitting process helps us determine which instruments are better suited for success, and which ones should be avoided. This process includes mouthpiece trials and listening activities and evaluations. Students will let us know of their top two instrument choices, which will in turn allow us to narrow down their final instrument assignment.
- **Are there any financial obligations or other considerations to participating?** • Learning a musical instrument successfully requires an investment of both time and money. We have a

requested contribution to help cover the costs of any instrumental music. Contributions are voluntary and do not affect any student's eligibility in participating in any of our programs. There are typically two requests. 1) Saratoga Music Boosters program contributions, which support bringing in professional specialists on each instrument. These coaches will provide students with the highest quality of instruction possible to ensure the most successful experience for your child, particularly with group instruction occurring just once a week. 2) Instrument Use donations, which are requested to cover the use of quality instruments for your student such as repairs and maintenance costs. Regardless of financial contribution, we welcome and invite any and all students to participate in our music programs. More information on both of these will be coming soon.

- **Is one lesson a week enough to learn an instrument?** • Particularly with group lessons, this option is intended to expose students to a small sample of the beginning instrumental process, but is in no way intended to be a comprehensive experience. Once students join us at Redwood and we are able to work with them each school day, then the real magic begins!
- **What instruments are included in the Instrumental Music Exploratory option?** • For band, students would be able to learn either the euphonium/baritone, trumpet, clarinet, or flute. For string orchestra, students will be able to learn either the violin or viola.
- **What if my student already knows how to play a band and/or string orchestra instrument?** • That's fantastic! We would love to have them join us! Do note that this is a once-a-week survey of the instrumental ensemble music experience, starting from the very beginning. This is not a traditional daily band/orchestra experience. To keep the experience challenging and engaging, students in this position should try an instrument that they do not yet know how to play.
- **My student plays the piano and/or guitar. Could they join the Instrumental Music Exploratory option?** • We welcome all students! While piano and guitar are not included in band or orchestra, many of the skills involved will transfer over to the new instrument. Students with prior music backgrounds often find it easy to pick up another instrument due to their ear training, knowledge of music reading, familiarity with good practice strategies, and self-discipline.
- **What are the expectations of student responsibility?** • Musical instruments are expensive and often-fragile pieces of equipment ranging from \$400-\$1500 per instrument in addition to other materials such as reeds, grease, oil, etc. Students are expected to properly care for and maintain their instruments after each practice session. This takes special care and dedication!
- **What are the practice expectations?** • Instrumental music is fun and exciting to learn, and also CHALLENGING! The experience this year is intended to be casual, so there is no expectation of practice outside of class. However, students are welcome to bring their instruments home and play outside of class if they would like.
- **Would there be any extracurricular practices associated with the Instrumental Music Exploratory option?** • No. Our intention is to keep the experience entirely during students' existing in-school 5th grade music time.
- **Are there performances?** • As the once-a-week class time is minimal and barely touches upon instrumental basics, there are no performances this year. These opportunities begin as students move to Redwood.
- **When should I get an instrument?** • Not yet! When it comes to musical instruments, brand names, quality design, and specialized details matter. There are many cheap and positive-rated instruments for sale online that are, to put it bluntly, no good! We will have more information on instruments in the fall, and also can offer school-owned instruments to use for the year for an affordable suggested donation. We also invite and encourage quality instrument rentals from reputable local stores. This helps us ensure availability of school instruments to those students and families who truly need them, too.

- **What if the instrument(s) that my student learned this year seems like a mismatch? •**  
This year's experience is meant to be a very small sample of the entire process. If students think that their 5th grade instrument might not have been for them but they like the idea of participating in ensemble music, they can definitely try a different one in 6th grade! We also know that there are many reasons that a student and an instrument don't mesh and are happy to discuss to determine the true root of the challenge.
- **Anything else? •** That's it for now! If you are interested in checking out what other music offerings your student can look forward to from 5th grade through 8th grade, you can find us online at [www.redwoodmusic.us](http://www.redwoodmusic.us).

To assist us in proper placement of their music track for the year, we ask that you discuss with your student the track that they are interested in choosing for this year, then complete the Google form (be on the lookout for an upcoming ParentSquare message!). This will indicate to us how the 5th grade music sessions will be split and allow us to test and fit the correct students for their appropriate instruments should they be interested in the instrumental music route. Additional questions? Please email us!

Thank you so much for your help. We look forward to a wonderful year of music with your students!

*Ms. Jones, Mr. Jow, & Ms. McPherson*

[bjones@saratogausd.org](mailto:bjones@saratogausd.org), [jjow@saratogausd.org](mailto:jjow@saratogausd.org), [imcpherson@saratogausd.org](mailto:imcpherson@saratogausd.org)

---



**SUSD Elementary General Music: [bit.ly/susdgm](https://bit.ly/susdgm)**



**SUSD Instrumental Music: [redwoodmusic.us](http://redwoodmusic.us)**  
Saratoga Music Boosters: [saratogamusicboosters.org](http://saratogamusicboosters.org)

## Old FAQs (not part of the actual handout)

- **What are the practice expectations?** • Instrumental music is fun and exciting to learn, and also CHALLENGING! We ask that your student spend some practice time with their instrument each and every week. Think of it as musical homework, but much more fun! Instrumental students should practice at home between weekly classes. Like any physical skill, this requires consistency, independence, and discipline to develop complex physical coordination and translate theory into instantaneous instrumental performance! Playing an instrument during in-class meetings only is not sufficient to ensure success. Students typically do well with short practice sessions (ideally starting at 5 minutes a day) this year. Students must also be responsible and remember to bring their instruments to school on music days.
- **What COVID protocols will be in place during music time?** • We are sure that some creativity and flexibility will be required, and look forward to working with each school site, our district office, and our county to prioritize student safety. Band instrument instruction will be held outdoors and distanced (on days with inclement weather or precarious air conditions, class will be moved indoors with other, non-playing content being covered). String instrument instruction will be held indoors with masks.