

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the D.C. Virgo Middle School Band Program! I am excited about the coming year and I hope you and your child are as well! I believe strongly that participation in band will enhance your child's experience here at Virgo.

Enclosed in this folder are important pieces of information. I realize it is a lot to go through, but I try to provide you with all the information you need for the whole school year so that you may better plan. I suggest you read each document carefully so that you will fully understand the way the band program works, and what each student and parent is responsible for. Some documents are for your information and to keep at home, and others are to be signed/filled out and returned to me.

Document	Color	Keep, or Turn In?
Virgo Band Handbook	Light Blue	After reading the entire handbook with your student, tear off the back two sheets, fill out both, and return. YOU KEEP THE HANDBOOK. This way you can refer to it throughout the school year.
Band Calendar of Events	Lime Green	You keep in a handy place, so you can refer to it throughout the school year.
Expected Expenses Sheet	Kelly Green	This is for you to keep and to help you plan your budget for the school year. I strongly encourage each parent to get their child's "Concert Attire" as soon as possible!
Media Release Form	Bright Yellow	Turn in. Band students are photographed, video taped, and audio taped, so I must have a release form on file. This is the same you're your child's homebase teacher will hand out, so please make sure your child turns this in to ME and NOT THEIR HOMEBASE TEACHER.
Practice Charts	Bright Orange	Students are expected to practice 30 minutes a day, five days a week, for a total of 150 minutes a week. Parents give their child a grade based on how often the child practices, and the child grades themselves on the quality of the practice. New practice charts will be given out each month, or you can download them from the "Documents" page of the band website (www.virgoband.com)

One of the most common questions as a parent of a beginning band student is "How and when does my child get an instrument to play?" During the first week of school, I will spend time asking the students what instrument they want to play.

I try to let each student play the instrument of his/her first choice. Sometimes this is not possible if we are to have a balanced instrumentation. If necessary, I will ask students to consider their second choice. The better balanced we are, the better we will sound. Students who already have an instrument and students who rented an instrument for "Summer Band" are guaranteed those instruments. If you do not already have an instrument for your child, there are a number of ways to obtain one:

- You may obtain an instrument on your own, from a neighbor, older sibling, or any music store. Pawn shops do carry instruments, but you must be very cautious. Often these instruments are not in good playing condition and require costly repairs – often more than the instrument is worth.
 - **Also, some discount/department stores sell band instruments at extremely low prices. Although these "deals" are tempting, I urge you NOT to buy them. They are VERY poor quality instruments. Local repair shops will not repair them, so if they break, the parents have just lost money on a worthless instrument. I have NEVER had good experiences with these instruments.**
- There are several music stores in town that offer "Rent-to-own" programs. These programs are often perfect for the beginning band student. If the student decides that band is just not his/her thing, the parents can turn the instrument back in to store with no further obligation. Most also offer "insurance" for \$5.00 a month that cover certain damages/losses.
- If none of the above options are possible, please speak with me. I will do everything I can to make sure that any child that wants to be in band gets an instrument to play.

All students will be required to have an instrument by Friday, September 12th. According to County policy, any child who does not have an instrument by this date will automatically be dropped from band class and placed in another elective.

ALL students must also purchase a band method book. We are using "Essential Elements 2000". The cost is around \$8.50. I will be sending home an order form for these books during the first week of school. Please note that not all middle schools in New Hanover County are using the same book, so make sure that you get "Essential Elements 2000"! You can see what it looks like by going to the "Announcements" page on the Virgo Band Web Site (www.virgoband.com).

If you have any further questions, please feel free to call me at 251-6150 ext. 107, or you can email me at Bandlady813@ec.rr.com. Again, I look forward to working with you and your child this year!

Sincerely,

Amy L. Hinson, Director of Bands
Virgo Middle School