

Dear Students and Parents,

In March, eighth graders will have the opportunity to sign up for high school band. I would like for every one of you to join us! I am writing today to tell you a bit about myself and about high school band. I would also like to learn more about each of you so that I can answer your questions.

1) **First, to tell you a bit about myself:** I have been involved with school band since I was nine years old. I played the French horn in 4th-12th grade and was active in my school's (Madison, CT) music department. After high school, I received my BA in Music from Carleton College (Northfield, MN), my BS in Music Education from UConn, and my MM in French horn performance from UConn. Before coming to Stonington, I was the middle school band director in Ledyard for three years. I have been at SHS for ten years, and I was named Stonington's "Teacher of the Year" in 2011. I live in Mystic with my husband and my three-year-old son.

2) **Next, to tell you about band:** Stonington High School has three bands, all of which are comprised of students in grades 9-12. Most freshman enroll in **Concert Band**, which does not require an audition. Advanced students are welcome to audition for honors credit **Wind Ensemble**. This group is the same as concert band, but plays harder music. **Honors Jazz Band** meets during the school day. Like honors wind ensemble, this requires an audition. The jazz band, concert band, and honors wind ensemble play in three concerts each year. Our December concert is a "holiday" presentation, our March concert focuses on "traditional" band literature, and our June concert is a "pops" performance. The groups also combine to play at six home football games and march in three parades each year. We also participate in festivals and field trips. Course Descriptions for these three classes are below:

CONCERT BAND Length 1 year, Credit 1 All students with band instrument backgrounds are encouraged to enroll in this ensemble, which does not require an audition. The main focus of the class is improving individual and ensemble skills while studying and performing medium difficulty band literature. Students are expected to practice individually. Students will perform at three band concerts; march in three parades per year; play in the stands at six home football games; and play at graduation. Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory, whether they are during or after school. Conflicts are handled individually. Prerequisite: The ability to play a brass, woodwind, or percussion instrument; ability to read music.

WIND ENSEMBLE HONORS Length 1 year, Credit 1 The main focus of this class is improving individual and ensemble skills while studying and performing advanced difficulty band literature. Students wishing to audition for this smaller, select ensemble should be comfortable playing one-on-a part. Students are expected to practice individually on a daily basis. Students will perform at three band concerts; march in three parades per year; play in the stands at six home football games; and play at graduation. Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory, whether they are during or after school. Conflicts are handled individually. Prerequisite: Audition and permission of the instructor

JAZZ ENSEMBLE (HONORS) Length 1 year, Credit 1 The jazz ensemble is an organization of students that performs big band jazz literature. Instrumentation consists of saxophones, trombones, trumpets, piano, bass, guitar, and drums. The jazz ensemble performs at concerts, festivals, and community events. Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory. If a student is not able to concurrently enroll in wind ensemble, he/she is still required to perform at all wind ensemble functions. Prerequisite: Audition and permission of the instructor, concurrent enrollment of wind ensemble is HIGHLY encouraged.

3) **Frequently asked questions:**

Here are some questions/comments that students ask me about high school band, and my answers to them:

A) "Can I play in band and play a sport?"

YES! 95% of the band plays at least one sport (including football and cheerleading). There are very few conflicts between band and sports and I am incredibly flexible when there are. Students should do both!

B) "If I am in band, I will not have any study halls in my schedule. I'm afraid that this will be too hard."

NO! All freshmen take "Freshman Academy" which is a study hall for which you receive credit. Taking an additional study hall on top of Freshman Academy is not necessary. I encourage all students to take advantage of the opportunities at the high school by signing up for electives. 95% of the band is also on the honor roll. There is plenty of time to get homework done (in Freshmen Academy and after school), go to sports practice, and participate in band.