

September 3, 2009

Dear Parents,

As the new school year begins, we would like to draw your attention to a valuable educational opportunity currently available to students in our schools. The **Pentucket Instrumental Music Program** provides an opportunity for students to learn to play a musical instrument during the school day, and to participate in the school band or string ensemble. Along with learning basic musical skills, there are a number of long-term benefits that make this program especially relevant in today's educational environment.

When students begin study of a musical instrument, they open a world of potential for themselves. In addition to developing their individual musical talents, studying an instrument helps students develop many of the skills necessary to finding success later in life.

The Pentucket School District has embraced the concepts of **21st Century Learning** to best prepare our students for future success. As a school district we are committed to the learning of these skills.

Five Common Elements of Powerful Learning

Experiential

Ownership

Forces one out of Comfort Zone

Multifaceted Support

Reflective

Habits of Learning

Thinking

Communication

Collaboration

Independence

Creative Exploration

Each of these skills is intrinsic to musical performance and can be developed in school through participation in the Instrumental Music Program.

In the Pentucket Instrumental Music Program, the opportunities available to students grow as they progress from the elementary to secondary levels. Students expand their musical experience by participating in a variety of ensembles including Concert Band, Marching Band, String Ensemble, Jazz and Blues Ensembles, Mallet and Percussion Ensemble, and in the Pit Band for school musicals. Each of these ensembles offers unique challenges and rewards to its participants.

Pentucket Middle and High School musicians have opportunities to perform in parades, engage in competitions with groups from neighboring towns, and to travel to music festivals at novel destinations such as Canobie Lake and Six Flags (Please click here to visit the PRMS Band http://web.me.com/prhsfapa/Site_2/Home.html and PRHS Band web pages: <http://www.pentucketmusic.com>). Pentucket's superb performing groups routinely place among the top ensembles in the region at such music festivals and competitions. As Pentucket continues to develop its tradition of musical excellence, students have adopted a sense of pride and enthusiasm that has

contributed to increased participation in the program, and has promoted new and expanded opportunities for student musicians.

As band and string players transition from one grade level to the next, they are supported by a unified group of peers who share similar interests and talents. This provides a very necessary experience for students: being PART of a greater whole, and teaching them that their work or preparation has a direct impact on the whole, as well as working independently and cooperatively - an experience that has become increasingly rare for children.

A few other points to consider:

- Making music has been shown to improve test scores and boost academic achievement. (Web Link: <http://www.amcmusic.com/musicmaking/thebrain.htm>)
- Participation in school music ensembles can make a student more attractive to prospective colleges, and can open doors for scholarships.
- Playing an instrument can provide opportunities for travel, and offer a conduit for students to relate with people of other cultures and backgrounds.

Information about the Instrumental Music Program was distributed in school this week to all incoming 4th grade students, as well as any interested 5th and 6th grade students. We hope that you will take some time to review this information, and we encourage you to contact either Mr. Yennior (yennior@prsd.org) (Bagnall and Donaghue Schools) or Mrs. Jeffries (jeffries@prsd.org) (Page School) with any questions or concerns you may have. Students can also join the program in the Middle School and the High School by contacting Mr. Beatrice at abeatrice@prsd.org.

Lastly, we would like to point out that there is currently a participation fee in the amount of \$200.00 for the Instrumental Music Program (roughly \$6.00 per each weekly music lesson). In this difficult economy, we understand that requesting this contribution may place an additional burden on families but payment plans can be worked out with the Principal. Before making a decision about your child's participation, we hope that you will strongly consider the many benefits of enrolling your child in the Instrumental Program. Also, please be sure to make your school's music teacher aware of any particular financial hardships your family may be facing, as there may be financial assistance available to help offset the costs involved.

Our Superintendent Dr. Paul A. Livingston notes, "As a former instrumental band instructor for the Wayland, MA Public Schools, I know what it meant for my students to be involved in the program to this day. I still hear from former students about the values this experience taught them and the connections they made in college and beyond through music. They remember the boost it gave them to be noticed in college admissions. The life-long learning of sticking with something to acquire a difficult skill is far too rare in today's world. Colleges and employers respect those people that have shown they have done this."

We hope that you please consider carefully this wonderful opportunity for your child to experience the enjoyment and enrichment that comes from learning to make music. We welcome any feedback you may have regarding the Pentucket Instrumental Music Program.

Sincerely,

Ellen Hart – Director of Fine and Performing Arts

The Pentucket Instrumental Music Staff