Chelmsford Public Schools
Fine and Performing Arts Department
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FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT INFORMATION FOR INCOMING GRADE 5 FAMILIES:

***McCarthy* Middle School**

February 1, 2017

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Middle School! It is the time of year when you and your student will begin to select elective courses. To assist you with this process, this letter will provide you with information regarding our 5th grade Fine and Performing Arts Programs at McCarthy.

In grade 5 at McCarthy, students select either performance music (Band, Chorus, or Orchestra) for a full year, or art for half of the year and general music for half of the year. Students who take performance music who would also like to explore the grade-level art curriculum are encouraged to join the Art Club, which is an after-school club taught by the school's art teachers.

All students take art classes in grade 7-8, regardless of whether they participate in music ensembles.

It is important to know that students who select to participate in our Band, Chorus or Orchestra Program at any grade level (5-8) commit to staying in the program for the entire school year.

There are several reasons for this policy:

- Our curriculum focuses on skills and expectations that are developed sequentially throughout the year, and the music directors choose literature and plan for progress through the curriculum based on the number of students in each ensemble. If students were allowed to change courses, it would impede the curricula.
- Overall, our staffing and budget are based on the number of students who choose each elective. Each year in the Fine and Performing Arts Department, we begin by looking at those students who have selected Performance Music. Depending on the number of students enrolled in these groups, we then work on how many Art sections are needed. We also order supplies based on the enrollment figures to ensure we will have adequate materials for each student, so switching classes mid-year would result in inadequate resources in the classroom.

A video is currently available on your current elementary school's website further detailing choices for grade 5 Fine and Performing Arts, and you can find also curriculum information for Art, Band, Chorus, and Orchestra on the CPS webpage at any time by visiting the following link: http://www.chelmsford.k12.ma.us/arts. You can also find curriculum information for Art, Band, Chorus, Orchestra, and General Music on the CPS webpage at any time by visiting the following link: http://www.chelmsford.k12.ma.us/arts.

In addition, the following transition events are planned in order to help you and your child make informed decisions about their arts choice in grade 5:

- February 4, 2:00 p.m. Choralfest concert featuring various choral ensembles. All are welcome to attend this free concert at 2:00 p.m. at the CHS Performing Arts Center.
- February 11, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.: Instrument Test Drive at CHS Main Entrance
    - All middle school teachers will be on hand to lead all grade 4 students in trying out all band (trumpet, trombone, flute, clarinet) and orchestra (violin, viola, cello, bass) instruments.
- February 17 during the school day: Middle School "Tour of Chelmsford"
    - All grade 4 students will attend assemblies at their schools to meet the middle school chorus, band, and orchestra directors and see the ensembles perform.

Thank you for your attention; I hope this will help you and your child to make your Fine and Performing Arts selections for 5th grade. I am always available to answer questions you may have, so please feel free to contact me or any of the teachers at any time through their contact information below. We are all looking forward to welcoming this class to McCarthy Middle School!

Sincerely,
Christina Whittlesey
PreK-12 Fine and Performing Arts Department Coordinator

McCarthy Grade 5 Fine and Performing Arts Teachers:

ART: Tim Darland darlandt@chelmsford.k12.ma.us
BAND: Allison Lacasse lacassea@chelmsford.k12.ma.us
Sean Wright wrights@chelmsford.k12.ma.us
CHORUS: Jodi Richardson richardsonj@chelmsford.k12.ma.us
ORCHESTRA: Susan Slocum slocums@chelmsford.k12.ma.us

SmartMusic Program
For Grades 5-12 Performance Music Students

For the past several years, the CPS performance classes have used an exciting new type of software called "SmartMusic." This tool is an impressive practice aid and that allows students to receive immediate feedback on their practice work. It has also been used as a supplemental assessment tool in instrumental classrooms throughout our district to help provide teachers with specific information regarding student progress.

What can Smart Music do for our CPS Performance Music Students?

1. *Smart Music: the "Rock Band" of quality instrument computer programs!* Using a microphone, it will tell you what notes you played or sang correctly and which ones you missed. It will even give you a score, telling you how many total notes you played right! This will be a component of grading on some assessments throughout the year.
2. It will allow you to record your songs and send those recordings as MP3 files to relatives, friends and your teacher!
3. You can tune your instrument at home: It has an excellent built in tuner!
4. You can keep a steady beat: It has an excellent built in metronome that you can use while you play!
5. It will make it easier to follow written music by providing a moving highlight on notes as they should be performed!
6. It will help you to succeed no matter what the speed of the song, because you can change the speed of the song so that you can play or sing hard songs slower and easy songs faster!
7. It is a good practicing resource: If you click on any note in the song, Smart Music will tell you the name of that note and show you a fingering chart!
8. It will explain your music: Smart Music has a large built in Music Dictionary with definitions of musical terms and explanation of symbols used in music!

We are currently piloting expansion of the use of SmartMusic to pilot with our Chorus students so that all CPS Performance Music Students will have access to this useful tool. There will be practice room subscriptions in each music classroom at the Middle Schools so that students can practice and record assessments. In addition, many families have opted to purchase a student license for expanded use at home. You can learn about SmartMusic, watch videos of how the program works, and, if you would like, purchase the program for home use through their website: http://www.smartmusic.com. Not having individual subscriptions at home will not detract from a student's grade or ability to prosper in his/her musical ensemble.

Other points that may be of interest to you:

- SmartMusic shows an immediate score after a student performs an exercise. Similarly to the video game "Rock Band," the score reflects how many notes and rhythms were played or sung correctly. While teachers use this score to inform them of student progress, teachers also grade the exercises themselves to evaluate the performance on dynamics, phrasing, articulation, and other aspects of musicality not evaluated by SmartMusic.
- If you are purchasing a student license, it is usually **not** necessary to purchase a microphone as suggested on the SmartMusic website; typically, the microphone on your home computer will work fine.

You can watch a presentation from an episode of "Spotlight on Fine Arts," online to learn more about our district's use of SmartMusic at any time by visiting the following link:
http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01497&video=229196.