



Welcome to music class for the 2017-2018 school year at St. Mark School! This year, all students at St. Mark will be gaining fluency in the language of music. Each student will learn the basics building blocks of sound and music, and we will focus on hearing, performing, and writing music from all around the world. Ultimately, St. Mark students will use their musical skills to express themselves and communicate the important elements of their growing identities, faith, and sense of community.

Students will learn musical elements such as **rhythm** (duration of sound), **pitch** (high and low sounds), **dynamics** (loud and quiet), **form** (the note and phrase structure of a piece of music), **tone** (sound quality), **style** (type of music), and many other important elements music making. Students will be expected to hear and analyze these elements, learn important vocabulary associated with each element, perform these elements vocally and instrumentally, and notate these elements using standard western musical notation. Lessons will be tailored to each class' age and ability level, and every student will be expected to show effort and progress in their musical development.

All students will be singing this year, either in formal ensemble performances or within the context of music class. Singing is one of the most basic and most important aspects of musical performance, and it is the most crucial skill used in building strong musicianship. Students who sing demonstrate their ability to analyze the music they are hearing, and singing allows a student to physically experience all of the elements of musical sound. Both vocalists and instrumentalists must have the ability to sing, since musicians must be able to hear how music should sound before they can effectively create it on their instruments. Singing will be an integral part of not just general music class, but also of instrumental ensembles.

Singing is a highly personal experience, and it can be very scary to sing with other people, especially for older students who are less comfortable with their growing and changing voices or for students who are inexperienced with singing. We will focus continually on ensuring that the music classroom is a safe place where students are comfortable enough to explore their voices and comfortable enough to

make the mistakes necessary to becoming a singing musician. Kindness and respect are values posted in the room, and we will always demonstrate behaviors that embody those values in music class.

Additionally, **students will never be graded on the quality of their singing.** Instead, I will assess students based on students' personal growth and effort. If a student attempts to sing, is willing to make mistakes along the way, and demonstrates growth in the singing skills covered in class, that student will be successful in music class. I will continually monitor and record students' performance in class regarding certain skills, and students will receive feedback through scores for these assessments. When calculating each student's final grade for each quarter, I will examine the scores and determine if progress was made. Participation and effort will also factor heavily into the overall grade.

I am very excited for the upcoming year, and I hope to encourage a love for music at St. Mark School along with high standards of performance. St. Mark students are already wonderful musicians, and I look forward to helping them continue to grow in music, in life, and in Christ.

Sincerely,

Mr. Becker-Howell  
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