

# Gregory Middle School Song

Plantinga/Stoneham  
1985

B $\flat$  F

1 Gre - go - ry Mid - dle School's the great - test you will

## Gregory Instrumental Music

### 2018-2019 PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

4

8 me test.

13 Soon you'll see that Gre - go - ry's a cut a - bove the rest, Oh,

F F7

B $\flat$  F

17 Gre - go - ry stu - dents share and Gre - go - ry stu - dents care.

F B $\flat$

Our Music Education Mission...

**To enable each student to develop  
and share his or her unique talents and  
become life-long participants in music.**

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near at Gre - 'gry Mid - dle School



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Welcome to the Music Department at Gregory Middle School. The instrumental music experience is a very significant offering of our school curriculum. Your student's participation in instrumental music enhances many areas of his/her personal growth and adds variety and color to his/her general education. The music program at Gregory Middle School is designed to help meet the emotional, social, and cultural needs of every band and orchestra student.

Our goals for each student include:

1. To discover, appreciate, and value his/her talents, the talents of others, and the beauty of all types of music
2. To improve his/her skills in the areas of tone production, music theory, composition, and improvisation
3. To gain a desire to continually improve upon past performance and to be the best he/she can be
4. To experience self-fulfillment as he/she communicates with others through music
5. To prepare your musician for all of the outstanding musical opportunities that await him/her at Neuqua Valley High School
6. To instill a life-long enjoyment and appreciation of music long after leaving Gregory Middle School

It is to these ends that we ask each student to give his/her best effort in cooperation with your involvement at home. With all of us working together as a team, we are confident that your child will have a positive and rewarding year.

Thank you, in advance, for your support of your child's music education!

*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.*

Musicians are made, not born.

Were Mozart and Michael Jordan “born with it”?

Many people are lulled into thinking that good musicians and athletes are just born with natural talents and are destined to excel. There is no denying that these individuals were given many talents, however, their surroundings and upbringing had more to do with their success than any other factor. Mozart’s father happened to be the premier piano instructor in Europe and saw to it that from a very young age, Mozart had daily instruction and practice. Michael Jordan’s parents also insisted on daily practice and training. The results? Experts in the field of music and basketball.

We are all familiar with the discussion of nature versus nurture. Nature refers to the talents we are born with in relation to what we become. Nurture refers to how our upbringing and environment play a role in what we become. Research shows that a student’s success in their schooling is largely dependent on parent involvement and the environment in the home. As parents, it is easy to hear the sounds of young musicians and think to ourselves that our kids either “have it” or they don’t. The truth is, a student’s success in band is not determined at birth. Honestly, success for your student may not happen immediately, but occur years into their musical journey. We firmly believe that students can learn musical skills, foster them through consistent practice, and, with support from home, have a rich experience in music regardless of what they may have been “born with”.

Musical skills are learned just as math or reading skills. With repetition and practice, they become second nature and empower the students to grow and succeed. Music has repeatedly been proven to use more of the brain simultaneously than any other activity. It creates well-rounded, critically thinking, sensitive people who are able to work well with others while pursuing an art form that defines culture.

Music is for life. Your belief in your student’s ability to participate in music will have a lasting impact.

## Large Group/Ensemble

The middle school music experience in District 204 involves daily large group instruction in an ensemble. It is the place where the individual skills and talents of each musician are brought together to form a larger and even greater work of art. The development of *group* or *ensemble* performance skills such as balance, blend, tuning, and rhythmic precision are pursued during the daily band/orchestra rehearsal. Music history with composer backgrounds and compositional devices are also explored during the full group experience. Cross-curricular connections are made frequently. The students experience the similarities between the study of music (band/orchestra) and other subject areas by participating in the special units that are studied in the core end of each grade level.

Band and Orchestra classes also emphasize skills beyond music such as organization, collaboration with others, goal-setting, self-evaluation and self-expression. We are proud to know that these skills will transfer into every area of life in and beyond Gregory Middle School.

## Technique Class

The Gregory Instrumental Music Ensembles have a celebrated tradition of playing at a very high level. We have consistently been able to program quality literature and perform concerts that provide enjoyment for students and adults alike. Why are our students able to play at such a high level? Two reasons:

- 1) Our students are awesome, and
- 2) the students participate in *Technique Class*.

**What is *Technique Class*?** *Technique Class* is where students actually learn to play their instruments. *Technique Class* is the small group lesson that all band and orchestra students participate in several times per semester instead of attending their regular ensemble class. Full ensembles, on the other hand, are where students take their individual skills and learn how to play together.

**My student is in band/orchestra five days a week. Why do they need a separate class to learn how to play?** Full ensembles are where students take their individual skills and learn how to play together. In some groups, there are as many as 11 different instruments playing. Every instrument requires different skills and techniques to be played successfully. It is not possible to teach the diverse playing techniques needed for each instrument in a large ensemble class. Teaching students to play their individual instruments in a full band or orchestra setting would be like teaching a large math class with 45-70 students. That might sound slightly reasonable, but what if within that math class you had to teach 5 students fractions, 10 students geometry, 15 students statistics, 3 students calculus, 2 students multiplication, and 13 students trigonometry all within the same period? We would all agree that such a scenario would not work. Fortunately, we are able to deliver individualized, instrument-specific instruction to your students in technique class so that they are able to enjoy the expressive and emotional fulfillment that comes from playing in and contributing to an ensemble performance.

**How does *Technique Class* work?** Band and orchestra students are excused from their regular ensemble class to participate in a small group technique class. The schedule will rotate so that students will miss their ensemble several times per quarter. This schedule will be available in the classrooms and online so that all parents, students and teachers are aware of when technique assignments are due.

**How does my student know when their *Technique Class* is?** This schedule will be available in the classrooms and online so that all parents, students and teachers are aware of when technique assignments are due.

*Please see the Grading Guidelines for a more specific description of our grading policies.*



## Combo

Students enrolled in the Gregory Music Department have the privilege and opportunity to be *Combo Students*. *Combo Students* or *Combos* are students who are in band/orchestra and chorus. To facilitate participation in both, the following schedule is used on a regular five day week:

Mon: C	Tues: B/O	Wed: C	Thurs: B/O	Fri: <i>Alternates</i>
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B/O= BAND/ORCHESTRA DAY      C=CHORUS DAY

A schedule similar to this is hung outside of the band and orchestra rooms and posted online so that all *Combo Students* can be aware of the schedule and plan accordingly.

Being a *Combo Student* requires extra responsibility and dedication. Although we will never introduce new concepts on the days that *Combo Students* are in chorus, *Combo* folks will not get the same amount of playing time or repetition as their full-time band/orchestra peers who are in class five days a week. To stay caught-up and to feel successful in band and orchestra, we ask that all *Combos* do the following:

- Check in with their band/orchestra teacher on their way to chorus for any announcements, handouts, or reminders
- Check the *Combo Schedule* to make sure they know what ensemble to attend
- Check the *Technique Schedule* in case they need to bring their instrument for *Technique* on a non-B/O day
- Practice all of their chorus and band/orchestra music so that they are able to contribute musically to both ensembles
- Sign out with Mr. Pfenninger at least 24 hours in advance if technique falls on a Chorus day. Students will always attend technique on the scheduled day. Failure to attend technique (because of forgotten instrument, failure to inform Mr. Pfenninger, etc) on the assigned day will result in the loss of the attendance portion of the technique grade. Absences from school will be excused.

It is the goal of the Music Department to have our musicians succeed and feel comfortable with their participation in all ensembles. Should a student be struggling with the extra responsibilities of being a *Combo Student*, the chorus and instrumental directors will have conversation with that student and their parents about increasing success. In the best interest of the student, a recommendation may be made to select one full-time ensemble in lieu of being a *Combo Student*.

*Combo Students* will receive their quarter grade based upon their performance in chorus (50%) and in band/orchestra (50%).

## *Philosophy of Assessment*

### **Focus on musician growth-not grades**

- The Band and Orchestra Curriculum is assessed in a variety of informal and formal ways that allow for individual learning styles and abilities
- Musicians will be given continual feedback from their directors and fellow students throughout the entire learning process
- Criterion for success will be clearly articulated for each technique class or ensemble assignment

## *Guide to Grading*

### **Band and Orchestra Grades Are Based On the Following:**

#### □ **Rehearsal Participation (Including Dress Rehearsals where attendance is mandatory)**

Each student will receive weekly points for attitude, having proper supplies, timely turn-in of permission slips, written work, and preparation.

#### □ **Concert Participation**

Points for concert participation will be based on attendance (or completion of a written make-up assignment), behavior at concert, having supplies, being on-time, and having the proper uniform.

#### Absences from performances

Absences will only be excused *if approved by the director at least two weeks prior to the performance*. Family emergencies and illness will be excused.

Any student who has an excused absence will have the opportunity to complete a make-up assignment (commonly a 1-2 page type-written assignment related to the concert) and receive up to full credit. Please mark your calendars carefully at the beginning of the year to avoid conflicts with performances.

#### □ **Technique Class Assignment Performance (Point totals vary)**

Students will be assessed on their *Technique Class* performance of assignments. Please refer to the *Goal Sheets* for a complete listing of all assignments.

#### □ **Classwork (Point totals vary)**

Students will receive assignments to complete both in- and outside of class, such as the online weekly practice reflection.

Continued on next page...

## Frequently Asked Questions About Grades and Home Access:

### **Where can I get the most current status of my student's band/orchestra grade?**

Home Access has the most current listing of your student's progress. The **Goal Sheet** lists all of the assignments he/she is responsible to play for each quarter. The sheet includes the specific playing assignments and the schedule of their due dates. As a student performs the assignments, they are given a score that is to be written on the **Goal Sheet**. In other words, a student knows their score/grade instantly. Extra copies of the **Goal Sheet** can be found on the Gregory Band/Orchestra Websites.

### **What if my student performs poorly on an assignment?**

We encourage students to do their best at all times. He/she is always welcome to retest an assignment to earn more points.

### **How do I interpret the markings made in Home Access?**

**Blank score boxes:** Blank score boxes mean that the student has not completed that assignment. The missing points are not currently impacting their grade. The assignment must be made up as soon as possible or it will turn into a "0".

- An "X" in the box means that the assignment is excused. The student will not be penalized for that missing assignment.
- A "Z" indicates that the student has not completed that assignment. The missing points are impacting the grade. The assignment may be made up, but must be done prior to the cut-off date.
- A "0" indicates that no points were earned for that assignment.

### **When I have a question about my student's grade, who should I talk to first?**

**TALK TO YOUR STUDENT!** One of the primary goals of our program is to make the students accountable for their learning. We do a great deal of communicating with your students so that they understand the expectations and the grades they are earning. Between the daily discussions in full ensemble and the **Goal Sheet**, they have all of the tools they need to understand their grade. If you still have questions after consulting with your student and their **Goal Sheet**, please feel free to contact your student's ensemble director.





## *Performances*

All musicians perform at least four times a year: the Demonstration Concert (October), Triptych Concert (December), Spring Concert (March), Fine Arts Festival (May), and Memorial Day Parade (May—Band Students Only). Performances are the culminating event to our daily rehearsals. Please mark your calendar with the performance dates. Additional dates may be added, especially for the co-curricular groups. Specific information will be sent home as needed.

**See the Music Calendar Sheet for a complete listing of all events for the entire year.**

## *Private Lessons*

One-to-one instruction is encouraged to ensure attention and success as an instrumentalist. Private teachers of the highest caliber work closely with the directors. Selected high school students will be available to 6th and 7th grade students as Guided Practice Teachers. A list of all private lesson instructors who teach at Neuqua Valley High School will be available beginning in October. You may contact a private instructor at any time during the school year. Visit the websites for a list of private professional and High School Guided Practice teachers.

## *Fundraiser*

The Gregory Middle School Music Department has one fundraiser each year. Its success is necessary to provide the musicians with extra funds for transportation costs and fees for special clinics, guest conductors, and summer camp scholarships. Participation is optional and greatly appreciated.

## *Music Uniform*

The Gregory Music Department feels very strongly about creating unity and professionalism through the use of a uniform for performances. All music department students will wear the following for performances—no exceptions:

- long black pants
- black socks
- all black shoes
- Music Department polo shirt TUCKED IN (no ties or folding, please)

### **Uniform expectations:**

**ALL STUDENTS WILL WEAR THE UNIFORM IN ITS ENTIRETY AT THE REQUIRED PERFORMANCES/EVENTS.** Inspections will take place before each event requiring the uniform. Students not in full uniform (i.e. wearing white socks or blue pants) can expect an inquiry from their director at the event, an invitation to change into the required uniform, loss of concert participation points, or a removal from the performance.

