

# 2013-2014

## Armada Middle School

### Band and Orchestra Handbook



Mr. Thomason - Instructor

Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome to the Armada Middle School music department! I am looking forward to having a very successful year. We have an exciting and challenging year of music ahead of us. Let's make it great!

This is my seventh school year in Armada Area Schools and I am extremely excited to be here as your music teacher. I graduated from Oakland University in Rochester, MI with the degree Bachelor of Music in Music Education and Vandercook College of Music in Chicago, IL with the degree Master of Music Education. I look forward to sharing my knowledge, love, and passion for music and teaching with you.

Also, this November my wife and I are expecting our first child. We are very excited to welcome a baby girl to our family!

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with as much information as possible regarding the band and orchestra program and all the opportunities it offers. Please read this handbook carefully. You are responsible for knowing its contents. Being informed and prepared will make your middle school band and orchestra experience much more enjoyable and rewarding.

Parents, I encourage you to become involved. Any time that you can volunteer will be greatly appreciated and will help to keep the band and orchestra running smoothly. Please be sure to sign and detach the last page of the handbook and have your son/daughter return the form to me.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me @ 586-784-2562 or by email: [kthomason@armadaschools.org](mailto:kthomason@armadaschools.org) Also check the website: [www.armadaschoolsmusic.com](http://www.armadaschoolsmusic.com) for any updates or more detailed information regarding upcoming events.

I am looking forward to a great year filled with hard work, great memories, and beautiful music!

Sincerely,

Keenan Thomason  
Instrumental Music Director





## **DAILY REHEARSALS**

Every rehearsal is extremely valuable, and that is why it is essential that we make the most of every minute of our rehearsal time. Please be in your seats with your instrument and music out ready to play by three minutes past the start of the hour, in order to be considered “on time.”

If you have questions or concerns about your instrument, please take care of these before or after class or during set up time so that the beginning of class is not delayed.

There are just a couple rehearsal rules that will make our time together more effective:

- ♪ When the conductor is on the podium, it is time to learn, and therefore, all playing and talking must stop immediately.
- ♪ When the conductor stops conducting, it is time to listen for important instructions. In order to make the most of the brief time we have together, instructions should only have to be given once. If people are talking or not paying attention during instructions, we waste valuable time.
- ♪ Gum, candy, food and drinks (except water) are not permitted in the band & orchestra room.
- ♪ Personal electronic devices (i.e. cell phones, iPods, tablets, etc.) are not permitted during class unless instructed by the teacher.

I cannot stress enough how important these rules are for everyone to follow. Do not wait to stop talking or playing until everyone else has stopped, or it will never get quiet. When the conductor is on the podium, all noise must stop. When the conductor stops conducting, all noise must stop.

These rules hold true every day, regardless of the conductor on the podium, and are consistent throughout all instrumental programs.

## **EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES** *(Detailed Supply sheet found at the end of the handbook)*

In order to receive your full daily equipment points, you must have all of your necessary supplies and equipment. This includes a pencil, one inch 3-ring black binder, and your instrument. Random equipment checks (including binder and pencil) will be done in class for a grade.

### ORCHESTRA:

- ♪ **All Players:** You must own a metronome, clip on tuner, and rosin.
- ♪ **Violin & Viola Players:** Must own a shoulder rest
- ♪ **Cello Players:** Must own a rock stop or black mouse pad.
  - **Strings** – All instruments that are rented from Port Huron Music Center are strung with “Helicore” strings. If a string breaks please replace the string with a string of the same quality.

### BAND:

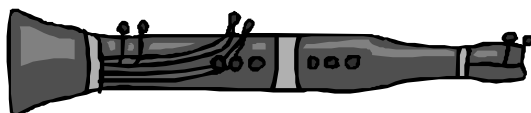
- ♪ **All Players:** You must own a metronome and tuner.
- ♪ **Brass Players:** You must own a bottle of valve oil (trombones need slide cream and a small spray bottle for water instead of valve oil) and have it readily available during every rehearsal. You can purchase these items at any store

that sells school band and orchestra equipment. “Al Cass” is a good brand of valve oil and can be purchased relatively inexpensively. Trombones can find “Bach” slide cream as well as others or may use regular “cold cream” such as “Ponds” found in most pharmacies as long as it is colorless and odorless.

- ♫ **Reed Players:** It is extremely important to have a good supply of reeds at all times. I recommend that you buy a whole box of reeds at a time. It is less expensive than purchasing single reeds and will save you time in the long run. “Van Doren” (for saxophone and clarinet) and “Mitchell Lurie” (for clarinet) are good brands of reeds if you choose to purchase them on your own at a music store. 8<sup>th</sup> grade clarinet players should be playing on *at least* a 2 ½ strength reed (think about moving to 3 if you haven’t already). 7<sup>th</sup> grade clarinet players should also be playing on 2 ½ or 3. Saxophone players should be performing on 2 ½ or 3 strength reeds. 6<sup>th</sup> grade students may begin on a 2 but will quickly move to a 2 ½. (6<sup>th</sup> grade students may not need a whole box of strength 2 reeds).
- ♫ **Percussion Players:** All percussionists are required to bring their stick bags to class every day. Each member of the section must have his or her own stick bag, mallets and snare sticks, and they must have your name on them in permanent marker. The equipment in the percussion section is for *your* use only. Please take care of the equipment as if it were your own. **DO NOT** let non-percussionists touch your equipment. Much of the percussion equipment can be easily damaged or taken out of tune, and this can result in expensive repair bills. If you see a non-percussionist playing the equipment, please report it to me immediately.

Music supplies can also be delivered to the school from Marshall Music or Port Huron Music. Both stores visit Armada once per week and carry all of the supplies listed above. Instrument repairs can also be handled through these stores for your convenience.

Take good care of your instrument whether it belongs to you or the school. Having an instrument in the shop is not only costly, but it takes away from valuable practice and rehearsal time. **Every instrument must have a name tag with your name, address, and phone number clearly written on it!**



### USING SCHOOL INSTRUMENTS

All students using a school instrument will be charged a \$20 maintenance and/or cleaning fee.

If you are a brass player using a school instrument, you will need to purchase your own valve oil (or slide cream).

If you are a woodwind player using a school instrument, you will need to purchase your own reeds.

If you are a string player borrowing a school instrument, you will need to purchase your own rosin and are responsible for string replacement and bow rehairing if they are broken while you have the instrument.

If you are a string player using a school instrument, you will need to purchase your own rosin, shoulder rest or rock stop and are responsible for replacing any strings or bow hair that break while you borrowing the instrument.

Before receiving a school instrument, the student and a legal guardian must sign a loan agreement. You are responsible for the school equipment that you use. At the end of the year, you will need to return any items that you were issued. Any lost items will need to be replaced by the student. Please make sure you take good care of this equipment, and make sure that it is not left out where it could be taken or damaged. Students are responsible for all damage to the instrument while on loan and must have it repaired.

### INSTRUMENT STORAGE

- ♫ **Band** – All band students will be assigned a locker in the band room for their instrument. Students must have a lock on their band locker at all times. Locks may be borrowed from Mr. Thomason or students can purchase their own locks. Lockers should be used for instruments and music only. Do not put anything else in your band locker.
- ♫ **Orchestra** – All orchestra students will have a specific slot on the instrument racks for their instrument. The instrument racks are for instruments only. Do not place any music or personal items on the racks.

## **TARDY POLICY**

- ♫ Please be in your seats ready to go by the designated time. If, for some reason, you do not make it to your seat on time, you will be marked tardy. School policy states that one behavior point will be issued to a student for each tardy after their third tardy in one trimester.

## **LEAVING CLASS**

Please do not ask during class to leave to use the rest room or to go to your locker. Please use the rest room in between classes and be ready to play when you get to class. If, in the case of an emergency, you need to leave class, you will be allowed 3 passes per marking period. Please use them wisely.

If you arrive at class and realize that you forgot something, you will be charged a tardy to return to your locker. If you are on your way to class and realize that you forgot something, I would prefer that you go back immediately and still try to arrive in class on time rather than coming to class to get a pass. Writing passes can take time away from getting class started. Please be considerate of others in this respect. Above all, think carefully, and always plan ahead before coming to class.



## **GRADING**

Your grade is based on a combination of assignments, quizzes, tests, class participation, equipment grades, and performance participation.

- ♫ Assignments: Every marking period students will be required to complete listening, rhythm, composition and other music assignments. Here is how your assignment grade will be calculated:

$$\text{total number of assignment points} / \text{number of points possible} = \text{assignment grade}$$

- ♫ Quizzes and Tests: Playing and written quizzes and tests will be given regularly throughout the trimester. Usually quizzes are over music currently being played. If you practice your music regularly, most likely, no additional practice will be needed for this type of quiz. At times, quizzes will be given to reinforce new and/or important musical concepts. Tests are often reviews of previous quizzes, or they may be in conjunction with chair auditions. Here is how your quiz and test grade will be calculated:

$$\text{total number of quiz or test points} / \text{number of points possible} = \text{quiz or test grade}$$

- ♫ Class Participation: Students can earn up to 10 points per day. Provided that you come to rehearsal and do not talk while the conductor is on the podium, do not chew gum, and do not play when you are not supposed to, you will not lose any points. It is easy to receive 100% of your participation grade every day. Here is how your participation grade will be calculated:

$$\text{total number of participation points} / \text{number of points possible} = \text{participation grade}$$

- ♫ Equipment: To have a productive rehearsal everyone must be prepared with the required equipment. Your equipment grade is calculated as part of your participation grade (2 points for pencil and 5 points for music in your black 3 ring binder.) Equipment checks will be done on a random basis to make sure that you have your instrument, music (in a black 3 ring binder), and pencil. Instruments should go home so students can practice on all weekends and vacations. Provided that you come to rehearsal prepared with all your equipment and supplies, you will not lose any equipment points. It is easy to receive 100% of your equipment grade every day. Here is how your equipment grade will be calculated:

$$\text{total number of participation/equipment points} / \text{number of points possible} = \text{part./equip. grade}$$

♪ Practice Journal: Home practice is essential for a great band. Students should practice at least 60 minutes a week. It is the responsibility of the student to hold on to their practice journal for the entire marking period. They will receive a zero for the week if it is lost. Students should have their journal in class every day. All practice journals must be handed in on the due date (usually a Monday) for full credit. They will be accepted one day late for half credit. Journals must be signed by a parent/guardian to receive credit. Random checks for practice journals will happen and will be worth 5 points for that day. **Students are required to print their own practice journals from the school music website [www.armadaschoolsmusic.com](http://www.armadaschoolsmusic.com)**

♪ Performance Participation: Because we are a performing ensemble, performances are required, just as they are at all of the other schools in the area. Each member of the ensemble is very important! A performance is the culmination of the hard work we do every day in rehearsals, and missing a performance is similar to missing a **final exam** in another class. Missing a performance will lower your trimester grade significantly. **If you do happen to have a conflict with a performance, it is essential that you inform Mr. Thomason at least 30 days in advance so that we can attempt to work it out in some way. If your absence is excused by Mr. Thomason, a make-up assignment will be given.**

### SOLO & ENSEMBLE (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Only)

Solo & Ensemble is a great opportunity for all students to grow as young musicians. Every 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade student will be able to participate in Solo and Ensemble. Students who choose to participate will prepare and then perform a solo or ensemble of their choice for a clinician at Rochester High School along with students from all over the state at the end of January. Students who are interested should start thinking about choosing music to start preparing by October. More detailed information will be given out at a later date.

### SEATING (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Only)

In order to prepare you for band and orchestra at the high school level and beyond, I feel that it is important to expose you, as musicians, to the audition process. Auditions will be held in the Fall. This audition will also be counted as a test grade, so it is important that you do your very best, even if you are not concerned with your seating placement. It is important for you to know that the purpose of the seating arrangements is not to rank players from “best to worst,” but rather to place them where their strengths will be utilized. Remember, you are no more or less valuable a player based on where you sit in band or what part you play; however, if you wish to “challenge” for a seating reassignment, there will be opportunities to do so.



### PRACTICE

Always play to the best of your ability, and prepare at home not only for quizzes and tests, but for daily rehearsals as well. I know that even the most serious player will not be able to practice every day. If you can take your instrument home at least a couple times during the week that is acceptable, but the instrument should go home on weekends and vacations. When you practice, make sure that you not only practice your band music and quiz/test material, but that you also spend some time playing other music that you enjoy. To maintain our high level of musicianship as a group, you must commit to improving your musical skills and keeping your “playing muscles” in shape throughout the year.

### PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Holiday Concert (All Students).....	December 19, 2013
Solo and Ensemble Festival (Participating 7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade students only).....	February 1, 2014
Orchestra Pre-Festival (7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Only).....	February 11, 2014
Band Pre-Festival (7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Only).....	February 18, 2014
Band Festival (7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade only).....	(tentative) March 7, 2014
Orchestra Festival (7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Only).....	(tentative) March 8, 2014
Spring Concert (All Students).....	May 13, 2014
Ohio Field Trip (Participating 7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade students only).....	May 23 & 24, 2014

**Please mark these dates in your calendar right away!**

\*There may be other performance opportunities that arise throughout the year. You will be informed of these opportunities well in advance.

**UNIFORMS**

Concert Band uniforms consist of a white tuxedo shirt, black bowtie, black dress pants, black socks, and black dress shoes. These items must be purchased by the student. (Tennis shoes, jeans and yoga pants are unacceptable). Students who need a tuxedo shirt can purchase one from the music boosters at open house on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Students should plan to attend the open house to be fitted for the correct shirt size.



**PRIVATE LESSONS**

Students are strongly encouraged to study their instrument privately with a qualified instructor. Rehearsal time is too short during band class for students to get the type of individual instruction needed. A weekly 30 – 45 minute session with a private teacher, in conjunction with daily practice, will help students progress and get the most enjoyment out of their instrument. \$15 - \$25 a half hour is the going rate for lessons. Contact Mr. Thomason for a list of private instructors in the area.

**STUDENT BOOSTER ACCOUNTS**

Every student who chooses to participate in fundraisers provided by the Armada Music Boosters will have their own booster account with the money that they have earned. This money can be used for any Armada school music related activity or for supplies, lessons, equipment or any other item that will benefit the student’s success in the Armada music program. The money can be built up over several years and students will have access to the money until they graduate from high school, leave the school, or leave the program for more than one year. To access this money students will need to fill out a “money voucher” that can be found on the music website or from Mr. Thomason.

**TRIPS**

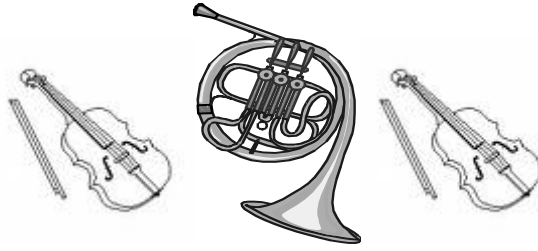
The band and orchestra will attempt to take two field trips this year. First, a trip to hear the Detroit Symphony Orchestra perform (available to all Middle School band orchestra students based on available seats). Second, an overnight trip to Cedar Point in Sandusky, OH (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade only.) Money raised in the student’s booster accounts can be used to pay for the cost of these trips. More information about these trips will go home at a later date.

This handbook should answer many questions that you may have regarding the upcoming school year. Please read it thoroughly with your parents or guardians, and when you have finished reading it, sign the form below, have a parent sign it, and return it to me by **Monday, September 9, 2013**. (This will be your first test grade! Everyone who turns it in on time will get 100%. And, for every day after the due date you will lose 10%.) Keep this handbook so you can refer to it as needed. If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at [kthomason@armadaschools.org](mailto:kthomason@armadaschools.org) or call me at (586) 784-2562

I know it will be a great year. I hope that you are as excited as it as I am. I love music, and I look forward to sharing my passion with you. Best wishes for a successful school year at Armada Middle School!

Sincerely,

Mr. Thomason



Please return by Monday, September 9<sup>th</sup>

We have read the 2013-2014 Armada Middle School Band and Orchestra Handbook and understand the guidelines as stated.

Student Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents: If you would like to be included in the e-mail mailing list to receive band and orchestra updates and information, please include your e-mail address below.**

Parent E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_