

# Music Department

# Handbook



Sinaloa Middle School  
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[novatomusic.com](http://novatomusic.com)

**Dear Music Students and Parents,**

Welcome! My name is Jason Eckl and I am the Music Director at Sinaloa Middle School. I am excited to be working with such a great group of students and parents. There are many exciting activities planned this year.

I feel both students and parents are vital to our success, so please let me personally thank you for your commitment to this music department. When I was in middle school, band and chorus influenced my life in a very positive way, and I hope to provide similar experiences for students here at Sinaloa.

Please read this packet thoroughly - it contains very important information for students and parents. **Please read and sign the commitment letter and return it by Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>.** Other important parts of the packet include:

- The Calendar- A calendar for each ensemble will be handed out in class, ask you student for it!
- Rules and Grading Policy
- Equipment List- **every student** (including choir members) will need equipment.
- Fundraising Form- please read

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me throughout the year. I am always available to meet with both students and parents to discuss any issues you may have. Please see the "Contact Information" section on how to contact me.

Thank you,

Jason Eckl, Music Director

## **Grading Policy:**

**40% Participation.** This portion of the grade is based on how well a student functions as a member of his/her ensemble. Students will be graded on their ability to make a positive contribution to the ensemble. Students will have their grade lowered for causing distractions in class and for being disrespectful to others.

**20% Practice.** Students will be required to learn various parts of their music given as nightly, weekly or long term assignments. Most students will need to practice around 1 hour per week, however some students may require more or less time to learn their music. Students will be assessed on their practice by playing/singing the parts they were assigned to learn during the class period.

**20% Tests.** Students will be tested regularly on both improvement on their instrument or voice and on other subjects taught in the class, including group work skills, concert skills and stage presence. Students will be assessed individually. See the "Frequently Asked Questions" section for more information on tests.

**20% Class Preparation.** Students are required to have their own music, pencil, binder and instrument every day. Students may not share music with other students.

**Attendance at all concerts in which the students is performing is mandatory- every student is needed for the ensemble to perform at its best. Exceptions will be made for emergencies only, and will need to be verified. One unexcused concert absence will result in an automatic lowering of the class grade by 2 letter grades. Two unexcused absences will result in an "F" for the class. Students may also become ineligible for future performance and activities.**

## **Class Rules:**

### *Respect for Individuals:*

- No negative comments about yourself or others.
- No interrupting a person who is speaking or playing.
- No playing another person's instrument without Mr. Eckl's permission.
- Take proper care of instruments and music.
- Do not do anything that harms an individual.
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### *Respect for the Ensemble:*

- Always bring instruments, music, binder and a pencil to class.
- Always have your own music.
- No food or drink during rehearsal except water from the drinking fountain or water in spill-proof containers.
- Do not talk, play or sing unless asked to do so. We will warm up together.
- Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.
- Do not do anything that disrupts the rehearsal.

## **Consequences:**

Consequences include the following and will be assigned based on frequency and severity of the rule broken.

Verbal or visual warning.

Lunch-time or break-time detention.

Music room trash pick-up or sweeping.

After-school detention.

Office Referral; student meets with the Assistant Principal.

## Equipment List:

**Everyone-** A **pencil** must be brought to every rehearsal.

Every student must bring their own **music** to every rehearsal.

Every student must keep all of their music in a **black binder**. 1 inch to 2 inch size binders are best.

### **Concert Dress Code -**

All students must wear the appropriate concert dress for all of our formal concerts. In addition to being visually pleasing, this helps students learn about dressing properly for different occasions. The music department will provide clothing for any student who is unable to obtain concert dress for financial reasons.

**Men:** Formal all-white collared buttoned dress shirt. Short sleeved or long sleeved (no polo shirts or stripped shirts). Black formal slacks (no corduroy, no jeans, no cargo pants). Black socks, black formal shoes (no tennis shoes).

**Women:** Formal all-white collared buttoned blouse. Short sleeved or long sleeved (no tank tops). Black formal pants (no skirts or dresses). Black socks, black formal shoes (no tennis shoes). No studded belts, no ruffles on shirts, no black jeans, no pinstripes.

**All band members –** All instruments must be labeled with the students' name.

**Flutes-** cleaning rag or swab and polishing cloth.

**Bassoons-** swab, cork grease, reed case, **3 playable reeds at all times.**

**Clarinets-** swab, cork grease, **3 playable reeds at all times.**

**Saxophones-** swab, cork grease, **3 playable reeds at all times.**

**Trumpets-** valve oil, slide grease, mouthpiece brush, cleaning snake.

*7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders need a straight mute.*

**French Horn-** rotary valve oil, slide grease, mouthpiece brush, cleaning snake.

**Trombones-** Slide oil or slide cream, mouthpiece brush, cleaning snake.

**Baritone/Tuba-** valve oil, slide grease, mouthpiece brush, cleaning snake.

**Basses-** Amplifier (any size), amp cord, *electronic tuner*, extra set of strings

**Percussion-** stick bag, one pair of snare sticks (size 5A),  
one pair of yarn mallets (blue head).

All students will have their first materials check on September 4<sup>th</sup>. All of the equipment on this page needs to be obtained by then, except for the concert clothes.

***If you have trouble obtaining the necessary equipment the student should speak to Mr. Eckl. When possible, instruments and equipment will be provided for those students who are in need.***

Equipment can be purchased at

*The Magic Flute in San Rafael or Best Music in Oakland*

## Contact Information

This year the music department will have almost 250 students in 5 regular classes, 3 before-school classes and 8 after-school classes. Mr. Eckl teaches or supervises all of these classes; this is a significantly larger teaching load than is handled by most teachers. In order for Mr. Eckl to communicate with parents efficiently, please follow the following guidelines.

- Whenever possible please e-mail or send a written note with the student or drop a note off in the office. Please do not leave phone messages unless absolutely necessary. Due to the large number of students in the music department and the long hours Mr. Eckl teaches phone calls cannot be returned in a time efficient manner. Please e-mail or send a written note.
- For all e-mails and notes a **minimum of 24 hours** is needed for Mr. Eckl to return them. During busy times, such as concert weeks and the end of quarters a longer period of time may be necessary.
- The most efficient way to contact Mr. Eckl is through e-mail at [sinaloamiddleschoolmusic@yahoo.com](mailto:sinaloamiddleschoolmusic@yahoo.com)
- Except in case of emergency, calls will not be forwarded directly to Mr. Eckl. Please leave a message.
- To relay information to a student during the school day please call the main office at 897-2111.
- For emergencies while students are on trips or in the 2 hours preceding a concert, call 509-6385. **This is Mr. Eckl's cell phone and is to be only used for emergencies.** Any students who abuse this number will be transferred to another elective class and will face disciplinary action.
- For questions about grading please read the frequently asked questions page before contacting Mr. Eckl.
- For recent updates visit the website, [novatomusic.com](http://novatomusic.com). Please check here before calling or emailing.

## **Student Responsibilities / Study Skills**

In order to help students learn and grow as young adults they will be required to take charge of their own education. Students, **not** parents are responsible for:

- Bringing their own music, pencil, binder and instrument to school. Students will be graded on this daily. When a student loses music, he/she is responsible for borrowing it from another student and photocopying it in the library on his/her own time.
- Giving handouts, permission slips and other forms to their parents/guardians.
- Recording information given verbally in class in their planners in order to relay this information to parents/guardians.
- Notifying Mr. Eckl, an administrator or a parent/guardian of any problems in class including broken instruments, class conflicts or difficulty with class material.

## **Frequently Asked Questions for Parents**

### ***What does my student need to do to get a good grade in music?***

During an average grading period most students get a "B" or better on their grade report. To get a good grade in music students need to: 1. Have a positive attitude and try hard in music. 2. Bring their music, instrument, pencil and binder to class daily. 3. Avoid causing distraction or getting in trouble in class. 4. Practice their music and pass their tests. 5. Attend all concerts in which he/she is performing.

### ***How are students tested in class?***

Students are tested in class often, and tests are worth 20% of their grade. Tests are given on specific sections of their music or on entire pieces. Depending on the difficulty and amount of the material being tested, students are given 1 day to over a month to learn the material. In class they will be asked to perform the music for Mr. Eckl. If the student does well on the test they will be passed. If a student needs to practice more, he/she will be asked to play the piece again for Mr. Eckl the next day outside of class, during break or lunch. Students are required to keep taking the test until they pass. For each day that the student does not pass their grade will be lowered. *Although this process seems scary at first, most students become used to it very quickly and pass their tests on the first try.* Help from Mr. Eckl, teaching assistant, older students and classmates is always available.

### ***What does "materials not brought to class" refer to on a progress report or report card?***

This notation means that a student has forgotten his/her music, pencil, binder or instrument more than is acceptable. See "class preparation" under "Grading" for more information.

### ***May students leave one set of music at home and one at school?***

No. Students must bring their music back and forth from school and home every day. In class, students will be writing instructions and assignments and taking notes on their music. These extra instructions will be crucial to the practicing they will do at home. Each student must have their own music in class every day.

### ***What should I do when my student's instrument breaks?***

Time permitting, Mr. Eckl will be able to do minor repairs on instruments, but most of the time the instruments will need to be taken to the repair shop. If you are renting an instrument it is recommended that you take the instrument to the shop where you rented it. Local repair shops are The Magic Flute in San Rafael and Best Music in Oakland.

### ***What can I do to help my student practice?***

Just like other classes, students will usually have nightly assignments and a student should include practicing in his/her regular homework schedule. Parents can help the student by establishing a regular homework/practice time of the day. Students also need a quiet, uncluttered space where they can practice. Music stands, metronomes and tuners will also help students practice efficiently. An average student should practice about 10-15 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Visit the Sinaloa Music page at [novatomusic.com](http://novatomusic.com) to find a page on practice tips.

### ***What about private lessons?***

Private lessons are tutoring sessions that where an instrument or voice instructor works individually with a student. In these lessons the instruction is geared toward the individual student. Teachers generally work on *technique* - how to produce sound, *style* - how to interpret music and also on basic playing skills. Private lessons are good for all students. For struggling students private lessons can help students feel more comfortable in their music class, for advanced students private lessons can add an extra challenge and help students master their instrument or voice. Students at all levels benefit from private lessons. For lists of local private teachers visit the Magic Flute at [www.themagicflute.com](http://www.themagicflute.com). This list is published by the music store - the teachers are not affiliated with the Novato Unified School District.

### ***Should I purchase an instrument for my student?***

Whether or not parents should purchase instruments depends a great deal on how far a student has progressed on their instrument and what they plan on doing in the future. Some students are ready for a higher quality instrument and some are at a level where a rental instrument is just fine. Please contact Mr. Eckl to help determine if your student is ready for his or her own instrument. Additionally some instrument brands and models are superior to others. Before purchasing an instrument please contact Mr. Eckl for recommendations about what type of instrument to buy and where to purchase the instrument for the best price.



## 2009-2010 Commitment Form

Students and Parents,

Please read and sign the following and **return by Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**. This will be the first homework assignment of the year. I am looking forward to a great year, which will only be possible with a solid commitment from both students and parents. Feel free to contact Mr. Eckl with any questions or concerns.

Please Check:

- We (student and parent) have read and understood the rules and grading policy.
- We have read and agree to provide the equipment listed on the equipment list or to see Mr. Eckl if we cannot provide it.
- We have read the calendar and agree to ensure student attendance at all concerts in which the student is performing.
- We have read the contact information including the portion about e-mail, written notes and phone calls.
- We have read the student responsibility/study skills information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Student Name*

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Parent/ Guardian Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/ Guardian Signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*More information for  
parents on the next  
page* →

# Parent Help

The Sinaloa Music Department strives to create a high quality, fun and educational learning environment for all of the students who take music classes. From our extremely diverse selection of classes (16 different ensembles!) to our busy performance calendar (over 20 concerts a year!), Sinaloa Music is one of largest, most diverse and most rapidly expanding middle school music departments in the area. **To provide the students with the best experience possible, we need parent help!**

If you would like to help, the best way is to participate in the Sinaloa Music Boosters. The Sinaloa Music Boosters is a non-profit organization of parent volunteers that helps with a wide variety of tasks necessary to keep the music department running smoothly. All parents are welcome to attend the 3 or 4 meetings we have each year. There are no membership dues and you can volunteer as much or as little as you would like. **The first Booster meeting is Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 in the choir room, 401. Please come!**

Whether or not you attend the booster meetings please indicate if you would like to help with any of the needs listed below and send this form back to school with your student. Thank you.

- Cooking or providing goods for bake sales.
- Coordinating bake sales.
- Ushering at concerts.
- Taking pictures and/or video of concerts and performances.
- Converting concert videos to DVD.
- Building sets for the musical.
- Supervising the painting of sets for the musical.
- Finding props for the musical.
- Organizing/filling sheet music.
- Helping out with Swing Dance Night.
- Contacting local press about upcoming events.
- Any special skills you might have: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

