

A MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING BAND KARATE!!!!

I am a firm believer in the philosophy: “It ain’t broke – don’t fix it.” I’ve also been at this job long enough to know when something isn’t working and there needs to be a change. 4 years ago I shifted our playing assessment system from “Pass-Offs” to “Band Karate”. The goal being to get more students to perform the playing lines and in turn increase their playing ability. With Band Karate I created a LOT of extra work for myself, a system that was more complicated & difficult for the students to follow, and impossible for many parents to understand. The goals of increased student achievement and playing ability were not evident and in many ways I think that the system actually created more problems than it fixed. Over the last 4 years I’ve been “modifying” the Band Karate System to make it better for myself and the students. I feel I successfully fixed the grading part of BK, however the goal of increasing student success has still not come to pass. I have watered the playing/grading portion of the system to the point where it’s a lot of work for too little gain.

We need to have a system to assess students’ playing ability. I also need to hear each student play individually to guide their progress. The current system will not effectively achieve those goals. With all of that in mind I am suspending Band Karate this year and moving to a Playing Test system. The details for the playing tests will be found below. If I am being honest: I should’ve done this after the 2nd year of Band Karate, but I had put a lot of time and effort into the system & wanted to see it flourish. I have enough data to create a playing test system that is fair & simple for all students. By the end of the year I will have enough information to either expand the playing test system or revert back to the old Pass-Off System for 2019-2020. My goal in ANY grade is to make the students better players and accountable for their own performance, not to punish them.

How will this affect our current players?

1st year players and students new to CMS this year: You will have no changes at all. Everything was going to be new to you. Given that we’ve not started playing assessments in the Band Classes, you have no changes to worry about.

2nd year players: You will have the largest jump to the new system, including how we proceed next year. I’ve been through this type of transition before. It will all work out. Trust me.

3rd year players: The original plan was to complete Band Karate by Spring Break. You will simply have playing assessments until the end of the year instead of ending after the 3rd term.

Grading for the 2nd Term Playing Tests

ALL Band members will have 1 playing test **BEFORE** the 12/13 Winter Concert, and 1 playing test **AFTER** the 12/13 Winter Concert. Tentative schedules are December 6th & 7th for playing test #1, and December 14 & 17 for playing test #2. **ALL** make up playing tests must be completed by December 19. Please note that I will be adjusting the weights for Concert Attendance and Playing Tests in progressbook. Concerts will be weighted heavier than Playing Tests.

How tough will the grading be?

For this term – not very. For the first playing test, as long as I can recognize the melody I’ll give a grade of 80-100. Students will only earn a failing grade if they do not attempt to play or cannot finish the lines listed. For the second playing test, a higher quality performance will be required to earn the 80-100. I

will always allow students to re-take their playing test for a higher score. Re-Takes will need to be done before & after school. For the 2nd semester, there will be 4 playing tests a marking period (3 if I cannot make the scheduling work.) The lists of test lines and playing days will be posted after winter break.

What will I have to play?

I will have the complete list of playing lines I'll choose for the 2nd term tests ready next week. Students will need to play 3 or 4 lines out of the book. I will choose the lines based on the student's playing level (i.e. Band 1/2/3). For the 2nd & 3rd level players, I'll match up with where you finished Band Karate last year. I will offer class time for students to play (I go around the room – they play, I grade what I hear) Students who wish to play them before or after school need to do so on my limited availability. Please note, that a "0" will be given for students who do not play their test-lines.

How will Mr. Nichols keep track of the playing tests?

It will be a simple task for me to adjust the current Band Karate spreadsheet for playing tests. I will keep track of completed lines in the sheet, and grades will be put into progressbook as the students play. Completed test lines will be posted in the band room. I will only post the grades in progressbook, no grades will be posted in the classroom.

Bonuses?

I **ALWAYS** want to reward those who go above and beyond the minimum requirements. Students may play more than the required lines for extra credit. There will be a set of "bonus" lines for each playing level (Band1/2/3) I will need to fiddle with progressbook before I can be more specific: trust me to do right by the students.