



Birchwood School of Hawken

ANNOUNCING CHANGES TO THE MUSIC PROGRAM

We are excited to announce changes to the instrumental program for the 2017-2018 school year!

Parent Sessions to Explain Changes

Thursday, May 18 / 8:30 a.m. or 3:30 p.m. / Resource Room

Mrs. Debelak will host two sessions for parents to explain the changes. Parents of rising sixth graders (current fifth grade students) are strongly urged to attend in order to understand the expanded electives.

Instrumental lessons will **no longer** be part of a requirement scheduled into the fifth and sixth grade music class. We still strongly believe in the value of instrumental music lessons: they provide an opportunity to discover the enrichment that playing an instrument adds to a child's life and they tap into potential talent students may have. Due to our experience in the past few years, the involuntary approach to participation is not the best possible course for all students. We are committed to the riches of a music education, yet believe the restructuring of the programming will offer a broader education while aiming at excellence for those who do opt to pursue an instrument. A description of the changes is as follows:

Fifth Grade: A weekly music class tailored to the special nature of fifth graders will aim to grant varied experiences in music while not limiting the experience to instruments. It will offer a full and rich curriculum that includes singing, recorders and rhythm instruments (such as percussion, xylophone, ukulele, guitar), theory, composition, and biography. The course will serve as a cap on students' experiences in grades 1-4 and a bridge to instrumental electives in grades 6-8. It will foster an appreciation for instrumental music through demonstrations in class by visiting professionals, our ensemble, audio/video/streaming, and a field trip to the Cleveland Orchestra. This exposure to instruments is developed in grades 1-3 and emphasized in grades 4-5.

To further enrich and expand the fifth grade programming, students may still sign up for the choir elective and will have one other new class that incorporates fine arts with creative thinking skills and technology. They will continue to have a required art class and fine arts experiences offered through reading class that incorporate poetry, music, public speaking, and the dance residency. Fifth graders will cap the K-5 Spanish language experience with a special program. (Sixth grade students will begin a Spanish I elective.) Private music lessons will still be offered after school at all grade levels. For your convenience, the school provides a paid registrar to facilitate the use of school space and schedule professional instructors in a variety of instrumental classes.

Sixth Grade: The advanced ensemble elective, previously available only to seventh and eighth graders will now be expanded to sixth graders. The elective will maintain a prerequisite standard of admission. Those who participate will have an ensemble class two times per week. Sixth grade students may also opt to sign up for the choir elective. It will be offered at a different time than the elective ensemble. Students may sign up for either or both. They may also opt out of a music elective.

Sixth graders will continue to have a required art class and the fine arts experiences offered through reading class that incorporate poetry, music, public speaking, and the drama residency. In sixth grade, several new electives are also offered so this new option out of music creates more choice. See the registration sheet "Birchwood School of Hawken Electives" that includes Future Problem Solving (FPS), National History Day, a new course in computer programming just for sixth grade, advanced instrumental ensemble, choir, and Spanish I as an elective.