

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

ONE TINGLEY LANE · EDISON, NJ 08820

September 5, 2023

Greetings All,

Welcome to another year of activity in the St. Thomas Aquinas Music Department!

This letter serves as a reminder to all returning students - and a guideline to all new students – of the expectations and grading system by which STA Music participants will be evaluated. This letter also constitutes a contract between you and the Music Department, ensuring that you understand the requirements of the department.

Music at St. Thomas Aquinas is a *co-curricular* activity. Students receive a grade for their participation in Bands and Choirs. The basic breakdown of the grade is the same as any other St. Thomas Aquinas class across a semester: Quarter 1 counts for 40%, Quarter 2 counts for 40%, and the semester exam counts for 20%.

Each semester spent in the STA Music Department will give the student an extra grade on their report card – which *does* count as an extra half credit *per semester*. Students participating in the co-curricular Music program graduate St. Thomas Aquinas with more course credits than students who do not. In short, by participating in Band and/or Choir at St. Thomas Aquinas, you can add credits to your transcript.

Students receive grades for each posted rehearsal. The rubric for rehearsals is posted on Schoology and included in this packet. Students should attend every rehearsal, since it is usually only once per week. **If a student is involved in an activity that conflicts with Music rehearsals, such as the Drama Department or a sport, they ARE still eligible to participate.** Students who cannot attend a rehearsal may participate by following the instructions for Virtual Rehearsal. Virtual Rehearsal instructions for each week of each performing group will be posted on Schoology as well.

The Fall Exam grade is a series of four grades based solely on the Concert weeks of the Fall semester. The Fall exam has four 25-point assignments: Tech Day, Dress Rehearsal, First Christmas Concert Night, and Second Christmas Concert Night. The Spring exam has four 25-point assignments: Tech Day, Dress Rehearsal, First Spring Concert Night, and Second Spring Concert Night. *Unless there is a system-wide shutdown, the exam grades must be attended in-person, and cannot be completed virtually.*

Higher-level groups such as the Director's Select Chorus and the STA Jazz Band will also factor into the grading system, but only for the students who audition and are placed into those groups. For the sake of simplicity, the grade will appear for all Choir and/or Band students, but non-members will be excused from the "assignments".

As far as monetary cost, there is a one-time activity fee of \$40, due with this packet. There is also a mandatory minimum fundraising requirement per family of \$150 spent on fundraisers, and at least one bagging shift. *This may be amended to a \$180 fundraising requirement if grocery bagging proves to be impossible.* Each family is also expected to purchase a minimum of 5 tickets for each of the two concerts. There is a fundraising buyout option that is discussed later on in this packet.

Please read all of the information provided in this packet, and sign the final contract form with your student, and return it to Mr. Cullinan with your \$40 participation fee* by or before Friday, September 22, 2023. I look forward to working with all of our students this year to put on some wonderful concerts!

*\$40 Participation Fee is *WAIVED* for Marching Trojans members. Those students already paid this fee in July.

~ Mr. Joseph Cullinan '02, Director of Music

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GRADING POLICIES

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR STUDENT BEFORE COMMITTING

(Concert Band and Concert Chorus)

ATTENDANCE - *Did the student attend all required rehearsals or performances?*
Did the student arrive on time to all required rehearsals or performances?

ATTENDANCE POLICIES:

- 1) All rehearsals are MANDATORY.
- 2) If a student has to miss a rehearsal for a good reason (barring family emergencies) they or their parent must contact Mr. Cullinan via email more than 24 hours prior to the rehearsal in question.
- 3) If a student is out sick from school on a rehearsal day, they must contact Mr. Cullinan in addition to notifying the main office.
- 4) If Mr. Cullinan does accept the excuse for missing rehearsal, that student must attend their weekly pullout session that week to remain eligible to be excused.
- 5) Whether or not an excuse is acceptable is solely at the discretion of Mr. Cullinan.

BEHAVIOR - *Did the student behave themselves well at all rehearsals and performances?*
Did the student represent themselves, the music program, and the school well?

BEHAVIOR POLICIES:

- 1) Students are expected to maintain silence when being taught or spoken to during rehearsals – this also applies to moments when one particular group is being taught or spoken to. Students not being spoken to at any given moment are expected to maintain silence so that the rehearsal may continue in an orderly fashion.
- 2) Attendance is a big part of behavior. To not give proper notice of a missed rehearsal is to misbehave.
- 3) Cellphones, laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices are not to be used during rehearsal times.
- 4) A student's behavior score is solely at the discretion of Mr. Cullinan.

EFFORT - *Did the student do their best to improve themselves as a musician?*
Did the student complete all tasks as directed, and in a reasonable amount of time considering their personal skill level?
Did the student participate fully in the "community" of the music program – attending all rehearsals and performances, and fulfilling their fundraising obligations?

EFFORT POLICIES:

- 1) Mr. Cullinan is aware of every student's personal skill level, and considering that knowledge, an effort to improve is expected. In most cases, personal rehearsal or a lack thereof will show in each student's results.
- 2) Attendance is a big part of effort. To not attend a rehearsal shows a lack of effort.
- 4) A student's effort score is solely at the discretion of Mr. Cullinan.

**STUDENTS ARE GRADED AT EACH AND EVERY REHEARSAL.
ALWAYS BE AT YOUR BEST!**

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FUNDRAISING POLICY

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR STUDENT BEFORE COMMITTING

All Members of the St. Thomas Aquinas Music Department are required to participate in our primary fundraiser: Bagging Groceries for tips *at least once per school year (pending COVID guidelines)*. General dates for fundraisers will be announced at the mandatory Music Department parent/guardian meeting on September 5, 2023 at 6:30pm at the school.

All Music Department Members are required to sell or purchase a minimum of 5 total tickets for each Concert (one per semester) at a price not to exceed \$12 per ticket. Early-bird ticket specials will be available at \$6 per ticket. This does not mean that you need to personally buy 5 tickets for each **night** of each Concert (as each concert is two nights) – but that between friends and family, 5 total tickets will be purchased for each Concert between the two nights.

Our fundraisers include, but are not limited to:

Grocery Bagging at local supermarkets (All year round)
Scrip Gift Cards (All year round)
Boscov's Shopping Passes (September-October)
Poinsettia sales (November/December)
Dip Mix sales (January and April)
Concession Operations at TD Bank Park in Bridgewater (May – August)

The grocery bagging fundraisers count 100% toward a student's fee for the Music Department's Spring competition trip.

In addition to the student requirement of at least one Grocery Bagging shift per school year, there is also a **PARENT/GUARDIAN** service requirement for membership in the department. Parent/Guardians can fulfill their service requirement by doing any one of the following:

Serving in an administrative role within the Music Boosters Organization
Chaperoning one Bagging Shift
Attending a "Bagging Calendar Selection Day" at Woodbridge Shoprite
Working a volunteer station for two total concert nights
Concession Operations at TD Bank Park in Bridgewater (May – August)

And many other opportunities – see Mr. Cullinan for more information.

There is a \$150.00 fundraising minimum, meaning each family is expected to spend a minimum of \$150 total on Music Department fundraisers throughout the year. If it is not possible to bag groceries, there will then be a **\$180.00 fundraising minimum.**

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THE BUYOUT OPTION

There are three different payments required of Music Department members (*not including money toward the end-of-year trip*): The \$40 participation fee due on Sept. 22, the money required to be spent on fundraising throughout the year, and the money toward the Concert ticket requirement (5 minimum for the Christmas Concert and 5 minimum for the Spring Concert – for a total of \$60, if you were to buy using early-bird prices).

If you wish, you may use the one-time buyout option to pay the participation fee, fulfill your fundraising requirement, and pre-pay and reserve 5 tickets for each concert. The one-time buyout price is \$285.00 and is due on October 1.

If you use the buyout option, you will not be required to participate in any fundraisers, and \$100 of the buyout would be eligible for 2023 trip credit. You would still be required to fulfill the parent/guardian service requirement and to pay the remainder of any trip money owed if your student goes on the trip. If the student does not go on the trip, the buyout option is not refundable and does not carry over to the next year.

If you choose the buyout option, you may return this packet with \$285 per student cash, money order, or check made out to St. Thomas Aquinas High School.

If you are not selecting the buyout option, please return this packet with the \$40 per student activity fee, if applicable.

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR STUDENT BEFORE COMMITTING

In order for the various groups of the St. Thomas Aquinas High School Music Department to continue to excel at the superior standard, the Director enforces a strict attendance policy.

All scheduled rehearsals, sectionals, and performances are mandatory. Any unexcused absence will be reflected in each of the three grading criteria for Music Department members.

In the event that you must be absent from a rehearsal, 24 hours advance notice is required. If approved by the director, the student **MUST** be present at their next sectional pullout to complete the excused absence. Even if the absence is approved for excused status, that status will be revoked if the student misses their next sectional pullout.

If you are sick the day of a rehearsal, you must contact Mr. Cullinan **IN ADDITION** to contacting the Main Office.

Student athletes are permitted to miss rehearsals for competitions only, not for practices. Coaches are aware of this compromise with the athletic department – Mr. Cullinan MUST be notified 24 hours in advance of a competition.

Students will not be excused from Music Rehearsals for club meetings.

Students will not be excused from Music Rehearsals for doctor or dentist appointments, unless there is either pertinent illness or a preexisting condition.

Continuous unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the semester and permanent withdrawal from the program without possibility of reinstatement at the end of the semester.

The attendance policy is very strict; you must be present at all functions. However, in the event of a serious family emergency or other major development you may inform the director at your earliest convenience and accommodations will be made to make up the time.

- If a student misses a rehearsal due to illness, they must provide a doctor's note.
- If a student is well enough to attend classes through period 8, they are well enough to attend rehearsal.
- All grades, and the approval or denial of excused status, are solely at the discretion of the director.

PULLOUTS

In addition to the after-school programs, students are expected to attend their sectional pullouts during the school day. They can be excused from this requirement only if they have a test or presentation, or are not scoring well in the class in question. Pullouts are on a rotating schedule, so for example if the trumpets meet 4th period one week, they would probably meet 5th period the next week, so as not to miss the same classes repeatedly.

Absences **MUST** be reported via email: jcullinan@stahs.net

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THE STA MUSIC DEPT. CONTRACT

PLEASE KEEP THIS PAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS AND SIGN AND RETURN THE SAME CONTRACT ON THE NEXT PAGE

- 1) I understand that Music at St. Thomas Aquinas is a co-curricular activity and that my student will be graded based on their Attendance, Behavior, and Effort as detailed in this packet.
- 2) I understand that the participating student will be held accountable for their actions (or lack thereof) and I agree that **personal responsibility** is a value that can and should be enforced.
- 3) I understand that the grade the participating student receives will be included on their report cards and transcripts.
- 4) I have read and fully agree to the Attendance, Fundraising, and other policies contained in this packet.
- 5) I understand the importance of the participating student's presence at rehearsals and performances not only to their fellow Music Department members, but also to their grade.
- 6) I understand that the grade my student receives is at the sole discretion of Mr. Cullinan, and it is the responsibility of my student to sign attendance sheets and communicate with Mr. Cullinan at all times.
- 7) I understand that there is a responsibility to fundraise and take part in fundraising activities each year, as detailed in this packet.
- 8) I understand that a parent/guardian **MUST** fulfill the Music Department parent/guardian service requirement each year.
- 9) I understand that each student is responsible for the purchase/sale of 5 total tickets for each concert, as detailed in this packet.
- 10) I understand that selection to one of the higher performing ensembles (Jazz Band or Select Chorus) is a privilege, and a student may be dismissed from one of these groups at any time due to a lacking in attendance, behavior, or effort at the sole discretion of Mr. Cullinan.
- 11) I understand that my student **MUST** be present at the concerts (Dec. 8 & 9, May 4 & 5) and their respective Dress Rehearsals and Tech Days (as posted on Schoology) or risk failure on their exam grade for that semester.
- 12) I understand that the participating student is COMMITTING to be present at ALL PERFORMANCES – including both nights of the Christmas Concert, both nights of the Spring Concert, and other events as detailed, including but not limited to: Open House (Oct. 22), In-school Masses, Mass at the Cathedral, and other dates.
- 13) I understand that once my student signs up for Concert Band or Concert Choir, it is considered a class, and they may not simply "quit" once the add/drop period for classes has passed each semester.

KEEP THIS COPY FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS