

STAPLES HIGH SCHOOL



MUSIC DEPARTMENT HANDBOOK 2025 – 2026

Staples High School

Stafford Thomas Jr., Principal
70 North Ave
Westport, CT 06880

Stephen Zimmerman

Pre-K - 12 Coordinator of Music and Visual Arts

Jeri Brima, Director of Orchestras

Carrie Mascaro, Director of Orchestras

Kevin Mazzarella, Director of Bands, Jazz Ensemble

Lauren Pine, Director of Choral Activities

Caitlin Serpliss, Assistant Director of Bands

Gregg Winters, Jazz Workshop, Music Technology

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WELCOME!

Welcome to the Staples Music Department! As we begin another year, we are eager to share our comprehensive Staples Music Department Handbook, designed to be your one-stop-shop resource for all things Staples Music.

This handbook provides valuable information regarding our programs, policies, and procedures as a member of our musical community. We encourage you to get involved, ask questions, and extend your curiosities beyond the classroom.

We look forward to creating new musical moments this year with you. Please be sure to thoroughly read through the handbook with your family, mark important dates on your calendar, and **digitally sign the last page by Friday, September 12th.**

Sincerely,

Jeri Brima
203.341.1475

jbrima@westportps.org

Carrie Mascaro
203.341.1328
cmascaro@westportps.org

Kevin Mazzarella
203.341.1314
kmazzarella@westportps.org

Lauren Pine
203.341.1309
lpine@westportps.org

Caitlin Serpliss
203.341.5127
cserpliss@westportps.org

Gregg Winters
203.341.1570
gwinters@westportps.org

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Our goal in the Staples High School Music Department is to achieve musical excellence at all times. We are committed to engaging music on both the expressive and technical levels. In order to achieve musical excellence, rehearsals must be approached with a purposeful and artistic mindset. Therefore, it is necessary for all musicians in our ensembles to fully participate in the process. Each individual musician is an integral part of the ensemble as a whole and their presence is vital to elevate our ensembles to the artistic levels our art deserves.

Rehearsal Attendance

Students are expected to attend ***all*** scheduled rehearsals. If a student is excused from school on a given day, they are also excused from that day's rehearsal. However, if a student has accumulated 3 or more absences prior to a concert and has not demonstrated the level of preparation expected, they may be required to attend one or more extra help sessions with the director. These extra sessions will be scheduled in consultation with the student's parent/guardian.

Concert Attendance

Per the Staples High School Attendance Policy, students who are not present at the end of the school day are not eligible to participate in any after school activities, including concerts. However, a concert for a music class is similar to a test in a science, math, or English course, and must be made up whether the absence is excused or not. Make-up assignments will be determined by the ensemble director and will be due within two weeks after the concert.

If a student's absence from a performance is unexcused, the student's final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade. Validity of excused absences will be reviewed and determined by the entire Staples High School music staff. Valid excuses include, but are not limited to: family medical emergencies, documented illness, religious holidays, or unavoidable catastrophic events. Should the staff find the absence to be excused, the ensemble director will determine make-up assignments.

For a student to be excused from a performance due to a family trip or other pre-planned event, the ensemble director must be notified, in writing, **at least one month prior to the performance**. If excused, students will have to complete a make-up assignment in order to prevent a negative effect on their final grade.

CONCERT INFORMATION

Use the link below to see the most up to date concert calendar for the 2025-2026 school year.

[2025-2026 SHS Music Department Calendar](#)

Concert Attire - “Dress Black”

Concert “dress black” is a floor length outfit with a sleeve.

Concert “Dress Black” Options:

Black Formal Pants

Paired with:

- Black button down dress shirt

Black Formal Skirt w/ Blouse Combination

- Floor length
- Must have sleeves (any length)

Black Formal Dress or Jumpsuit

- Floor length
- Must have sleeves (any length)

PLEASE AVOID:

- Sneakers
- Exposed legs
- Exposed shoulders
- Leggings as pants
- Athletic apparel or athleisure
- Sleeveless tops
- White socks
- Polos

*An excellent resource for concert black attire is stageaccents.com. Many of their items fit the criteria above.

*****Directors reserve the right to request students change their attire if it does not conform to the policy.***

CONCERT ETIQUETTE

Expectations for the Performers

Pre-Concert

- Wear the designated performance attire. You must inspect all of the pieces of your uniform a few days before the performance to make sure they are clean and wrinkle free.
- Arrive prior to the designated call time so that you are ready to warm-up at the designated call time.
- Listen carefully to all pre-performance instructions.
- Always be in the appropriate designated place at the appointed time prior to performance.

During a Concert

- Maintain a proper singing and playing posture – ie. sit on the front edge of the chair with a straight back
- Always keep your eyes on the conductor. Do not look around or to the audience – keep your focus on the music.
- Never do anything that would call unnecessary attention to yourself – the audience should be focused on the music of the ensemble as a whole.
- Walk on and off the stage in a disciplined fashion.
- To best support all performers, quiet MUST be maintained backstage and in the audience during a concert. You should be setting an example of audience etiquette.

Students will be graded on the following:

- Punctuality
- Appropriate Concert Attire
- Appropriate Concert Etiquette as detailed above
- Playing to the best of one's ability

Reminders for the Audience

Please help us create the most successful performance atmosphere for students. Here are a few guidelines to help minimize distractions:

- Refrain from talking.
- Turn off all electronic devices ie: cell phones, tablets, watch alarms, and electronic games.
- Do not call out to your child as they walk onto the stage or at any time during the performance.
- Do not take flash photography.
- Refrain from leaving as soon as your child's portion of the concert is over. Students are expected to stay for the entirety of the concert to support each other.
- If you are arriving late or need to move around, please move in between pieces of music.
- If younger children are attending the performance, please keep them with you at all times.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

In order to achieve to the highest levels of rehearsal efficiency, learning and performance, each musician in the Staples High School Music Program is expected to:

Attend every rehearsal

- On time
- No food (including gum) or drink (except water) is allowed in any of the music areas
- With a clean, fully functioning instrument in good playing order (Band/Orchestra)
- With all music neatly kept in a music folder

- With a sharpened pencil and eraser. **NO PEN!!**
- Prepared to rehearse and contribute in a positive manner (BYOD only when requested)
- Cell phones are not permitted at your seat and/or stand during ensemble rehearsals or performances.

Attend all performances

- On time (call time for all musicians will be designated by the students' director and is typically 45 minutes to an hour prior to the beginning of the concert).
- With instrument and music
- Appropriately dressed
- All students will attend the entire concert to support the music program and each other.

A significant component of the musical process is the performance. It is vital that you attend all scheduled performances. The absence of an ensemble member will impact the balance and blend of your section as well as the execution of the overall musical performance. Therefore, any **unexcused absence** from a performance will result in a deduction of 10 points from your final grade for the quarter average (one full letter grade).

Excused absences are up to the discretion of the director and school administration. In order for a student to receive an excused absence, the student and/or their parents must contact the ensemble director no less than 4 weeks prior to the date of the performance. Emergency absences include, but not limited to the following circumstances will also be excused:

- Documented illness
- Medical emergency (family)
- Religious holiday
- Death in the family

How do we define respect in the rehearsal process?

- **Respect for the Rehearsal Process**
 - Demonstrating respect for the rehearsal process by following teacher and/or student leader directions. Do not speak out of turn (disruption) or create a distraction (improper use of BYOD) during rehearsals or lessons. Raise your hand at the appropriate time and wait before speaking.
- **Respect for Others**
 - Showing courtesy and tolerance, respect differences and make others welcome. Listen when others are talking and do not prevent others from rehearsing or listening to teachers and/or student leaders.
- **Respect for Self**
 - Striving for excellence by participating actively and positively at all times. Do not settle for anything but your very best efforts. Be on time and prepared every day.
- **Respect for Property**
 - The classroom sheet music, pianos, guitars, computers, music department and other school equipment must be respected and treated properly at all times.

ENSEMBLE DUES

Each year, all students participating in performance ensembles are asked to contribute dues to help ensure the smooth operation and enrichment of the music program. A fee of \$30 is collected from each student to cover various costs and consumables. These dues also help cover other potential expenses such as supplies, merchandise, end-of-year events, and other incidental costs.

Students who require financial assistance should not hesitate to request a scholarship; dues will be waived for those in need. Please submit all dues to your director by **Friday, September 12th**, in a sealed envelope labeled with your name, and make checks payable to Staples High School.

**We are requesting a one time fee of \$30 per student, not per ensemble.*

ENSEMBLE GRADING POLICY

In order to achieve our goals of growth and excellence as a performing ensemble, every student must strive to improve on a regular basis. Therefore, to have an accurate sense of individual understanding, each ensemble member will be assessed on the following:

Performance/Written Assessments - 60%

Each quarter, a combination of assessments will be selected from the following:

- **Performance Assessments**

- Musical Excerpts - solo and/or small ensemble
- Concert Self-Assessment
- Technical Exercises
- Scales/Etudes
- Sight-reading
- Excerpts

- **Written Assessments**

- Music Annotation
- Music Theory (i.e. Rhythm sheets, Scales, etc.)
- Articles
- Journals/Reflections

*****Please note, all assessments can be made up as many times as necessary. Our goal is for every student to improve and to continue working towards mastery!*****

Performance in a Large Ensemble Rehearsal - 40%

2-3 large ensemble assessments per quarter will be given based on the following:

Large Ensemble Participation Rubric - BAND / ORCHESTRA

Fulfills Westport 2025 Expectations for Civic, Social, and Ethical Values:

~Encourages students to find solutions through the process of understanding their role in ensembles and through individual practice~

	8	12	15	20
BEHAVIOR/ RESPECT	Students do not display appropriate behavior and respect during class.	Students rarely display appropriate behavior and respect during class.	Students usually display appropriate behavior and respect during class.	Students always display appropriate behavior during class.

ATTENDANCE/ PROMPTNESS	Students are never on time to class.	Students are rarely on time to class.	Students are usually on time to class.	Students are always on time to class.
PLAYING POSTURE	Students never use the correct playing position.	Students rarely use the correct playing position.	Students usually use the correct playing position.	Students always use the correct playing position.
PREPARATION	Students are not prepared for class with a music folder, instrument (Band/ Orch), and a pencil.	Students are rarely prepared for class with a music folder, instrument (Band/ Orch) and a pencil.	Students are usually prepared for class with a music folder, instrument (Band/ Orch), and a pencil.	Students are always prepared for class with a music folder, instrument (Band/ Orch), and a pencil.
ENGAGEMENT	Students do not sing/play with concentrated effort; do not listen when the teacher or others are speaking; or follow the conductor's cues.	Students rarely sing/play with concentrated effort; listens when teacher or others are speaking; and/or follows the conductor's cues.	Students usually sing/play with concentrated effort; listens when teacher or others are speaking; and/or follows the conductor's cues.	Student always sings/plays with concentrated effort; listens when teacher and others are speaking; and follows the conductor's cues
CELL PHONE USE	Students did not store cell phones appropriately 13-16 times during the quarter.	Students did not store cell phones appropriately 9-12 times during the quarter.	Students did not store cell phones appropriately 5-8 times during the quarter.	Students did not store cell phones appropriately 1-4 times during the quarter.

INSTRUMENTAL Performance Assessment Rubric

Fulfills Westport 2025 Expectations for Civic, Social, and Ethical Values:
~Encourages students to find solutions through the process of understanding their role in ensembles and through individual practice~

In alignment with the Westport 2025 Lens, students will use critical thinking skills to interpret, analyze, synthesize and evaluate their own musical performance and how it relates within the large ensemble.

CATEGORY	1 - Does not meet	2 - Approaching Goal	3 - Meeting Goal	4 - Advanced
Tone Quality	The tone is often not focused, clear or centered regardless of the range being played.	Tone is often focused, clear and centered, but sometimes the tone is uncontrolled in the normal playing range.	Tone is mostly focused, clear and centered through the normal playing range of the instrument.	Tone is consistently focused, clear, and centered throughout the range of the instrument. Tone has professional quality.
Rhythm	The beat is usually erratic and rhythms are seldom accurate detracting significantly from the overall performance.	The beat is somewhat erratic. Some rhythms are accurate. Frequent or repeated duration errors.	The beat is secure and the rhythms are mostly accurate. There are a few duration errors, but it doesn't detract from the performance.	The beat is secure and the rhythms are accurate for the style of music being played.
Pitch	Very few accurate or secure pitches.	Some accurate pitches, but there are frequent and/or repeated errors.	An occasional isolated error, but most of the time pitch is accurate and secure.	Virtually no errors. Pitch is very accurate.

Articulation	Few secure attacks. Markings are typically not executed accurately.	Attacks are rarely secure, but markings are often executed accurately as directed by the score and/or the conductor.	Attacks are usually secure, though there might be an isolated error. Markings are executed accurately.	Secure attacks. Markings (staccato, legato, slur, accents, etc.) are executed accurately.
Dynamics	Attention to dynamic levels is not obvious.	Dynamic levels fluctuate but can be discerned.	Dynamic levels are typically accurate and consistent.	Dynamic levels are obvious, consistent, and an accurate interpretation of the style of music being played.
Expression and Style	Rarely demonstrates expression and style. Just play the notes.	Sometimes performs with nuance and style that is indicated in the score or which is suggested by the instructor.	Typically performs with nuance and style that is indicated in the score or which is suggested by the instructor.	Performs with a creative nuance and style in response to the music.

	Tone	Rhythm	Pitch	Articulation	Dynamics	Expression	Total
Self Assessment	4	4	4	4	4	4	/24
Teacher Assessment	4	4	4	4	4	4	/24

Large Ensemble Participation Rubric - CHOIR

	10- Superior	8- Excellent	6- Good	4- Fair	2- Needs Improvement
Tone Quality	Demonstrates a highly developed tone that is uniform, consistent, and well controlled throughout. Lapses are infrequent and minor in nature. Pitches are centered and focused.	Demonstrates an above average tone with minor lapses. Pitches are occasionally not centered and focused.	Demonstrates average tone quality. The sound is inconsistent in range and dynamic extremes. (Sometimes harsh, thin, pinched, or swallowed). Pitches are sometimes not centered and focused.	Demonstrates inadequate characteristic tone qualities. (Frequently harsh, thin, pinched, or swallowed). Pitches are often not centered and focused.	Demonstrates undesirable tone quality. (Always harsh, thin, pinched, or swallowed). Pitches are not centered and focused.
Balance & Blend	Demonstrates a highly developed concept of balance and blend. A particular section rarely overpowers another section.	Demonstrates an above average concept of balance and blend. Occasionally a particular section overpowers another section.	Demonstrates an average concept of balance and blend. Often a particular section overpowers another section.	Demonstrates inadequate balance and blend. Sections are frequently overpowering each other.	Does not demonstrate balance and blend.
Intonation	The ensemble performs in tune in all dynamics and ranges throughout the performance. There may be rare lapses in intonation.	The ensemble is well tuned most of the time with minor flaws.	The ensemble is often in tune with occasional flaws. Attempts are made to correct problems when they occur.	The ensemble is somewhat in tune. When problems occur minimal attempts are made to correct them.	There is a lack of tonal center that results in poor intonation. No attempts are made to correct problems when they occur.
Rhythmic Precision and Note Accuracy	Rhythmic precision and clarity are present at all times. Always sing correct pitches.	Rhythmic precision and clarity is present most of the time with rare mistakes. Sings correct pitches with rare mistakes.	Rhythmic precision and clarity is present most of the time. Students miss some pitches but recover quickly.	Rhythmic precision and clarity is present some of the time. Students miss numerous pitches and do not recover.	Rhythmic precision and clarity are rarely present. Students rarely sing correct pitches.
	5- Superior	4- Excellent	3- Good	2- Fair	1- Needs Improvement
Phrasing	Almost always achieves clear and meaningful shaping of musical passages.	Often achieves clear and meaningful shaping of musical passages.	Attempts to create clear and meaningful shaping of musical passages.	There is minimal attempt to create clear and meaningful shaping of musical passages.	There are no discernable phrases.
Dynamics	The ensemble displays an appropriate range of dynamics throughout the performance.	The ensemble displays an appropriate dynamic range throughout most of the performance.	The ensemble displays an appropriate dynamic range for some of the performance.	The ensemble attempts few dynamic changes.	There are no discernable dynamic changes.

CHOIR Performance Assessment Rubric

Choir Ensemble & Rehearsal Skills Scoring Rubric

This is the criteria that is used to evaluate students' Ensemble and Rehearsal Skills.

****Each bullet point is worth the number of points listed at the top of its column.****

NAME _____ ENSEMBLE _____ QUARTER 1 2 3 4 RUBRIC # _____

	Advanced – 6	Proficient – 5	Basic – 4	Below Basic - 3
Singing & Participation	<input type="checkbox"/> Always sings and participates when applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Is consistently ready to sing when requested	<input type="checkbox"/> Generally sings and participates when applicable. <input type="checkbox"/> Is usually ready to sing when requested.	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally sings and participates when applicable. <input type="checkbox"/> Is often not ready to sing when requested.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely sings or participates. <input type="checkbox"/> Is not ready to sing when requested.
Posture	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently exhibits proper singing posture while sitting or standing	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost always exhibits proper singing posture while sitting or standing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally exhibits proper singing posture while sitting or standing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely exhibits proper singing posture while sitting or standing.
Productivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates concentrated focus; refrains from side conversations. <input type="checkbox"/> Always refrains from phone use unless it is for an assignment or planner purposes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates strong concentration with little distraction. <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly refrains from phone use unless it is for an assignment or planner purposes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates adequate focus; occasionally needs to be reminded to refrain from talking. <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes is on the phone during class for reasons unrelated to class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent focus; needs frequent reminders to sit still, refrain from talking or actively participate. <input type="checkbox"/> Is on the phone once or more per class period for reasons unrelated to class.
	Advanced – 4	Proficient – 3	Basic – 2	Below Basic - 1
Rehearsal Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently prepared for class. <input type="checkbox"/> Is consistently ready to begin class on time. <input type="checkbox"/> Always refrains from chewing gum.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually prepared for class. <input type="checkbox"/> Almost always ready to begin class on time. <input type="checkbox"/> Generally refrains from chewing gum.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is sometimes prepared for class. <input type="checkbox"/> Is sometimes ready to begin class on time. <input type="checkbox"/> Gum chewing is a common occurrence.	<input type="checkbox"/> Is rarely prepared for class. <input type="checkbox"/> Is generally not ready to begin class on time. <input type="checkbox"/> Almost always chews gum during class.
Being Proactive in Rehearsal	<input type="checkbox"/> Marks music and takes useful notes without prompting. <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently listens and follows along while other sections are working. Consistently applies these lessons to their own work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually marks music and takes notes when prompted. <input type="checkbox"/> Generally listens and follows along while other sections are working. Generally applies these lessons to their own work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes marks music and takes notes when prompted. <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes listens and follows along while other sections are working. Sometimes applies these lessons to their own work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely or never marks music or takes notes when prompted. <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely listens or follows along while other sections are working. Rarely applies these lessons to their own work.

50-45 = A+ to A- | 44-40 = B+ to B- | 39-35 = C+ to C- | 34-30 = D+ to D- | 33 or lower = F

Fulfills Westport 2025 Expectations for Civic, Social, and Ethical Values:

~Encourages students to find solutions through the process of understanding their role in ensembles and through individual practice~

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

In alignment with the Westport 2025 Lens, students will use critical thinking skills to interpret, analyze, synthesize and evaluate their own musical performance and how it relates within the large ensemble.

Vocal Sight-Singing Assessment Rubric

Fulfills Westport 2025 Expectations for Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

Encourage students to find solutions through the process of problem solving musical issues in ensembles and individual practice.

Name: _____ Period: _____ Quarter: 1 2 3 4

Beat Accuracy GRADE /4	Rhythm Accuracy GRADE /4	Pitch Accuracy GRADE /4	Solfege Accuracy GRADE /4
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Sight-Singing Exercise # _____ Total Score _____ / 16

RHYTHM / BEAT ACCURACY

	Does Not Meet	Proficient	Meeting Goal	Advanced
Beat Accuracy	Steady beat maintained for little to none of the example (> 6 mistakes)	Steady beat maintained for some of the example (3-5 mistakes)	Steady beat maintained for most of the example (1-2 mistakes)	Steady beat maintained for the entire example
Rhythm Accuracy	Few to none of the rhythms performed correctly (> 6 mistakes)	Some of the rhythms performed correctly (3-5 mistakes)	Most rhythms performed correctly (1-2 mistakes)	All rhythms performed correctly

PITCH / SOLFEGE ACCURACY

	Does Not Meet	Proficient	Meeting Goal	Advanced
Pitch Accuracy	Few to none of the pitches sung correctly (> 6 mistakes)	Some of the pitches sung correctly (4-5 mistakes)	Most pitches sung correctly (2-3 mistakes)	All or nearly all pitches sung correctly (0-1 mistakes)
Solfege Accuracy	Few to none of the correct solfege syllables used (> 6 mistakes)	Some of the correct solfege syllables used (4-5 mistakes)	Most of the correct solfege syllables used (2-3 mistakes)	All or nearly all solfege syllables used correctly (0-1 mistakes)

Critical Thinking	Interpret	Analyze	Synthesize and Apply	Evaluate	Global Students
	Understands the significance of the concepts and content	Break down ideas, concepts, and content	Connect ideas and apply to other contexts	Make knowledge-based decisions using credible evidence	Create an original product or idea to arrive at new meanings.

HONORS CREDIT

Students in the Staples Music Department have the opportunity to earn honors credit in all performing ensemble classes including: Freshman Concert Orchestra, Freshman Concert Band, Treble Chorus, Anima Cantorum, Sophomore Orchestra, Bella Voce, Symphonic Orchestra, Symphonic Band, Choralaires, and SSAA Choir.

Deadlines for Application

Grades 10-12: September 11, 2025

Grade 9: September 25, 2025

Detailed information about honors classes and criteria can be found [HERE](#).

STUDENT GUIDELINE AGREEMENT

**STUDENTS PLEASE SIGN BY USING THE LINKS BELOW
BY FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5th (10 point quiz grade)**

STUDENT

I have read the Staples High School Music Handbook. Please digitally sign using the link provided below.

[SHS STUDENT Music Handbook Digital Signature Form](#)

PARENT GUIDELINE AGREEMENT

**PARENTS PLEASE SIGN BY USING THE LINKS BELOW
BY FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5th**

PARENT/GUARDIAN

I, too, have read the Staples High School Music Department Handbook. My signature below indicates that as a parent/guardian of a student in a Staples High School music ensemble, I agree to the aforementioned policies and procedures. Additionally, I will do my part to make sure my student is punctual and present for all performances and after school rehearsals.

Please provide a digital signature using the link below.

[SHS PARENT/GUARDIAN Music Dept Handbook Digital Signature Form](#)