



# Placement and Program Information

Hello, and congratulations on your admission into Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology! This school offers many wonderful opportunities for you, and we are excited to introduce you to the band program, one of the most visible and successful programs at this school. Perhaps the best advice we can offer as you seek to learn more about us is to *please* email the band director, Mr. Ballard, with any questions instead of asking others in the broader community. Sometimes

misinformation goes out from people who are not involved in the band program, you're much more likely to get accurate answers straight from the source!

Please [introduce yourself to me on this form](#) if you're new to TJ next year (even if you're waiting on admission results).

If you would like to talk to current TJ Band students, please email any of those listed below who have volunteered to field your questions, particularly about how to include band as an annual part of your 4 year journey at TJ:

Class of 2021 Senior Rep: Vance Kreider [vancekreider02@gmail.com](mailto:vancekreider02@gmail.com)

Class of 2022 Junior Rep: James Mallek [jams.blond.000@gmail.com](mailto:jams.blond.000@gmail.com)

Class of 2023 Sophomore Rep: Elisabeth Everhart [elisabeth.everhart@gmail.com](mailto:elisabeth.everhart@gmail.com)

If your parents would like to talk to another parent of a current band student, they can feel free to contact:

Booster President, Senior Parent: Val Kreider [president@tjbands.org](mailto:president@tjbands.org)

Booster Vice President of Communications, Junior Parent: Susan Essman [vpcommunications@tjbands.org](mailto:vpcommunications@tjbands.org)

Booster Vice President of Ways and Means, Junior Parent: Lisa Barker [vpwaysmeans@tjbands.org](mailto:vpwaysmeans@tjbands.org)

We want to start you off with the best recruitment tools we have to offer – the current students! Below is a link to the recruitment video that our historians put together. It highlights what the band program has to offer and what the students think of the experience. (Link available at [www.tjbands.org](http://www.tjbands.org) also.)

[TJ Bands Recruitment Video](#) (created by the previous director, Adam Foreman in 2018, but the info is still relevant)

And here's another video made by our marching band alumni speaking to why they believe their involvement was one of the best decisions they made during their time at TJ: [Why TJMC? Alumni Perspective](#)

One of the truly enjoyable things about TJ is that the school offers a fully comprehensive high school experience along with the additional science and tech courses. It is very rare that a school with this academic reputation would also boast one of the best fine arts departments in the country. While you enjoy taking accelerated STEM classes, you also can take up to four years of band in one of the premiere programs in the US. In the TJ band program, there are many opportunities for you to perform and enjoy making music with your peers. The first step toward this process is signing up for band as a freshman. The other performing groups (Marching Colonials, Indoor Drum Line, Indoor Color Guard, Jazz Ensemble) are all dependent on that first step. There are certain situations later on down the road where you may take a year off from curricular band and still participate in the co-curricular groups, but as a freshman we do ask that you sign up for the class. We're well aware that it can be daunting to consider all the options and requirements ahead of you, but there are many ways students have to make the scheduling work the way they want it to in order to manage their course options the way they want to. This includes summer school options like Computer Science or PE (among many others), but the best way to learn what might work best for you is to talk with those students above who have experience with it.

When you sign up for band through registration it will place you in a generic "band" holding class. You will then be sorted into the specific ensemble that works best for you and the group. The ensembles that meet as a class are:

Percussion Ensemble (Upper Level Percussion Group)

Symphonic Percussion (Second Level Percussion Group – We Accept Beginners Here!)

Symphonic Band (Second Level Winds Group)

Wind Ensemble [SWE] (Upper Level Winds Group)

Jazz Band (8th period club open to all, plus a separate after school Jazz Ensemble, auditioned later in the year)

All of the above, except Jazz Band, count as the same "Advanced Band" credit on your transcript.

## Preparing and submitting an evaluation or audition recording:

All incoming band students with a Fairfax County student ID are asked to join Google Classroom code: **o3xu6rz**

Evaluation/Audition videos may be submitted to the corresponding assignment posted in that Classroom.

*All those coming from outside of Fairfax county who may not have their ID yet will not have access to the Google Classroom just yet. Videos may be submitted simply by emailing a link directly to [swballard@fcps.edu](mailto:swballard@fcps.edu). Please make sure you include your full name, and if possible, please send me LINKS to your videos rather than attachments.*

**There are two paths you can follow here - either a “Playing Evaluation” or a “SWE/Percussion Ensemble Audition”.** Incoming freshmen should focus on submitting the playing evaluation. Submitting the audition for the upper ensembles is optional and may take the place of the evaluation if you feel it will showcase your best skills. If you submit a playing evaluation and it indicates potential readiness, you may be invited to do the upper ensemble audition separately later on. Neither will be graded or shared with other students.

I will post some basic feedback and your ensemble placement in the private comments on your submission. Non-FCPS students who email me links directly will have feedback emailed directly back to them.

A single recording with all elements performed in succession is recommended but not required. If you prefer, you may submit each element below as an individual recording. Limit editing to captioning (recommended) and cuts while *not* playing. Test your audio and video recording *before* you make your final recording to ensure proper quality. But when you start recording for real, very often the first take is the best take, so go for it and don't let little mistakes stop you!

All submissions must be **video with audio**, with full view of your face, playing technique, and instrument. Contact me asap if you are unable to meet this expectation. For percussion, this includes your hands, wrists, and arms, as well as the playing surfaces of your instrument. A slightly elevated camera angled downward at the instrument works well, but keep your face in view as well for identification. Whatever instrument you have available to you is fine, even if it's not a concert snare or full-sized keyboard (octave transpositions are indicated on the Perc Ens mallet prepared piece if necessary).

Details for what to play are on the next page.

## Evaluation and Audition Music

WHAT	Playing Evaluation	SWE/Percussion Ensemble Audition
<b>WHEN</b>	<p>Due dates are flexible based on when you become aware of this process. Sooner is better, but give yourself a couple weeks to practice and prepare a good video. So if you read this on May 1, please submit on/around May 15 (etc).</p> <p><i>[Current TJ students - due date is May 2.]</i></p>	<p>You will be given a due date individually if invited to complete an audition for the upper ensembles. Or you may include it as your initial submission (optional).</p> <p><i>[Current TJ students - due date is May 2.]</i></p>
<b>WHY/ WHO</b>	<p>Requested from all new members of the TJ Band, and anyone returning from a year or more off from being in a curricular band class. For feedback and diagnostic only. Recommended, not required.</p>	<p>Required for consideration to join Wind Ensemble or Percussion Ensemble. Optional otherwise.</p>
<b>MAJOR SCALES</b>	<p><b>Play YOUR Bb, F and Eb scale.</b> Use whatever scale patterns you know. Skip any/all if you don't know them, it's ok!</p>	<p><b>Play YOUR Bb, Db, Gb, E and B scales.</b> Use All-State/District Audition ranges and patterns IF you are comfortable doing so.  <a href="#">Wind scale ranges</a>  <a href="#">Percussion scale ranges</a>                      If not, that's ok, use whatever scale patterns you are comfortable with, playing as many complete octaves as possible on each scale.</p>
<b>CHROMATIC SCALE</b>	<p><b>Play your chromatic scale, at least one octave if you can.</b> Whatever range or articulation pattern you currently learned is fine</p>	<p><b>Play your chromatic scale according to linked scale instructions above.</b> If you cannot meet all of those parameters, that's ok! Just include what you are comfortable with.</p>
<b>PREPARED PIECE</b>	<p><b>Anything you currently have prepared</b> (solo music, band music, <b>whatever you think showcases you best</b>) 1-2 minutes <i>maximum</i>.                      For percussion, snare and/or mallets are fine. You may include other percussion instruments if you choose, but they're not required.</p>	<p><a href="#">2021 TJHSST Wind Ensemble Audition Excerpts</a>  <b>Play the piece(s) listed for your instrument.</b></p>

<b>PERCUSSION SNARE DRUM RUDIMENTS</b> <i>(Percussionists only)</i>	<p><b>Playing Evaluation (in addition to material above)</b>                      If you are familiar with snare drum rudiments, please <b>play 2 you are most comfortable with</b> such as:                      Multiple Bounce Roll (soft to loud and back to soft over about 15 seconds), or                      Paradiddles, Flams, or Drags (slow to fast and back to slow over about 15 seconds).                      It's ok if you aren't familiar with rudiments! If so, just skip this part.</p>	<p><b>Percussion Ensemble Audition (in addition to material above)</b>  <b>Play each of the following rudiments</b> (15 seconds or less on each):   <b>Multiple Bounce Roll</b> (soft-loud-soft)  <b>17-stroke roll</b> (slow-fast-slow)  <b>Pataflafla OR Double Ratamacue</b> (slow-fast-slow)</p>
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Submitting videos of any kind is optional, but strongly recommended.

If no video is submitted, students will be automatically placed into Symphonic Band/Percussion.

## **FAQs about placements:**

### **What are my chances of making one of the higher ensembles?**

It depends on far too many factors to list. The short answer is that we typically only accept a few freshmen in the higher level groups a year, but it can fluctuate. We fill the groups up with the most qualified candidates for the positions. In the end, all students end up being enrolled in *Advanced Band*, so your transcript will look the same either way (if that worries you). Have confidence that we do what is best for the program and for you as a player (but we don't put the needs of an individual ahead of the group). We are very fortunate to get many talented players to join. Remember that you are auditioning for spots against upperclassmen who were just as talented as you when they first came in the program! But it's also worth noting, of our many All-District and All-Virginia Band honorees, most began their journey at TJ in the Symphonic Band; in fact some of our Symphonic Band members are included among those honorees this year! You will get a high level, quality experience no matter which ensemble you step into.

### **I don't think I have as much experience on my instrument as others. Should I still join band even if I think I may be a little behind?**

Absolutely! There is a place for all ability levels in our program, including beginners. Band is a class where you can enjoy playing your instrument and improving. It doesn't matter what your ability level is when you enter the program. Our focus is simply on having you continue to get better each year, in competition with *no one* but yourself and your own personal annual goals.

### **When will I know the results?**

Please allow some time for results, possibly several weeks or more. Usually we can give a fairly specific date (typically in mid-May), but with this unusual year have come some delays in the process. The best bet is to just know we will post them as soon as we can. In any case, there are a lot of auditions to get through for both incoming students and returning students, and there are lots of considerations when placing students into the appropriate ensembles. You will receive a message directly on your video assignment submission in Google Classroom (which should forward as an email to your fcps email) with feedback and your ensemble assignment for the coming school year. Those without an FCPS ID yet will be emailed that feedback directly.

Again, congratulations and welcome to the TJ Band! Please reach out to me any time with any questions you may have about this process, or the program in general.

## **Steve Ballard**

Director of Bands, TJHSST

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[www.tjbands.org](http://www.tjbands.org)