

Rockheights Middle School Music Program 2021 2022 *Handbook for Parents*



Risa McDonell, Music Teacher



For those who know me, nice to see you again! For those who don't, nice to meet you! My name is Risa McDonell and I teach all the music classes at Rockheights. I started my teaching career in 2002 in secondary schools in North Vancouver. I also played flute and conducted semi-professionally in the Lower Mainland, primarily with West Coast Symphony Orchestra. I am proud to have served on the board of the BC Music Educators' Association since 2012. In 2016, my daughter Ella was born and my priorities shifted a lot! I moved home to Victoria, so that I could raise Ella near our extended family. I am really enjoying teaching at Rockheights, now my third year, and getting to know the community here.

Communication

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2021 2022 Music Program Timetable



Rockheights Middle School 2021-2022 Music Program Timetable



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:40-8:52	Advisory (12 mins)				
8:52-9:48 (56 mins)	Music Exploratory	Music Exploratory	Band 6	Music Exploratory	
9:48-10:03	Nutrition Break (15 mins)				
10:03-10:59 (56 mins)	Music Exploratory	Music Exploratory	Band 7	Music Exploratory	
10:59-11:55 (56 mins)	Music Exploratory	Music Exploratory	Band 8	Music Exploratory	
11:55 – 12:15 (20 min, during lunch)		Band 7 & 8 Sectionals*		Band 6 Sectionals*	
12:15 – 12:20 (during lunch)		(Sectionals continued)		(Sectionals continued)	
12:20 – 12:40 (during lunch)		(Sectionals continued)		(Sectionals continued)	
12:40-1:35 (55 mins)	Band 6	Beginning Strings		Beginning Strings	
1:35-2:32 (57 mins)	Band 7	Intermediate Strings	Choir	Intermediate Strings	
2:32 – 2:50 (starts at 2:38, during Advisory)	Band 8	(Extra help time)	(Extra help time)	Jazz Band	
2:50 – 3:30 (40 mins after school)	Band 8 (continued)			Jazz Band (continued)	

*Sectionals are small rehearsals for only one section of the band (for example the flutes). You won't have to attend every time, only when your section is called, typically once or twice per term. They are only 25 minutes long, so you will still get 20 minutes for lunch.

As of September 8, 2021

Performances



Rockheights Middle School Music Program 2021 – 2022 Important Dates

When is it?	What is it?	Who's Involved?
Wed Sep 8 to Tue Sept 13	Music Program Promotion to Classes and Registration	All Divisions
Wed Sept 13 (see timetable)	Music classes begin	All Music classes
3-7pm, Tue Sep 21	Long & McQuade Instrument Rental Night	Anyone who needs to rent an instrument (and is not borrowing a school instrument).
9am, Wed Sept 22	Rental forms due to borrow SD61 String Instruments	Anyone who needs to borrow a stringed instrument from SD61
Starting Wednesday, Sept 22, then on Wednesdays at lunch all year.	Pizza Days Pizza Fundraiser for the Music Program	Student volunteers sell pizza outside the Learning Commons
Sat Sep 25 all day	Super Saturday First Band Lessons at Spectrum Secondary School	All beginner woodwind, brass and percussion students.
Thu Oct 21 to Sun Oct 24	BC Music Educators' Association Annual Conference	(Ms. McDonnell away)
Wed Nov 10 time TBA	Remembrance Day Observances	Ensembles TBA
Wed Nov 24 7:00pm	Fall Concert	All Band, String and Choir Ensembles
Wed Dec 8, 1:00pm	Daytime Winter Concerts	Ensembles TBA
Wed Dec 8, 7:00pm	Evening Winter Concert	All Band, Strings and Choir Ensembles
Fri Jan 28 Afternoon and Evening	Esquimalt High Grade 8 Retreat	All Grade 8's going to Esquimalt High
Fri Feb 25 All Day	Tour to Elementary Feeder Schools	Ensembles TBA
1:00pm Wed Apr 13	Rockheights Showcase of Learning	Ensembles TBA
March and April dates TBA	Spring Music Festivals	Ensembles TBA
Wed May 11 to Fri May 13	Camp Pringle Retreat for Grade 7's and 8's	Grade 7 and 8 Band, Strings and Choir students.
Wed May 25 1:00pm	Daytime Spring Concerts	Ensembles TBA
Wed May 25 7:00pm	Evening Spring Concert	All Band, Strings and Choir Ensembles
Wed June 1 7:00pm	Evening Choir Concert	Choir
Fri June 3, 9:00am	All Instruments due back	Any band or strings students who borrowed or rented instruments.
June Dates TBA	In-Class Year-End Parties	All Ensembles

- Concert participation is mandatory – please be sure your youth is available for evening concerts.
- More dates, such as field trips, fundraisers and festivals will be added as these opportunities arise.

Is It Safe To Play Music?

I will be teaching music under the guidelines set out by School District 61 as well as this report [Guidance for Music Classes in British Columbia During COVID-19](#), which was then reviewed by the BC Centre for Disease Control, and ultimately approved by the BC Minister of Education. Reading these documents will help you make an informed, research-based, decision about whether or not to participate in music this year.

Hand Washing and Instrument Hygiene

Every student will be asked to wash their hands at the start and end of each class. Brass students will not be allowed to empty water valves (aka spit valves) on the floor. Instead we will use paper towel, which will be disposed of at the end of class. As always, students will have to swab out their instruments at the end of class and we will have some in-depth lessons on how to deeply clean instruments as well. Students will no longer be allowed to share the large woodwind and brass instruments (such as baritone sax or tuba), but we will try our best to make sure everyone has their own to use. Some classes may be shorter so that Ms. McDonell can disinfect chairs and music stands before the next class.

Masks

Students will be required to wear masks in the hallways on their way to the music room and whenever they aren't playing their instruments, such as while they're in the storage room, setting up and taking down. Singers must sing in masks. Because I will be in contact with students from all over the school, I will be teaching from a distance of 2 metres, and/or standing behind a transparent barrier, and/or wearing a mask.

Rules on Indoor Gatherings

We have to follow any Provincial Health Orders in place at the time of our concerts. At the time this was written, the PHO will allow us to have a concert in our gym at 50% capacity, with audience members in masks. More information will follow closer to concert dates on the details or any changes to that rule.

Course Descriptions

At Rockheights, we are proud to offer a comprehensive music program. The following is generally how the courses work, but course offerings may change from year to year, depending on enrollment. Also, on occasion students are allowed to join later classes as a beginner, with the expectation that they catch up.

Beginner Band 6

This class is open to any student in Grade 6. No prior music experience is necessary. In this class, students learn to read basic music notation and how to play a woodwind, brass or percussion instrument. We will focus on music in the key of Bb.

Intermediate Band 7

This class is open to any student in grade 7 who has taken at least one year of band. It is a continuation of the band program and will expand into new key areas such as Eb and F.

Intermediate Band 8

This class is open to any student in grade 8 who has taken at least two years of band. It is a continuation of the band program and will expand into new key areas such as Ab and Db, and new time signatures.

Jazz Band 7 & 8

This class is open to any student who is in grade 7 or 8 who has taken at least one year of band. In this class, we will focus on playing various styles of jazz music (swing, rock, etc.) and students will learn basic improvising skills.

Choir 6, 7 & 8

This class is open to anyone who wants to sing! No prior music experience is necessary. In this class, we will be learning how to follow sheet music and singing a variety of styles of music.

Beginner Strings 6, 7 & 8

This class is open to any student in Grade 6, 7 or 8. No prior music experience is necessary. In this class, students learn to read basic music notation and how to play an orchestral strings instrument. We will focus on music in the key of D.

Intermediate Strings 7 & 8

This class is open to any student who is in grade 7 or 8 who has taken at least one year of strings. It is a continuation of the strings program and will expand into new key areas such as G and A, and new bowing techniques.

Music Exploratory 6, 7 & 8

This class is mandatory for all students at Rockheights. This year it will be 10 weeks long, and is a general music class where students explore a variety of musical ideas and techniques.

Attendance and Missed Work

Regular attendance is expected at all rehearsals, whether they meet inside or outside the timetable, and forms part of their mark in music classes. Attendance will be taken in class every day. We are preparing music as a group, an ensemble, and everyone depends on each other to do their part. Music classes are curricular (unlike clubs and sports teams, which are extra-curricular). Students are evaluated on the work they do in music. Since students will be missing some of their regular class time to attend music, it is important that they keep up with any work that they have missed. If a student feels that they are falling behind on their regular class work, please have them speak with me as soon as possible. Their classroom teacher, their parents, they and I will come up with ideas to help them get caught up.

Rehearsal Expectations

Here are the things that everyone needs to do to have a successful rehearsal:

- ✓ Arrive on time and set up quickly. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to set up.
- ✓ Bring your instrument, your music, your supplies (book, reeds, valve oil, etc.) and a pencil.
- ✓ When the conductor steps in front of the class, usually on the podium, that's your signal to be quiet because the rehearsal has started.
- ✓ Once the rehearsal has started, you shouldn't talk but instead listen to what's happening.
- ✓ If you have a question or want to say something, please raise your hand to speak. Don't call out.
- ✓ Do not play out of turn. Playing out of turn is disruptive to everyone and slows us all down.
- ✓ If you are having technical trouble with your instrument (stuck mouthpiece, broken reed, etc.), that you can't resolve on your own, let me know, but please understand you might have to wait to get it fixed.
- ✓ If you need to use the washroom or leave your spot for any reason, please raise your hand and ask. Walking around the room is disruptive to the rehearsal.
- ✓ Use pencil only to make markings in the music. No pens.

Practicing

Music students' homework is practicing. If you are only playing your instrument or singing during class time, you will get frustrated and feel that you are not keeping up. Practicing is fun! There will be assignments to help students set goals for practicing. Everyone is expected to practice on their own between classes and on the weekend. If you are struggling with practicing, don't worry! Please see me and I'll help you get going again.

Field Trips

Some field trips are proposed for later in the school year. All field trips are optional, and are not guaranteed. Field trips must be approved by the school district. Students must have demonstrated a pattern of responsibility in order to attend field trips.

Instrument Care and Storage

Every band and string student is responsible for obtaining and taking care of their instrument. Information will be distributed in class about how to assemble, clean and care for these instruments, as well as how to get an instrument to use. Students' instrument cases must be labelled with their name – please don't use duct tape. Instruments can be stored safely at the school in the instrument storage room.

Uniforms

Having a quality uniform contributes to our sense of pride and belonging. Rockheights has a simple performing uniform of a red t-shirt, which costs \$13. Information about uniforms will be distributed in the Fall.

Fundraisers and Parent Participation

We will continue to have meetings with parents to discuss the activities of the music program, fundraising and more, they may be held over video-conferencing. Attending the parent meetings are a great way to meet other parents, to get to know the teachers and other staff, and to be involved in the school community, and it's fun! All music parents are welcome to attend the meetings. They are announced by email – please make sure you are receiving music program emails and contact me if you are not rmcdonell@sd61.bc.ca

Making a Commitment To Music

Learning to play an instrument or to sing is challenging work. The rewards are huge, but it takes time, effort and sacrifice to achieve them. Every musician has felt frustrated at some point, especially in the first three years of playing. Leaving the music program is a big decision, though. Not only does it limit opportunities for getting back into a school music program later, it also really impacts the experience and morale of the whole ensemble. A student may feel that they are “just” one clarinet among many, but every single person is valued and important.

If a student chooses to be a part of the music program, please understand that they are making a commitment that matters to their peers. The ensemble feels a bond with each other, and it's demotivating when people leave. Therefore, if a student is feeling that they would like to leave a music class, we will have a talk first to see if there is something we can do to help them resolve their concerns. If it's not easily resolved, your parents and/or the principal may be invited to a meeting to see if we can resolve the issues. **If a solution can't be reached, they will be asked to complete a withdrawal form, which must be signed by their parents.**