



Rockheights Middle School Music Program

1250 Highrock Ave. Esquimalt, BC V9A 4V7 Ph: (250) 384-7125

Welcome to Music at Rockheights!

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Dear Rockheights Family:

Welcome! Yesterday at school, all new students learned about the music program at Rockheights.

This is a special enrichment program that is open to anyone in grade 6, 7 or 8 who wishes to learn to play a band or string instrument, or to sing in a choir. Getting involved in a school music program is a great opportunity to make meaningful memories and friendships and to do something that is fun and challenging! [Studies show](#) that students who participate in their school music programs graduate and pursue post-secondary schooling in higher numbers than their non-participating peers do. Middle school is the perfect time to try to learn an instrument, or to join choir. Here are some things to consider!

When are the class times? The music program at Rockheights uses the “pull out” model, which means students leave their regular class to attend music. They are responsible for the work they miss while they are away from class, and teachers will of course support them in completing their work. **The full music program timetable can be viewed on our website at www.rockheightsmusic.com.** Students are eligible to take classes in band, strings or choir.

When are the concerts? There are a variety of performances throughout the year, but these are major concerts where **student participation is expected**:

- 7pm, Wednesday, December 11th, 2024 (everyone)
- 7pm, Wednesday, May 28th, 2025 (bands only)
- 7pm, Wednesday, June 4th, 2025 (strings and choir only)

If you can't attend a concert, please speak with Ms. McDonell as soon as possible. There will be other events such as festivals and field trips announced later, including major performance events in term 2. In the meantime, check out the Events page of www.rockheightsmusic.com

Is there a uniform? **Yes.** Having a quality uniform contributes to our sense of pride and belonging. Information about t-shirts will be sent home in October. I collect a small fee to cover the cost. If you are not able to pay, we can loan one to you. The full uniform for concerts, assemblies and festivals is: Rockheights Music t-shirt, black (or dark) pants or skirt with tights, and comfortable shoes.

Do we go on trips? **Yes.** This year, students will attend daytime field trips, such as festivals or visiting schools. Overnight field trips are for students in grade 7 and 8 only at this time. Our next overnight trip is in the 2025 2026 school year. Trip dates are posted to www.rockheightsmusic.com Trips are optional and extra-curricular – more information about trips will be sent out as those opportunities arise.

What instrument can my child play?

Band class includes the following instruments only:

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- Woodwinds:** flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone (alto, tenor and baritone), bassoon
Brass: trumpet, French horn, trombone, baritone / euphonium and tuba
String: electric bass guitar only (sorry, no treble or 6-string guitar in concert band)
Percussion: percussionists learn all of the drums, cymbals, timpani and mallet percussion

Orchestral strings classes include these instruments only:

Violin, viola, cello or upright bass.

How do we get an instrument? You can rent, borrow or purchase an instrument. If costs present a challenge, don't worry. Every child can get an instrument for little to no cost. **No student will be denied an opportunity to participate in music because of costs.**

If your family is able to rent an instrument from a retailer, I strongly suggest that you do that. You will get a much better-quality instrument than if you borrow one from the school district. Learning a new instrument is challenging, and knowing that you have a quality instrument at the outset helps to resolve questions about what a problem might be (i.e. "is it me, or the instrument?") Repairs are also dealt with much more easily. There are two fantastic retailers in town who support our program very much.

Long and McQuade Musical Instruments

756 Hillside Avenue, Victoria

(250) 384-3622

www.long-mcquade.com

Tapestry Music

772 Bay St., Victoria

(250) 590-0752

Tapestrymusic.com

For band instruments, Rockheights also owns some wind, brass and percussion instruments, which can be loaned out on a first-come, first-served basis. I ask families to please make a one-time donation, \$20 is suggested, for the year if you can. Your donations help to defray the costs of maintaining these instruments and allows future students to have the same opportunities. Please make cheques payable to "Rockheights Middle School" and write your student's name on the memo line. If you are sending cash, please put it in an envelope with the student's name on it. If you cannot donate \$20 now, please consider donating any amount later.

For string instruments, School District 61 owns violins, violas and cellos, which can be loaned out on a first-come, first-served basis. The cost to rent these instruments is \$150 for violins or violas, or \$200 for cellos, for the year. If your family needs financial assistance, these fees can be reduced or waived. Please get in touch with me if you need help with this.

More information about how to get these instruments will be distributed in class, once students know which instrument they'd like to play. **Please do not send money until you receive the information. Chris Logan, from Long and McQuade will be in the music room from 4:30-6:30pm on September 19th, Meet-The-Teacher Night, to help parents with renting an instrument. All students are asked to please have their instrument by the third week of September.**

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How do I work this thing? There is a lot to know about playing an instrument for the first time. Instruments are fragile, and if your child has not been taught how to assemble it correctly, damages can happen very quickly. To get everyone off to a great start, **please do not try to assemble the instrument at home** until your child has had a lesson on it! **All beginners are asked to please attend a first lesson on their instrument at these times:**

Flutes, Trumpets, Trombones, Euphoniums: Tuesday, Sept 24, 3-4:30pm

Percussion (Drums): Wednesday, September 25, 3:4:30pm

Clarinets, Saxes and Bass Guitars: TBA

More info' to come soon! Beginning strings students will learn the first steps during their class time in the coming weeks.

How much will I need to practice? Consistent practice and commitment to your group are necessary for success. There will be assignments to help students set goals for practicing. Students should expect to practice for **a minimum of one hour every week on their own time**, including at the start of class. Our most successful students practice for some time every day. The music rooms are often available at nutrition break and lunch for practicing. It's a great way to make friends and spend the time.

What if I don't like it, can I quit later? Students are free to leave the music program at any time, however, it's in everyone's best interest to see students succeed. **Learning an instrument takes time and practice before the success happens.** These are ensemble classes, where students work together, so it impacts everyone's experience when students leave. So, before leaving the program, I always have a conversation with students to see what the issues might be – sometimes they chose an instrument that they don't like, and something else might be better (for example, choir or a smaller instrument). Sometimes they're falling behind in class work, and need some time to catch up. Sometimes, they just know it's not for them, and that's ok, too. I will contact parents if a student has indicated they would like to leave the class.

How will I receive information from the program? I will send information home via email or paper letters. Please make sure your email addresses are up-to-date with the school. The best way to reach me is through email at rmcdonell@sd61.bc.ca or by calling the school at (250) 384-7125. www.rockheightsmusic.com is the place to go to find all kinds of information about the music program, including the timetable and a copy of any letters that go home. Please be sure to check out the page made especially for [Newcomers](#).

How do I sign up? To take any music class at Rockheights, just start attending it. I will make sure your name is on the class list and you have everything you need for the class. Please get in touch with me if you have any questions or concerns rmcdonell@sd61.bc.ca. I look forward to working with you! I'm looking forward to making music with you!

Warmly,
Risa McDonell,
Music Teacher, Rockheights Middle School

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