

# Music at Seton School



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Seton Catholic School  
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Greetings Seton families,

This is a handbook to inform you of policies and procedures for all students who attend Seton School and participate in musical activities. The goal is to achieve musical education excellence in individual and group performance, as well as enjoy making music. It is hoped that this document will be helpful in answering many questions and informative to the point that you will understand what the music program is about. Cooperation and commitment is necessary for the success of the organization. Remember, good communication between teacher, student and parents can prevent misunderstandings.

Parents/Guardians, please take time to review and discuss the information in the handbook with your son or daughter. Once you have read the handbook, please sign the signature page found at the end and return this form to the main office.

The first section of this handbook will be for classroom music. The second section will be for all students who participate in instrumental music. And the final section will be for chorus.

## MUSIC EDUCATION

Research continuously underscores the benefits of music education in the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of children. Cognitively, students involved in music exhibit improved memory retention, increased concentration, and even enhanced mathematical abilities.

Music education also encourages emotional intelligence, promotes empathy and emotional awareness. As a collaborative endeavor, music instills values of teamwork and cooperation, and nurtures self-confidence. Physically, children develop fine motor skills and enhance sensory integration through interacting with various instruments.

Several scientific studies reinforce the significance of music education, finding a direct correlation with improved academic performance. The value of music education extends beyond musical competence—it influences a child's overall academic growth, cognitive development and promotes the social aspects of enjoying music.

Seton school has had a long-standing reputation for having excellence in music and musical performance.

### **Performance/Concert Dates for 2026-27 school year**

- ☐ December 1- Choral Performance
- ☐ Thursday December 17 - Annual Christmas Concert For Grades Pre-K through 5
- ☐ Wednesday December 23- Seton's Got Talent (morning performance only)
- ☐ January 18th - Chorus performance at Annual MLK celebration
- ☐ Thursday May 6- Spring Concert for Grades 5-8: Instrumental and Chorus.

My name is Traci Balsamo. My involvement in music goes back to my youth as a member of many performing organizations including dance, theater and musical organizations while growing up in Meadville. I have a diverse educational background that combines expertise in music and elementary education. I earned a Bachelor of Science in Music Education with a concentration in instrumental music, preparing me to teach and nurture young musicians. Building on this foundation, I pursued a Master of Arts in Music, focusing on classroom music, enhancing my ability to create engaging musical experiences for students of all ages. Additionally, my Master of Education degree in Elementary Education further solidified my teaching skills across various subjects, equipping me with comprehensive strategies to foster academic growth and development in elementary school settings. These 3 degrees collectively empower me to inspire and educate students through the transformative power of music and foundational education principles.

I stay involved in local music by performing with Allegheny College Civic Symphony, Mercyhurst University Civic Symphony, Greenville Symphony and the Concert Band of Northwest PA. In my free time I teach private lessons.

## Classroom music

All students at Seton will be offered classroom music. The weekly 45 minute sessions will consist of classroom activities that will teach children music based on the standards created by the Diocese of Erie. (<https://www.eriercd.org/schools/academics.html#>)

During my tenure here I will be using Hal Leonards' Essential Elements Music Class. This music curriculum has weekly lessons based on the concepts of Beat and rhythm, meter, pitch-melody-harmony, timbre, form and expressive elements. During the cycle of years from grades K-5, students will get introduced to, develop and master skills that include these concepts.

A typical lesson includes singing, movement, music vocabulary, children' literature and social emotional concepts.

In grades 5-8, students will use the Modern Band curriculum. This curriculum was invented and introduced to schools across the country in 2011. It teaches students to play, perform, improvise, and compose using popular music that the students themselves select. Modern Band focuses on genres like rock, pop, Latin, rap, R&B, country, and more with an immersive approach that empowers students to start playing on day one. Students of all ages, backgrounds, and experience levels find the modern band approach more appealing and fun.

Students will receive grades based on a participation rubric as well as graded classroom assignments and projects.

**All** music students in grades 5-8 will be required to have a personal 3 ring binder to keep track of their music for music class, chorus, band and string ensemble.

## Instrumental Music

Beginning in 4th grade, students can choose to participate in instrumental music at Seton school. Small group lessons will be offered for the following instruments. The string family (violin, viola, cello and string bass), the brass and woodwinds including flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, french horn, trombone and baritone and percussion. Please note that percussion means more than snare drum. **It will include all concert band percussion including bass drum, cymbals, bells/xylophone.**

It is most beneficial to students to play on a high quality instrument so I suggest that you begin with a rental program through our school vendor *Brighton Music*. They have high quality rental instruments with a program to build equity towards a final instrument purchase. For more information contact them at <https://www.brightonmusic.com/> or by phone at 724-843-9380.

All students will receive weekly instruction for 20 minutes. As they advance in their studies they will be assigned to beginning band or beginning string ensemble. That group will meet weekly for 30-45 minutes. More advanced students will be a part of the Advanced String Ensemble or Advanced Band. These groups will meet on a rotating schedule Tuesdays at 2 PM (during study hall).

Please understand that students who are falling behind in their core subjects may be asked to take a break from instrumental music. A good grade point average must be maintained.

In order for the program to be successful, I am asking that:

1. Students contact me if they are going to miss a lesson due to classroom testing, either by a note or email.
2. Students complete a weekly/monthly practice calendar with parental signature.
3. Students are on time for the weekly lesson.

4. Students should stay positive and work hard. They should make a real effort to learn and improve every day.
5. Chewing gum and candy damage instruments. Students should not bring them to the rehearsal (band/string ensemble).

A thoughtful dialogue between students and parents is very important when choosing a musical instrument and pursuing lessons. Playing an instrument takes time for weekly practice. 15-20 minutes at least 3 times a week. Students who are participating in instrumental music will not be allowed to change instruments mid-year. Once you stop taking school lessons during the school year, you can only return at the beginning of the next school year.

Students will receive a grade for instrumental music in the second and final quarters of the school year. This grade will be based on a point system that will be kept during the school year. Students will weekly receive points during their lesson. This will be based on the following areas: attendance, behavior, practice calendars, musical growth and musicianship.

Code of conduct is the same for instrumental music as it is for the classroom. Students are expected to be good citizens and show excellent behavior at all times. This is a school-wide expectation. Green slips and detentions will be given as needed.

Students will not be permitted to use or play another student's instrument. This is a health concern for brass and woodwind instruments and a financial liability for any other instrument. I strongly suggest that you have some type of insurance on your personally owned instrument.

In order to properly play an instrument, students must keep their **fingernails trimmed short**. It is nearly impossible to correctly play an instrument with long or artificial nails. Students will lose points for not maintaining short nails.

### Performance dress

- ☐ Solid Black pants, knee length skirt or leggings
- ☐ White top: dress shirt or blouse - short or long sleeves.
- ☐ Polo shirts are permitted in the spring.
- ☐ No tank tops, crop tops or t-shirts
- ☐ Boys will wear ties unless you are wearing a polo shirt
- ☐ Shoes should be dark/black. Black socks or stockings. No excessively high heels

### Skills Learned and Demonstrated In Instrumental Music

1. proper care of the instrument and simple maintenance including cleaning and oiling (where appropriate)
2. perform with proper posture
3. perform with correct playing position including arms, hands, feet and fingers
4. perform with an acceptable tone production including breath control, embouchure, articulation, bowing and breathing
5. demonstrate a knowledge of the basic fingerings required to play the material used
6. play and/or sing simple melodies
7. use good stick-hand position and demonstrate knowledge of proper sticking patterns (when studying percussion)
8. read basic rhythmic notation using whole notes, half notes, quarter notes and eighth notes and corresponding rests
9. perform simple rhythmic combinations listed above
10. read basic musical symbols
11. read and perform appropriate music in 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures

## Chorus

*He who sings prays twice. – St. Augustine.*

Chorus is for students in grades 6-8.

The goals for chorus are

1. To promote, provide, and encourage interest and participation in choral music.
2. To develop the individual voice and an understanding of its relation to the choral ensemble.
3. To foster confidence through creative self-expression.
4. To increase and develop musical skills and knowledge.
5. To develop an appreciation for aesthetic beauty through the arts.
6. To instill the value of effort, sacrifice, cooperation, fellowship, self-discipline and dedication.
7. To instill a sense of pride in the school, the choir program, and in the individual student.
8. To praise God through music

In the Spring there will be a musical production chosen by the music teacher. Once the production is announced students will be able to prepare for auditions for leading roles. Any student who does not audition for a leading role will automatically be a part of the chorus/background singer. Because musicals are a large time commitment, music classes during the winter months (January through March) will be used to prepare the chorus parts and teach choreography.

All students will be required to perform in the Spring production. It will be a considerable portion of the grade for the final 2 marking periods. A theater based curriculum has been developed so that students will learn vocabulary and proper theater techniques. Students will receive a rubric outlining the criteria that they will be graded on, which counts as two test grades – one for stage performance and one for audience etiquette.



## Absences

Attending school music performances is incredibly valuable for our students' artistic development and for fostering a strong sense of community within our school. These performances are the culmination of many hours of hard work and dedication, offering students an invaluable opportunity to showcase their talents and grow as musicians. We encourage all parents and students to prioritize attending these events to celebrate the achievements of their peers and support our vibrant music program. Therefore, if a student misses a performance due to an unavoidable family-related conflict, they will be given an alternative assignment to ensure their learning and contributions are still recognized.

There are times when absences may occur. Remember, good communication between teacher, student and parents can prevent misunderstandings. Absences from concerts will be excused at the directors' discretion. If a student is absent from school, they will automatically receive an excused absence from the concert and will complete an alternative assignment. Other acceptable absences include a medical emergency or illness, a death in the family, or a family emergency. Missing a concert for a sport that is not related to Seton school should be avoided.

In conclusion; music plays a pivotal role in shaping a well-rounded student, fostering creativity, discipline, and emotional expression. In the nurturing environment of Seton Catholic school, these values are not only encouraged but celebrated through various musical opportunities. From choir to band, from classroom to string ensemble, students will be encouraged to explore their talents, collaborate with peers, and develop a deep appreciation for the arts. Such experiences not only enrich their academic journey but also cultivate a sense of community and spiritual fulfillment, fostering individuals who are not only academically strong but also emotionally and creatively fulfilled. As music continues to resonate in their lives, these students are poised to contribute positively to society, embodying the values of compassion, dedication, and excellence instilled by their Catholic education.

**Performance/Concert Dates 2026-27 school year**

**Tuesday December 1** - Chorus Performance

**Thursday December 17, 2025** The Annual Christmas Concert For Grades Pre-K through 4

**December 23** - Seton's Got Talent (morning performance only)

**January 18-** Chorus performance at Annual MLK celebration

**Thursday May 6** - Spring Concert for Grades 5-8: Instrumental and Chorus.

**TBA** Modern Band Recital



### **Signature Page**

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and understand the policies and procedures outlined in the Seton Catholic School Music Department Handbook.

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First And Last Name Of Student (Printed)

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Student Signature

Date

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Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Date