

The following is a detailed explanation of the “SWITCHERS” Program

Purpose of Switchers

The primary objective of the program is to assist in creating and fostering better balanced instrumentation within the present Har-Bur ensembles. A performing group much like an athletic team needs an equitable distribution of players for the team to be successful. A band with 30 flutes and/or alto saxophones and 1 tuba player is comparable to a soccer team having 20 goalies and 0 offensive nor defensive position players. The following are some of the most frequently asked questions concerning the program:

What is Switchers?

- A program that assists students in learning specific, selected instruments such as **oboe, bassoon, bass clarinet, tenor and baritone saxophone, French horn, trombone, baritone horn/euphonium and tuba** for the sole purpose of improving ensemble instrumentation.

What Switchers is **NOT**:

- The program is not intended to assist students in changing from one plentiful instrument type to another. For example: Flute to alto saxophone, clarinet to percussion, trumpet to alto saxophone and **all changes like these** will not be covered in the program. Should a student wish to make such a switch it is the responsibility of the parents to seek outside, private instruction for their son/daughter. In the band the student will perform on his/her primary instrument until the private teacher feels that a proficient level of performance has been reached on the new instrument. At that time the director will audition and determine whether the student can “hold their own” within the ensemble setting. If that is not the case the student will be asked to continue on his/her primary instrument until the basic requirements are met.

Who is eligible for the “Switchers” program?

- Any student, grades 6-8, that is excited and interested in working on one of the aforementioned instruments
- The only question that I ask students, to ask themselves, when considering the program is: “Do I presently practice and demonstrate reasonable effort on my present instrument?” Students do not need to be the best player in their section to be a fine candidate for the program. The key to his/her success is **EFFORT**. If his/her answer to the question above is NO then Switchers is probably not for you.

Do I need to rent/purchase a new instrument?

- The Har-Bur Music Department generally has a large cache of instruments for students to work with which means that the acquisition, by parents, of another instrument is not usually necessary. However, with the ever-increasing number of students presently playing some of these instruments (including a majority of switchers from past years) the number of possible horns, in stock, may fluctuate from year to year.
- Purchase of items such as mouthpieces, ligatures and reeds are necessary. I will pass along full, specific information of what to get, as well as, options of stores to go to within the first few meetings.

****PLEASE NOTE****

THIS SCHOOL YEAR (2018-19) HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF THOSE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT YEARS WITH REGARD TO OUR INVENTORY. WE ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED IN THE TYPE AND NUMBER OF SCHOOL-OWNED INSTRUMENTS IN STOCK. ONLY A HANDFUL OF STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO WORK ON A NEW LOW WIND OR BRASS INSTRUMENT THIS FALL. STUDENTS WILL BE SELECTED ON THE BASIS OF INTEREST AND FINAL DECISIONS WILL BE DETERMINED BASED UPON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR(S). IF A STUDENT WISHES TO PURSUE AN INSTRUMENT THAT IS NOT AVAILABLE HIS/HER PARENT WILL NEED TO RENT THE INSTRUMENT.

How is the Switchers program structured?

- The group meets one day a week (to be determined by other ensemble rehearsals) during after school late-bus hours.
- Please note that playing a new instrument competently will take time. All perspective "Switchers" must maintain their edge on their primary instrument to participate in band while attending weekly meetings.
- Introductory Phase: During the first few weeks I demonstrate available instruments and allow students to do the same. This is the time when students begin basic work on a chosen instrument. There is no obligation, by the student, to have to continue should they decide not to at this time.
- Practice Phase: (mid October – mid December) An instrument has been determined for each student and lessons/musical assignments will begin. School instruments will be assigned, to take home, during this time and students need to make a commitment to the new instrument and program.
- Proficiency Test: (late December – before the holiday break) During the prior months students will be given specific, basic requirements that will be assessed in late December. Should a student pass this assessment he/she will be admitted, into their present ensemble, on the new instrument. Should the student fail to pass the required performance measure I usually continue the program until mid-late January. If at that time a student is still struggling with the basic requirements a recommendation may be made for he/she to remain on his/her primary instrument.

Should you have further question concerning the "Switchers" Program please feel free to contact me, at school, any time. Contact information: Gregory Cramer
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