

ABOUT OUR MUSIC PROGRAMS

The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District has a rich history of excellence in the performing arts. Beginning in 1st grade, all children have the opportunity to experience music through classroom instruction and concert performances. Our music curriculum is aligned with the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts as well as our own Standards of Excellence. Our music program is recognized as one of the strongest in the area. Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake music students enjoy a high level of success in competition, college entrance, and individual musical achievement.

ELEMENTARY MUSIC PROGRAM

All students in Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake begin music instruction in grade one where they have two ½ hour general music classes each week taught by a New York State certified music educator. In grade one, children begin to study the elements contained in the New York State Learning Standards for Music: Creating, Performing and Participating in music, knowing and using materials and resources, responding to and analyzing music, understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of music. This study grows and expands as children progress through grades one, two, and three. In grade three students are introduced to the Recorder in anticipation of selecting a band or orchestra instrument in fourth grade. In the second half of the third grade year students are exposed to live demonstrations of various instruments and discussions presented by the district music faculty. Students may be sign up for instrumental study at the end of the third grade year at our annual recruitment night. (See instrumental sign up information.)

In the first part of September of 4th grade students in elementary school begin instrumental instruction in group lessons held during the school day. These lessons consist of no more than five students of like instrument. The lessons are scheduled to meet on a rotational basis so that the same period of classroom instruction is not missed each week. All beginning band students start their study in the Breeze Easy Method. Beginning strings use the Strictly Strings Method. Most instruments are rented by parents outside of school, however larger instruments such as String Bass, Baritone Horn, French Horn are available for rental through the school. (See instrumental sign up information).

Most elementary instrumental students will participate in one or two concerts their first year. Elementary band and orchestra meet at the home school one morning each week at 7:30 am. Parents drop off their students (many carpool) for rehearsal and the student will then continue with the regular school day following rehearsal. All elementary concerts are held at our district auditorium at the high school with a daytime assembly program presented at the home school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MUSIC

When students enter the Richard O'Rourke Middle School as sixth graders their musical experience continues to grow. To satisfy the New York State requirement for music in the middle school, all students in grades 6 and 7 must take one ½ unit of music. Students may elect to take chorus or general music to satisfy this requirement.

In general music the focus is the continued study of the components of music outlined in the New York State Learning Standards. Many of these concepts are learned through instruction delivered in our *Yamaha Music in Education lab*. Here, students work at small electronic keyboards learning through hands on participation the study of musical concepts. In addition to study in this lab, students engage in classroom learning where music history, musical cultures of the world, and current trends in music are discussed.

Students who elect to sing in chorus will prepare chorus literature in preparation for performance at two to three concerts each year. In chorus traditional singing concepts are taught and reinforced. These would include proper breathing, diction, posture, and pronunciation of foreign language vocabulary. There are separate choruses for each grade level (6/7/8).

Middle school students will continue with their instrumental instruction much as they did in elementary school. Lessons are during the school day on rotating bases. Schedules are designed so that students will not miss the same class repeatedly. In most cases students will miss the same class two times or less each marking period. Unlike the elementary school, there is an after school period for academic make up and activity participation.

All middle school performing groups meet during the day. 6th grade ensembles meet during “flex” period which is an assistance/study hall period. 6th grade ensembles meet two of the five flex periods allowing students ample time to see teachers the other three flex periods or activity periods three days each week. 7th and 8th grade band meet twice each week during the regular schedule. In 7th and 8th grade Orchestra is a combined class that meets twice each week in the schedule.

Middle school staffing and schedule allow for instrumental groups to be a bit more varied. In elementary school there is often just one clarinet class or percussion class due to staffing limitations. At the middle school more contact time allows students to be grouped in situations that are more suited to individual learning pace. Instruction in middle school also expands as more technical, solo, and ensemble music is introduced as student’s progress. At this age students are encouraged to prepare NYSSMA solos (see NYSSMA link) and participate in music festivals.

In addition to the music offerings scheduled during the school day, students may elect to participate in extra curricular music groups. These would include: select choir, jazz ensemble, chamber strings, and the middle school spring musical production. Tryouts for these groups are publicized via daily announcements and postings.

Students also may expand their musical involvement by participating in NYSSMA solo festival, Saratoga Warren County All County music festival, and Suburban Council music festivals. Information about these events are shared with students in rehearsals and via daily announcements and postings.

HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC

All students in New York State are required to take one credit of music or art to meet graduation requirements. The high school music program offers a variety of ways to meet this requirement. Students may continue participation in one of the many performing ensembles that are scheduled during the school day. Symphonic Band, Mixed Chorus, Concert Choir, Concert Band, and Symphony Orchestra are the five major

credit bearing ensembles. All instrumental students and chorus students take group lessons in grades 9 and 10. Like the middle school these lessons are in groups on a rotation. Due to the block schedule at the high school, students never miss a class entirely. The focus of high school lessons is technical, tonal, and musical development where students begin to achieve at the upper levels of musical difficulty. At this age serious music students are encouraged to take private lessons from one of the area specialists and /or upgrade their instrument beyond a student model. Students are also encouraged to participate in the NYSSMA solo Festival as well as other select music festivals. Both Concert Band and Symphony Orchestra attend NYSSMA major organization evaluation festivals each year where ensembles prepare music and are adjudicated and rated on their performance. (See NYSSMA link).

In addition, students may take Music in Our Lives, a continuation of middle school general music which will fulfill this state requirement.

Many students who wish to further their musical knowledge or prepare for a career in music elect to take Music Theory. This course satisfies the requirements for college credit through the University in The High school program of SUNY Albany.

In addition to credit bearing courses there are a host of extra curricular activities open to high school students such as: pep band, jazz ensemble, select chorus, and the spring musical. Students may also participate in NYSSMA Solo Festival, Area All-State, Conference All-State, Saratoga Warren All-County Festival, Suburban Council Festivals, and Empire State Youth Orchestra Ensembles. Regular trips to competitive music festivals are also part of the experience for Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake students. In recent years our groups have competed at music festivals in Toronto, Canada, Orlando Florida, Baltimore, MD., Washington D.C., Virginia Beach, VA., and London, England.