

# Percussion

**Grade Level:** 7th and 8th grade

## **Overall Course Philosophy**

In our Percussion class, we will begin (7th grade) or continue (8th grade) our training and exploration of the percussion instruments one traditionally plays in concert band, jazz band, marching band, and modern band. Over the course of the year, we will develop competency not only on snare drum, but mallet percussion, bass drum, timpani, drumset, and auxiliary percussion. In addition, students in this course will be able to use academic language to describe each of these instruments and how to play them. Students will also be able to read written notation for percussion, from treble clef and bass clef for mallet percussion and timpani, to drum notation including drumset grooves. Students who develop exceptionally strong performance skills and practice discipline will be offered opportunities to perform with the other music ensembles at Villegas Middle School, including our band and choir programs, as well as perform as a percussion ensemble with our local high school groups.

**Course Instructors:** Maxwell Berland, Band Director

maxwell.berland@alvordschools.org

Geoffrey Tucker, Professional Percussionist (and Art Teacher)

geoffrey.tucker@alvordschools.org

**Course Logistics:** Period 3 (7th and 8th grade lunch schedule), Room 30/31 (Band)  
Percussion class will meet with Mx. Berland daily. Mr. Tucker will join us on Tuesdays and Thursdays as his schedule allows.

**Course Description:** Students develop beginner/intermediate percussion skills on all instruments they may be expected to play in school band settings, through heterogenous group rehearsals in class.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

Through this course, students will:

- Identify while categorizing the percussion instruments typically used in school band settings (SLO 1)
- Interpret and perform written music notation for various percussion instruments (SLO 2)
- Prepare music for performance including, but not limited to, music for percussion ensemble, concert band, jazz band, and modern band (SLO 3)

- Deconstruct the elements of groove-based percussion (SLO 4)
- Devise methods to incorporate improvised drum fills into the standard drum grooves (SLO 5)
- Reflect on personal progress and musicianship within the course (SLO 6)
- Constructively criticize the musical progress of peers within the class (SLO 7)

## Assignments

- *“Percussion Anatomy” Portfolio* (SLO 1): As students learn to play percussion instruments in class, they will fill out worksheets describing the name, parts, and classification of each instrument, and place these worksheets in a workbook sorted by instrument category. At the end of the course, they will have a self-made reference guide for each of the instruments they have played.
- *Playing Quizzes* (SLO 2, SLO 3, SLO 5): These short, biweekly performances will assess the physical progress of students in performing on various percussion instruments. Playing quizzes will be 4-16 measures of music exemplifying the topics of instruction for those two weeks. For example, during the unit on orchestral bells, students will perform playing quizzes showing mastery of the orchestral bells. Students will be expected to perform these quizzes alone, either in class or through online recording services.
- *Clap & Counts* (SLO 2, SLO 4, SLO 5): Students will develop an in-depth understanding of musical rhythm and how to write and read it in Western classical notation by completing Clap & Count worksheets. These worksheets will direct students to write in “counts” for the rhythms that they then perform aloud using their voice and hands. Later Clap & Counts will require students to not only write in counts, but compose their own rhythms, fills, and groove patterns that they then interpret by writing in the counts.
- *Performance Reflections* (SLO 3, SLO 6, SLO 7): At various points in the course, students will be directed to write short, one-paragraph reflections on performances they hear in class, whether these performances are by the student themselves, their peers, or by class instructors. In these reflections, students will answer the following questions:
  - Was the performance effective? Why or why not?
  - If you were the teacher, what would you advise the performer to do next to improve their performance?
  - Describe a concept you have learned about in class that you heard or saw in this performance.

## Grading Structure

Percussion Anatomy Portfolio	20%
Playing Quizzes	40%
Clap & Counts	30%
Performance Reflections	10%

Overall percentage in class versus letter grades:

0-59%: F      60-69%: D\*      70-79%: C\*      80-89%: B\*      90-100%: A\*

\*Per Villegas Middle School policies, these are passing grades for this course.

## Required Course Materials

Appleby, B. (2001). *Soundstart for Band*. ApRo Music.

Appleby, B. (2001). *ApRo Intermediate Band Method*. Apro Music.

Chapple, F. (2015). *The Packet: A fundamentals-based percussion curriculum*. FECIV Publications.

## Modules

1. Module 1 - Semester 1, Weeks 1 through 4 - Introduction
  - a. Topics
    - i. Villegas Middle School procedures
    - ii. Villegas Band procedures
    - iii. "Percussion Anatomy" overview
    - iv. Basic rhythm reading: quarter notes, eighth notes, quarter rests
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Percussion Anatomy: drum pad and stand; drumsticks; snare drum; Clap & Count #1, #2
2. Module 2 - Semester 1, Weeks 5 through 10 - Basic Drumming
  - a. Topics
    - i. Proper drumstick grips
    - ii. Setting up a drum pad and stand; setting up a snare drum
    - iii. Single strokes; flams; buzzing; buzz rolls
    - iv. Rhythm reading and playing: half notes and rests, whole notes and rests, dotted half notes
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Clap & Count #3, #4
    - ii. Playing Quiz #1, #2, #3
    - iii. Performance Reflection #1

3. Module 3 - Semester 1, Weeks 11 through 15 - Basic Melodic Percussion
  - a. Topics
    - i. Types of mallets for melodic percussion
    - ii. Proper mallet grips
    - iii. Matching written music to keyboard percussion layout
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Percussion Anatomy: bell kit; xylophone; orchestral bells; vibraphone; marimba; yarn, rubber, and brass mallets
    - ii. Clap & Count #1a, #2a, #3a, #4a
      1. These C&Cs now include melodic notation in treble clef
    - iii. Playing Quiz #2, #3
    - iv. Performance Reflection #2
4. Module 4 - Semester 1, Weeks 16 through 18 - Review and Ensemble Playing
  - a. Topics
    - i. Review skills from Modules 1-3
    - ii. Performing in heterogeneous groups (mallet percussion, snare drums, drum pads)
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Playing Quiz #4
    - ii. Performance Reflection #3
5. Module 5 - Semester 2, Weeks 1 through 5 - Introduction to Auxiliary Percussion
  - a. Topics
    - i. Review of Semester 1 topics and skills
    - ii. Auxiliary percussion (list below in Percussion Anatomy)
    - iii. Written percussion notation for auxiliary percussion
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Percussion Anatomy: cymbals (suspended, crash); tambourine; cowbell and agogo; woodblock and temple blocks; bass drum; timpani; triangle
    - ii. Clap & Count #5, #6
    - iii. Playing Quiz #5, #6
    - iv. Performance Reflection #1
6. Module 6 - Semester 2, Weeks 6 through 11 - Advanced Drumming
  - a. Topics
    - i. Rhythm reading and playing: dotted quarter notes; single eighth notes; eighth rests; sixteenth notes
    - ii. Double strokes; paradiddles; single stroke and double stroke rolls
    - iii. Special techniques using parts of the drum (i.e. rimshots)
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Percussion Anatomy: snare drum (zoomed in detail)

- ii. Clap & Count #7, #8, #9
  - iii. Playing Quiz #7, #8, #9
  - iv. Performance Reflection #2
7. Module 7 - Semester 2, Weeks 12 through 15 - Basic Drumset Grooves
- a. Topics
    - i. Rhythm reading and playing: reading multiple lines at once (reading a drumset groove in traditional Western notation)
    - ii. Setting up and sitting at a drumset
    - iii. Performing basic rock, jazz, and modern grooves
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Percussion Anatomy: drumset (multipage assignment)
    - ii. Clap & Count #10
    - iii. Playing Quiz #10, #11
    - iv. Performance Reflection #3
8. Module 8 - Semester 2, Weeks 16 through 19 - Review and Ensemble Playing
- a. Topics
    - i. Review skills from Modules 1-7
    - ii. Performing in heterogeneous groups (all percussion)
    - iii. Percussion opportunities at Villegas Middle School and beyond (high school ensembles, youth ensembles, etc)
  - b. Assignments
    - i. Percussion Anatomy: synthesis and notebook completion
    - ii. Playing Quiz #12
    - iii. Performance Reflection #4

## **Policies**

*Equipment Use.* Students will be using real percussion instruments and equipment that can be delicate and easily harmed. Each student and their guardian(s) will sign a contract stating their intention to treat all school equipment with respect and to pay for any damage caused by inappropriate behavior or neglect. Students who do not treat school equipment with care and respect will not be permitted to use it and will have to obtain their own equipment for participation in the course.

*Daily Practice Expectations.* Musicianship is both a mental and physical skill; like sports and exercise, a practice regimen is vital to achieve at a high level. Students will be expected to take their “bell kit” home daily and reserve a daily practice time to reinforce concepts learned at school. It’s recommended that this practice time range from 20 to 40 minutes per day depending on class content and student interest; 20 minutes per day of practice will be sufficient for most students.

*Late, Missing, and Redone Work.* It is recommended that students turn in work on time in class to avoid falling behind. However, missed work can be turned in late for

full credit. Students who are dissatisfied with their grade on a particular assignment may also rework the assignment and turn it in, also for full credit. When an assessment is redone, the student will always be given the highest score they have earned, even if a later try does not score as well as previous attempts. However, ALL late, missing, and redone work must be submitted for grading at least one week before the end of the semester. Work submitted after this deadline may not be graded in time for official grades, and it is up to the discretion of the instructors whether it will be accepted.

*Attendance and Participation.* Students are expected to play instruments and complete work in class as directed by the instructors without exception. Students with medical concerns or other issues should bring a note from home explaining the need for excusal. If the concern is medical in nature, the note should also be provided to the school office for official records and accommodations. Students who are unable to consistently participate in the daily requirements of the class will not learn much, and might wish to consider enrolling in another course.