



2026 — 2027

The PCS Band *Handbook*

A guide for students and their families.

DIRECTOR

Mr. Paul L. Brown

CONTACT

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PROGRAM WEBSITE

sites.google.com/polandcsd.org/pcsinstrumentalmusic

'26—'27

About the *program*

I Welcome

Music for all. Music is not simply a hobby — it is a discipline that requires skill, practice, and critical thinking, and it is an integral part of the human experience.

MR. BROWN, BAND DIRECTOR

Participating in music, as performer or as listener, allows students to gain a deeper appreciation for their own culture and the cultures of others. Music education develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, and it opens doors to a lifetime of music-making — through community ensembles, choirs, orchestras, and marching bands well beyond high school and college.

I believe music should be studied by all citizens as a vital part of life. One of the best ways to support your child's full participation in their education, and in their community, is by encouraging their involvement in music.

2 Our program's purpose

Our band program cultivates **prepared, productive citizens** by fostering creativity, discipline, teamwork, and community involvement.

- **Musical empowerment.** Learning an instrument builds cognitive ability, discipline, and teamwork — qualities essential for future productivity.
- **Creative expression.** Music gives students an artistic outlet that transfers to problem-solving in every other part of life.
- **Discipline and dedication.** Mastering an instrument demands consistent effort; those habits build responsible, diligent people.
- **Collaboration and teamwork.** A band crafts music together. Those collaborative skills matter far beyond the band room.
- **Community involvement.** Our performances knit the program into the life of the school and district.



CLARINET SECTION — BEGINNING BAND

3 The path through the program

Students move through a sequenced program built around measurable playing skills, not just grade level.

STAGE	GRADE	TO ADVANCE, A STUDENT MUST...
Recorder Training	Grade 3 (last 10 wk)	Pass the band entrance playing exam on recorder
Beginning Band	Grade 4	Complete lesson 5 in <i>Breeze Easy Book 1</i> — rehearsals begin end of January
Cadet Band	Grades 5–6	Complete lesson 14 in <i>Breeze Easy Book 1</i>
Jr. Band	Grades 7–8	Complete <i>Breeze Easy Book 1</i>
Sr. Band	Grades 9–12	Complete <i>Breeze Easy Book 2</i>

Prerequisites are demonstrations of ability, not calendar milestones. When a student passes the required lesson, they've shown they can perform at the level of the next ensemble.

STARTING BEGINNING BAND — APPLIED-LESSON NEXT STEPS

<i>1</i> <i>Schedule</i> Students are placed in small groups to create a rotating schedule and attend their first and following lessons.	<i>2</i> <i>Trial</i> At the first lesson, students try all of the wind instruments and rank their top three choices, first through third.	<i>3</i> <i>Selection</i> Once Mr. Brown approves the selection, students obtain an instrument by renting, buying, borrowing, or requesting one from the school (limited supply).	<i>4</i> <i>Finalize</i> Groups are reconfigured by instrument — flutes with flutes, clarinets with clarinets, and so on — and the schedule locks in for the year.
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4 How the week works — lessons + rehearsals

Our program follows a **lesson-and-rehearsal** model, similar to a lecture-and-lab pairing in academic classes.

- **Applied lessons** are the "lecture" — small-group instruction on your instrument, where technique, tone, reading, and repertoire skills are taught.
- **Rehearsals** are the "lab" — the ensemble applies those skills together, and mistakes become opportunities to grow.

Lessons are pulled from the school day on a rotating schedule so they touch different academic periods across the cycle. Schedules are posted in classrooms, in the cafeteria, and online at the program website.

Instrument-specific pedagogy. Every instrument carries its own technical demands — clarinet embouchure and breath, trumpet lip flexibility and articulation, and so on. Lessons are shaped to those distinctions, so each student gets guidance tailored to the instrument they play.

HOW TO READ THE LESSON SCHEDULE

1 Find your group Locate your name in one of the numbered groups on the posted lesson schedule.	2 Find the date Read across the top row and find the next closest lesson date.	3 Read down Look down that date's column until you find your group number.	4 Read left Look left along that row to see the lesson time. That is when to leave class.
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5 Lesson attendance & makeup procedures

• ATTENDING A SCHEDULED LESSON

- If a lesson falls between classes, bring the materials you'll need for the next class.
- Let your classroom teacher know you have a lesson.
- Hand in the previous day's homework and get the next day's assignment.
- **Students will not be excused from a scheduled test, lab, or resource** for a lesson. Students are responsible for any work missed as a result of a lesson.

• MISSED A LESSON? SCHEDULE A MAKEUP.

Lessons should not be missed. If one is, the student must schedule a makeup with Mr. Brown **before the end of the week** by obtaining a signed pass for a specific time and date. Present the pass to the classroom teacher whose class the student is leaving — if the timing works, the teacher signs the pass and the student attends. If not, negotiate another time and get a reissued pass.

IF YOU HAVE A SCHEDULED LESSON

<i>Attend</i>	<i>Miss it</i>
Bring materials for your next class, let the classroom teacher know, and attend the lesson at the scheduled time.	See Mr. Brown before the end of the week, negotiate a makeup time, and receive a signed Makeup Pass with the new date and time.

ONCE YOU HAVE A MAKEUP PASS

<i>Teacher signs</i>	<i>Teacher declines</i>
Present the pass to the classroom teacher whose class you are leaving. If the timing works, they sign it — attend the makeup.	If the timing does not work, return to Mr. Brown to negotiate another time and get a reissued pass.

6 Independent Study Band

Students whose schedules do not allow a regular band period can participate through **Independent Study Band**. It is a full-year commitment with the same performance obligations as the regular ensembles.

- **Rehearsal time is strictly adhered to.** Once the meeting time is set, students are expected to be there.
- **Lessons still apply.** Students attend their scheduled applied lessons and make up any that are missed, following the regular lesson-attendance procedures (§5).
- **Required performances:** Winter Concert, Spring Concert, and Graduation. Additional performances may be added by request.

Paperwork. Independent Study Band is set up through the Guidance Office using the district's *Alternative Scheduling Agreement*. The form requires student, parent, teacher, guidance, and principal signatures; the original is filed in Guidance, with a copy to the student and to Mr. Brown.

• MID-YEAR ENROLLMENT & TRANSFERS

Students who join PCS mid-year and want to play in band follow a short vetting process so the ensemble stays cohesive.

- **Referral.** The Guidance Office notifies Mr. Brown that the student is interested in band or has played an instrument before.
- **Meeting.** Mr. Brown meets with the student to determine placement and next steps.
- **Placement is by ability, not by grade.**
 - **Transfer with a band-teacher recommendation** from the previous school: the student is placed directly into an ensemble and the rotating lesson schedule.
 - **Willing but new to an instrument:** the student joins a rotating lesson group and is taught fundamentals from the beginning level.
 - **Some ability, not yet rehearsal-ready:** the student stays in lessons (with peers or in remediation) until Mr. Brown determines the student is prepared, or until the ensemble music is modified enough for the student to perform.

7 Expectations — attitude, behavior, effort

- **ATTITUDE**

1. Be courteous and respectful of others and the property of others.
2. Take pride in your performance and your actions.
3. Listen — both during instructions and while you play.
4. Recognize your own accomplishments and the accomplishments of others.

- **BEHAVIOR**

1. Follow the requests of adults.
2. Avoid disruptive or disorderly talking and actions.
3. Use school property properly.
4. Avoid threatening or intimidating language, gestures, or actions.

- **EFFORT**

1. Try your best to use your talent to the best of your ability.
2. Attend all lessons, rehearsals, and performances — or be prepared to make them up.
3. Be prepared by practicing at home and being on time.

- **WHEN YOU ENTER THE LESSON OR REHEARSAL SPACE**

1. Pick up your instrument and music.
2. Take your seat.
3. Start to practice.

- **CONSEQUENCES**

1. A verbal warning.
2. A written referral and a conference with the teacher.
3. Removal from the room.

8 Materials, folders & instruments

Materials. Students are responsible for bringing their instrument and music to every lesson and rehearsal. If a student doesn't have their instrument or music, they should still attend and let Mr. Brown know so a school instrument and music can be provided.

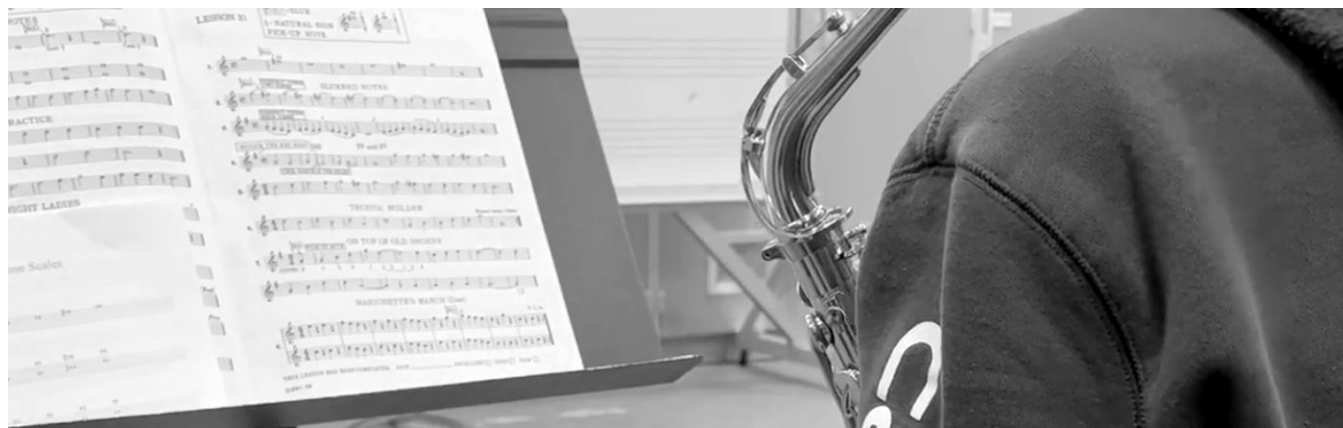
Assigned band folders. Each band student receives a folder. Students are responsible for the folder and everything in it — bring it to all lessons, rehearsals, and concerts. After each concert, music should be returned in good condition. Damage becomes the student's responsibility.

• BORROWING A SCHOOL INSTRUMENT

School-owned instruments are limited but available on request. Families who borrow accept responsibility for:

1. No damage beyond normal wear from normal use.
2. Notifying the band teacher as soon as any problem arises.
3. Repair or replacement costs if the instrument is damaged in the student's care.
4. Proper usage and care for the entire loan period.
5. Reapplying with a letter of request before entering Jr. Band if the student wishes to continue borrowing.

The borrowing form is available on the program site under **Forms & Documents**.



Getting an *instrument*

9 Getting started with an instrument

For Beginning Band families.

Beginning band starts with securing an instrument. There are three acceptable ways: **rent, purchase, or borrow from the school.**

• **OPTION A — RENT OR PURCHASE THROUGH BIG APPLE MUSIC**

Big Apple Music is our partner and delivers instruments directly to PCS during the first week of school. Lessons begin as soon as the instrument arrives.

• **OPTION B — PURCHASE ELSEWHERE (APPROVED BRANDS ONLY)**

Send the instrument to school with your child. Their teacher will let Mr. Brown know it has arrived; lessons begin after the first assembly lesson.

• **APPROVED BRANDS FOR BEGINNERS**

INSTRUMENT	ACCEPTABLE BRANDS
Flute	Yamaha, Armstrong, Gemeinhardt
Clarinet	Yamaha, Leblanc, Selmer
Saxophone	Yamaha, Bundy, Yanagisawa, Selmer, C.G. Conn
Trumpet & Trombone	Yamaha, Vincent Bach, King, C.G. Conn

Other brands may work, but the ones above are proven to serve beginners well. If you're considering something else — including a private-sale or online find — **ask before purchasing.** I'm happy to play it, or you can bring it to a qualified music store for a professional opinion.

Please do not let students assemble or play their new instrument until they receive proper instruction at school. Improper first assembly is the fastest way to cause damage.

10 Performances & concert expectations

Performances are the visible outcome of what we do every week. **Attendance at concerts is required.**

- **EXCUSED ABSENCES**

- Illness with a doctor's note
- Family emergency
- Other requests must be submitted **in writing by a parent or guardian three weeks prior** to the performance, and are subject to director approval.

Missed a concert? Students will complete an alternate performance and a music-theory assignment.

Recording. Rehearsals, lessons, and concerts are recorded for analysis and student feedback.

Extra performances outside the school day (community events, invitations, etc.) require at least **one month's notice** from the requesting organization, and participation is determined by an ensemble poll.

Concert timing. Call time **5:55 PM** · Downbeat **6:30 PM**.



BETWEEN SETS — A PERFORMANCE DAY

// This year's performance calendar

2026 — 2027. Items marked (TBC) are still being confirmed on the district calendar.

MONTH	EVENT	DETAILS
NOVEMBER	All-County 1	Nov 6 & 7, 2026 · Little Falls
	Veterans Assembly (TBC)	Tue, Nov 10 · Early Release Day · Band, Elementary performers, 7–12 Chorus National Anthem
DECEMBER	Dress Rehearsal / Mini Concert for PK–5 (TBC)	Tue, Dec 15
	Winter Concert 1	Tue, Dec 15, 2026 · 6:30 PM · 4–6 Chorus, 5/6 Cadet Band
	Winter Concert 2	Thu, Dec 17, 2026 · 6:30 PM · Jr./Sr. Chorus, Jr. Band, Sr. Band
	Snow dates	Wed, Dec 16 and/or Mon, Dec 21
MARCH	All-County 2	Mar 19 & 20, 2027 · Mount Markham
APRIL	NYSSMA Solo · Levels 1–4	Apr 30 & May 1, 2027 · Jarvis Middle School
MAY	NYSSMA Solo · Levels 5–6	May 7 & 8, 2027 · VVS
	Dress Rehearsal / Mini Concert for PK–5 (TBC)	Thu, May 13
	Spring Concert 1	Thu, May 13, 2027 · Jr./Sr. Chorus, Jr. Band, Sr. Band · recognizes Seniors and All-County / Solo Festival participants
	Spring Concert 2	Tue, May 18, 2027 · 4 Band, 4–6 Chorus, 5/6 Cadet Band · with Budget Vote & Art Show
	Reception in cafeteria after both spring concerts	Provided by FAF
JUNE	8th-Grade Moving-Up Ceremony	Band + 8th-grade vocalist(s) for National Anthem
	Graduation	Band + senior vocalist(s) or instrumentalist(s) for National Anthem

12 Concert dress

MUSICIAN	DRESS
Men	Long-sleeved white shirt, black pants, tie, black socks, black shoes
Women	White blouse or sweater; black skirt (no minis) or black pants; black socks or neutral / natural stockings; black shoes

13 NYSSMA Solo Festival

The New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Solo Festival is an **optional individual performance** where students play a graded solo for a certified adjudicator and receive written feedback.

- **WHEN AND WHERE — 2026–27**

- **Levels 1–4:** April 30 & May 1, 2027 · Jarvis Middle School
- **Levels 5–6:** May 7 & 8, 2027 · VVS

- **THE DAY OF**

- **Arrival:** at least 30 minutes prior to the performance time.
- **Dress:** dress nicely — dress shirts, shoes, and pants, or dresses.
- **Transportation:** parent or guardian drop-off and pick-up.
- **Duration:** each performance is approximately 10–15 minutes.

Parents/guardians are not permitted in the room during the performance, but are welcome to wait in the hall with their child beforehand.

Solo repertoire is chosen with Mr. Brown and matched to the student's grade level and NYSSMA level (1–6). Listening examples are posted on the program site under **NYSSMA SOLO**.

14 All-County Music Festival



Students may be selected by the **Herkimer County Music Educators Association (HCMEA)** to participate in the All-County Music Festival.

- **2026–27 FESTIVALS**

- **All-County 1:** November 6 & 7, 2026 · Little Falls
- **All-County 2:** March 19 & 20, 2027 · Mount Markham

Because guest conductors have limited rehearsal hours, students **must attend every scheduled rehearsal in its entirety**. A student who misses any rehearsal will be asked not to return for the remaining rehearsals or the concert.

Weather. If the Friday portion is canceled, a one-day (Saturday) festival will be held. If Friday goes as planned but Saturday is canceled, the festival will finish Sunday (students arrive at 1:00 PM for a 4:00 PM concert). Weather updates are announced on **WIBX 950 AM** and **WKTV / News Channel 2**.

Permission slip must be signed and returned no less than **two weeks before** the festival. Contact Mr. Brown as soon as possible if your child cannot attend.

15 Band Awards

At the end of each school year, students in Sr. Band, Jr. Band, and Cadet Band are considered for **Band Awards** recognizing sustained musicianship, reliability, and contribution over the year.

Ceremony: June 11 · MS 5:15 PM · HS 7:00 PM · **Nominations due:** May 15

- **FOUR CRITERIA ARE CONSIDERED FOR EACH STUDENT**
 - **NYSSMA attendance** — did the student participate in the Solo Festival?
 - **All-County attendance** — did the student attend the All-County festival if selected?
 - **Lesson attendance** — how consistently did the student attend applied lessons?
 - **Rehearsal contributions** — how consistently and positively did the student contribute in rehearsal?
- **THREE TIERS OF RECOGNITION, PER BAND**

<i>Medal</i>	Academic Excellence Award — one per band. Awarded to the top scorer. NYSSMA and All-County attendance are required to be eligible.
<i>Cert. I</i>	Outstanding Academic Achievement — awarded for strength across most criteria.
<i>Cert. II</i>	Prepared, Productive & Proud — awarded for reliability and a great attitude across the year.

Rules: All three recipients within a band must be different students; a maximum of two certificates may be awarded per period.

16 Graduation Band

Sr. Band members perform at the graduation ceremony each June.

WHEN	TIMELINE
Rehearsal	11:00–11:30 · Pizza & ice cream in the Band Room
Thursday · 11:00 AM–12:00 PM	11:30–11:45 · Band rehearses in the Band Room 11:45–12:00 · Rehearse with the graduating class
Ceremony	5:00–5:30 · Pizza & ice cream in the Band Room
Friday · 5:00 PM call time	5:30–5:45 · Band rehearses in the Band Room 5:45 · Band in place 6:00 · Graduation ceremony begins

Transportation. Parents/guardians should provide transportation to and from both events.

Dress. Dress nicely — dress shirts, shoes, and pants are acceptable; dresses for young women are acceptable. School dress code still applies.



NATIONAL ANTHEM — UTICA COMETS GAME

17 Communication & how to reach me

I use several channels so nothing gets missed:

- **Email** — pbrown@polandcsd.org
- **ParentSquare** — the district's parent-communication platform
- **The PCS Band website** — schedules, forms, listening examples, and performance timelines
- **Morning announcements** — for time-sensitive reminders
- **Posted schedules** — in classrooms, the cafeteria, and the band room
- **Handouts** — for beginners and event-specific notices

The band website is the single best place to find lesson schedules, the performance timeline for the year, forms, and audio/video help for the music we're rehearsing.

Quick reference

Tear this page out and stick it on the fridge.

DIRECTOR

Mr. Paul L. Brown

DISTRICT PHONE

315-826-0396

CONCERT TIMING

Call 5:55 PM · Downbeat 6:30 PM

MAKEUP LESSONS

Signed pass before end of week

ALL-COUNTY PERMISSION SLIP

Return two weeks prior

EMAIL

pbrown@polandcsd.org

PROGRAM WEBSITE

sites.google.com/polandcsd.org/pcsinstrumentalmusic

CONCERT DRESS

Black & white — see §12

CONCERT ABSENCE REQUEST

In writing, three weeks prior

BAND AWARDS

Nominations May 15 · Ceremony June 11