



Step-Up Instrument

Dear Band Parent,

There's something very important we should talk about. Step-up instruments (advanced/professional) can help your child take their music performance to the next level. Beginner instruments are just that - they help your child begin. However, like your child has probably outgrown their first bicycle, they have now outgrown their beginning band instrument.

How will you be able to tell your child is ready?

You might not be able to tell. You may need to rely on your child and their director to help you make this decision. If your child is practicing consistently, committed to Band, and seeing a normal rate of success on their instrument, there is a good chance they will be ready as they approach their second year of playing. If your child is above-average and is very responsible and careful with their instrument, they will be ready at the end of their first year of playing.

As parents and teachers know, all children grow and develop at different levels, so check with us if you have any questions. For most students, this step-up instrument will last them through high school and possibly college. We have very strong preferences as to which brands we prefer due to quality and longevity. We can certainly guide you to the perfect brand and model for your child.

What is different about a step-up instrument?

- **Improved Tone** - Think of tone as the engine of a car. Step-up instruments play with incredible tone and resonance unlike what is possible on a beginner instrument. This is due to the use of exceptional materials and craftsmanship.
- **Improved Response** - As your child advances through Band, the music they play will become increasingly more demanding in terms of technique and intonation. Step-up instruments allow students to improve unhindered due to their quick response, improved extreme ranges, and excellent intonation.
- **Additional Keys/Tubing** - Many woodwind instruments have additional keys that are used in intermediate and advanced music. Many brass instruments have thicker metal that is double-walled.

Going back to the bike analogy, these features are like the difference between riding a bike with training wheels and flying down the road freely. The level of speed, performance, and enjoyment of playing a step-up instrument cannot be overestimated.

What about the money I've paid?

If you bought your child's beginner instrument outright, that's just fine! Woodwind players will want a marching instrument, and beginner instruments are perfect for that. Step-up woodwind instruments should never be subjected to outdoor elements, so your child will need that instrument. If your child plays a brass instrument, you can also use theirs as a marching instrument. You can also resell your beginner instrument to a future band student and put that money toward the step-up instrument.

Additionally, music stores may let students trade-in their beginner instrument and put that credit toward a step-up one.

This is an investment.

Quality instruments hold their value well and can be resold down the road as needed. But we hope your child will be a lifelong musician and keep their instruments to play in community bands and possibly pass on to your grandchildren!

Regardless of whether your child continues to play after high school, this is an investment in your child's music education, and it is priceless. You're not just investing in the instrument, but also in...

- the experience.
- the love of music.
- memories.
- your child expressing themselves.
- your child learning discipline and work ethic.
- your child being part of a team, a band family.
- your child committing and seeing results.
- your child's success.

You are investing in your child.

Musically,

Chris Pulley & Patrick Trahan
Belton Middle School Band Directors