



Montgomery Township School District
Supervisor, Visual and Performing Arts

Adam Warshafsky
awarshafsky@mtsd.us

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Dear Music Parents,

We are very excited to welcome students back into the building next week. Back in August, I sent out a letter that communicated our anticipated safety protocols for in-person music making. There have been some updates/additions since then that are reflected in the information below.

We have all very much missed our ability to engage your students in what we call ***collaborative music making***. Collaborative music making is when students make music together live and in real time. We are eager to be back in school with your children to do this and that is why the music education profession, on a national level, is expending incredible efforts to make safety a priority while singing and playing instruments.

When we return to in-person learning, we are excited to have our students play instruments together and sing together once again. As is the case with most things during these unprecedented times, collaborative music making will not look the same. It is imperative that we follow the recommendations of the professional music education community and important scientific research specific to singing and band instruments to ensure that we are creating an environment for music making that is as safe as possible.

With woodwind instruments, brass instruments, and singing, we need to ensure that the breath required to make music does not pose an increased risk to our students and staff. We are fortunate that a massive scientific research study was conducted by some of the nation's most respected aerosol scientists at the University of Colorado and University of Maryland to examine aerosol and respiratory-droplet behaviors caused by playing woodwind and brass instruments and singing. The lead research scientists are Dr. Shelly Miller from the University of Colorado and Dr. Jelena Srebric from the University of Maryland. Both professors are highly acclaimed in the field of mechanical engineering and specialize in aerosols, air flow, and air quality. The aerosol labs they have access to are unique in their advanced capabilities to measure many different environments and factors. They measured how aerosols and respiratory droplets behave for each individual instrument and voice type as well as investigating the impact of various safety protocols.

The study has released recommendations that they believe allow for the playing of woodwind/brass instruments and singing in as safe of an environment as possible. To be extra cautious, in Montgomery, we will meet, and in some cases, exceed these recommendations. Please see APPENDIX A for the research-based protocols we will have in place.

Our scientific community is giving us a path back towards our kids making music together in school. While we will not see full size bands and choirs with 50-100 students playing/singing at once until more progress has been made on preventing and treating the virus, the research has shown us that this is not necessarily a result of the act of playing instruments and singing, but rather, just the need to avoid putting that many people together in close proximity regardless of the purpose. However, we can engage our students in playing their instruments and singing together in smaller groups. While the music won't be as loud, the benefits to our kids will be the same! We look forward to a time when we can "get the band back together" but until then, we will have a great time making music together in small groups.

Additionally, please note the following important items:

- **Music Making at Home!** - For students who are either on their virtual day or are remaining fully virtual, they will still be highly engaged in music making. Your children will need to be able to play their instruments and/or sing during their scheduled music class time. Please plan for this in your household so that students are able to appropriately participate in class.
- **Dress Appropriately** - as you'll see in Appendix A, for students who are in-person at school we will be going outside on a regular basis to make music. Please ensure your children are dressed for Fall-weather temperatures. Dress in layers for warmth outside!
- **Safety Protocols** - If students do not follow the appropriate safety protocols while in-person for music or do not have the appropriate music PPE (described in Appendix A), they will not be allowed to participate. This may have a negative impact on their grade.
- **Band PPE** - As you'll read in the appendix, woodwind and brass players will be given some special devices for their instruments and specialized face masks. These are expensive and we can only give out one of each. We recommend students store these items in their instrument case so it does not get lost. If it is lost, we can provide another but will need to charge for the replacement.

Thank you so much for your continued support of your children's music education! During these difficult times, I am so proud that Montgomery can continue to make music a regular and important part of their education. The value to their social and emotional well being is immeasurable as we give them a place to be expressive, creative, and connect with their peers and explore thinking in entirely different and important ways.

For those students joining us next week, we cannot wait to see you! For those staying home to learn virtually, we will continue to enjoy seeing you every day online and engage with you in real time.

Musically Yours,

Adam Warshafsky

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Appendix A - Safety Protocols

Band

This applies to any instrument that uses breath to make a sound (woodwind and brass instruments).

<u>Safety Protocol</u>	<u>Description</u>
Outdoors	Weather permitting, playing will take place outdoors. Students should dress in layers and must be prepared to go outdoors in typical Fall weather temperatures.
Group Size	Playing of woodwind/brass instruments indoors will be done in small groups only of about 15 students or less.
Social Distancing	Research recommends 6 feet of space. Indoors, we will have a minimum of 7 feet of space in all directions around each student when playing woodwind/brass instruments.
Time Limit	Research recommends a time limit of 30 minutes while playing indoors in the same location before either moving to another location or ceasing to play. We will follow this recommendation. After 30 minutes of playing, students will either switch locations to play in a different location or spend the remainder of class engaged in important and exciting music lessons that do not involve playing instruments.
Ventilation	All HVAC systems in our music rooms are confirmed to exchange with fresh, outside air and meet ASHRAE recommendations as well as recommendations from the research study. As such, rooms will have the air from the inside pumped out and fresh air from the outside pumped in. Additionally, we will open windows in rooms that have them when weather permits.
Bell Covers	The research shows that covering the bells of instruments with 80 denier fabric drastically reduces any spread of aerosols or respiratory droplets coming out of instruments. Denier refers to the density of the fabric. The district will be purchasing instrument specific bell covers made from at least 80 denier fabric. In addition, bell covers will have a filter inserted into them with a MERV-13 filtration rating. Each woodwind and brass student will receive their own bell cover and must have it in order to play**. Think of it as a mask for the instrument.
Masks	The state of NJ has given guidance that masks do not need to be worn in music classes. We will NOT follow this guidance. The research study recommends using masks with a hole cut out for the mouthpiece to prevent any leakage from mouth corners and nasal passages while playing. Instead, we have purchased specialized musician masks with a velcro flap. Students will open the flap to play and then immediately close it when they finish playing before any class discussion takes place. These protocols will be

	embedded into our daily routines and teachers will spend time training the students how to appropriately do this. Percussionists will have regular masks on at all times. Flautists may not be able to do this as a result of the instrument design, but will be using a specialized flute shield which fits over the head joint and functions like a face shield for the flute to capture respiratory droplets.
Instrument Sharing	There will be no sharing of wind instruments. This may cause some complications with our instrumentation, but we will do our best to utilize our school inventory when necessary to achieve this for our larger instruments such as tubas, bari-saxes, bassoons, etc.
Percussion	Percussionists will limit the sharing of any percussion mallets. When they are used, they will be disinfected before being used by another student. Students may be required to bring their own drumsticks and mallets. Percussionists will wear regular face masks at all times.

** Please note that according to the research, flutes do not produce an increased amount of aerosols, however they do produce respiratory droplets. Because of the nature of the flute, flute students will receive a special clear plastic device that fits over the head joint. Think of it as a face-shield for the flute. It will catch respiratory droplets just as a face-shield would.

Choir

<u>Safety Protocol</u>	<u>Description</u>
Outdoors	Weather permitting, singing will take place outdoors. Students should dress in layers and must be prepared to go outdoors in typical Fall weather temperatures.
Group Size	Singing indoors will be done in small groups only of about 15 students or less.
Social Distancing	Research recommends 6 feet of space. Indoors, we will have a minimum of 7 feet of space in all directions around each student.
Time Limit	Research recommends a time limit of 30 minutes while singing indoors in the same location before either moving to another location or ceasing to sing. We will follow this recommendation. After 30 minutes of singing, students will either switch locations to sing in a different location or spend the remainder of class engaged in important and exciting music lessons that do not involve singing.
Ventilation	All HVAC systems in our music rooms are confirmed to exchange with fresh, outside air vs. recycling interior air and meet ASHRAE recommendations as well as recommendations from the study. As such, rooms will constantly have the air from the inside pumped out and fresh air from the outside

	pumped in. Additionally, we will open windows in rooms that have them.
Masks	The state of NJ has given guidance that masks do not need to be worn in music classes. We will NOT follow this guidance. Students in choir will be required to have a well-fitted mask while singing. Students will be shown how to wear the mask to ensure it is well-fitted. The research study results show that singing while wearing a mask reduces any aerosol or respiratory droplet spread to similar levels of normal breathing/talking. Students will be required to have a well-fitted mask and those without will not be permitted to sing.

Orchestra

Because orchestra instruments (violin, viola, cello, bass) do not require breath to be played, there are far less safety precautions necessary. However, we will ensure that students remain a minimum of 6 feet apart and always wear masks. Additionally, we will avoid sharing instruments whenever possible. If an instrument is shared, appropriate cleaning protocols will be in place between student use and gloves may be required.