

Finding the Perfect Fit:

Beginning Band Recruitment & the Instrument Fitting Process

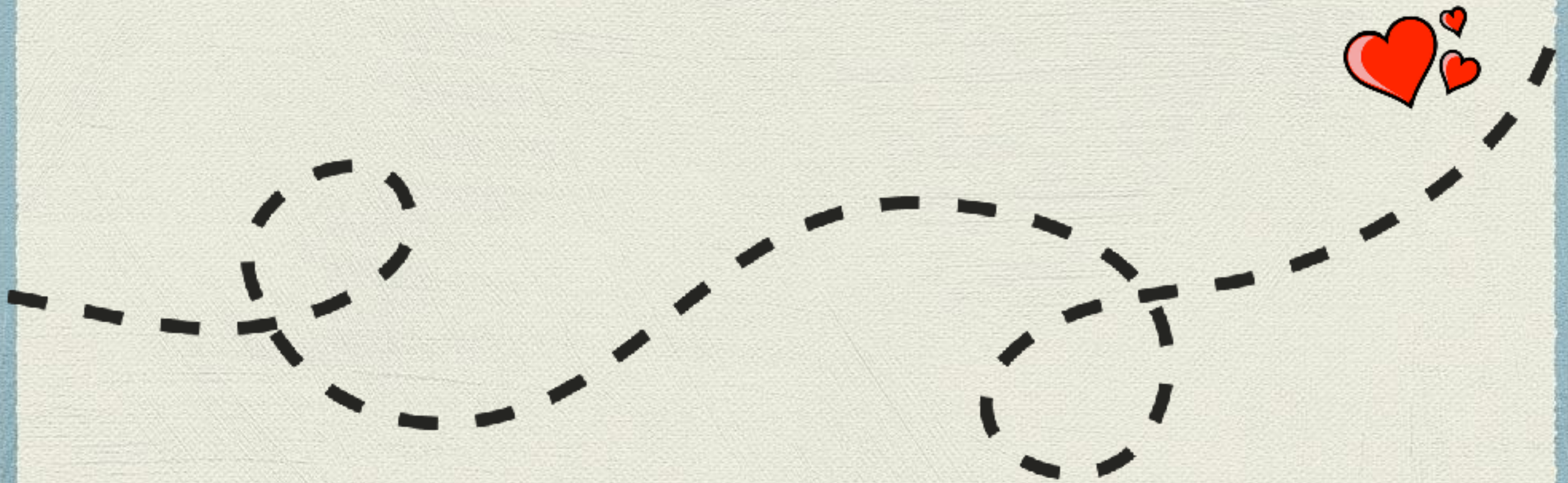
Wendy Higdon

Creekside Middle School, Carmel Indiana

The Midwest Clinic

Thursday, December 15, 2016

3:00 p.m.



How I developed a passion for
recruitment and refined my process

First thoughts. . .

Recruitment is **much more** than an *event* that happens on a specific day.

It is a *process*. . .one in which you should be engaged all year.

Part One:

Organizing and Streamlining Your Recruitment

“Organizing is what you do before you do something,
so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up.”

A. A. Milne

An organized recruitment process. . .

- Sets the stage for a successful program
- Helps to make a great first impression
- Makes your job easier
- Saves time



Great beginner groups are at the heart of any successful band program. . .

But first you have to
get kids in the door.

Steps to Success

- Build a timeline
- Determine your audience
- Develop your message
- Plan how to communicate
- Organize it all
- Partner with your local music store
- Carry out your plan (the fun part!)



Step 1: Backward-Develop Your Timeline

Sample Timeline

- Students select courses for next year Early April
- Instrument Fittings take place Late March
- Communication & Sign Up
Send Introductory Letter
Demo Concert/ Visit Classrooms
Sign-up for Fitting Appointments Early-Mid March
- Secure helpers/ volunteers Early March
- Preparation of Materials Jan. - Feb.



Remember to schedule
parent meetings and / or
instrument rental nights

During the rest of the year, engage in positive outreach within your community to **develop an image** of your program that attracts new members!

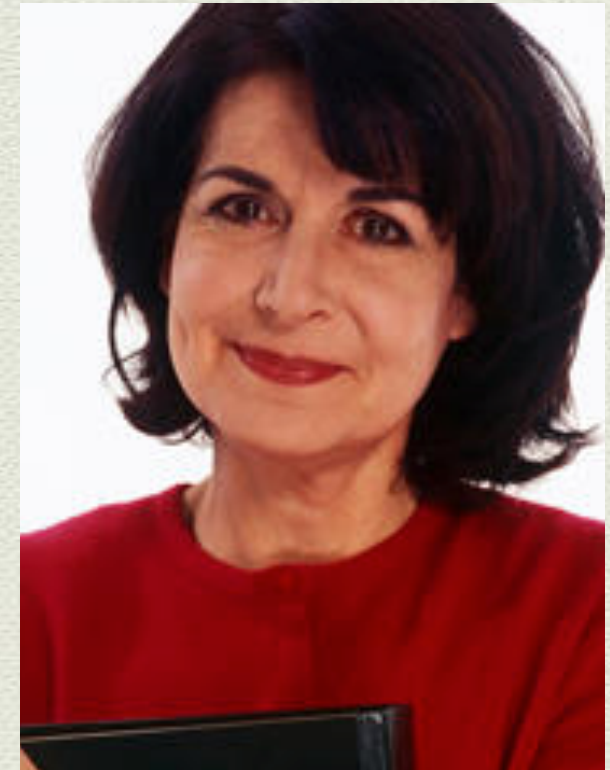
Step 2: Determine your audience



Students



Parents



Other
Stakeholders

Step 3: Develop your message

- Specifics about your program
- Important dates and events
- How enrollment works
- Benefits to joining/ advocacy materials
- Other important information

Step 4: Plan how to best communicate your message



*Know your audience- people respond to different methods of communication

Hooking Students

Demonstration Concerts

- Make the music fun, familiar and no more than a few minutes

Classroom Visits

- Opportunity to connect on a more personal level and answer questions



Hooking Students

- Videos
- Instrument Demos/Instrument Fittings
- Personal invitations
- Kid-to-kid interaction
- Giveaways with a purpose (stickers, wristbands, etc)



Engaging Parents

- ◆ Letters/ Email
- ◆ Websites
- ◆ Social Media
- ◆ Advocacy Materials
- ◆ Meetings
- ◆ Phone Calls



Don't underestimate the power
of “word of mouth” for
engaging parents

** This can be positive or negative*

Educating Stakeholders

- Face to face meetings
- Invitations to concerts/ events
- Invitations to observe your classroom
- Advocacy materials
- Data
- Research/ articles on best practice



Step 5: Organizing it All

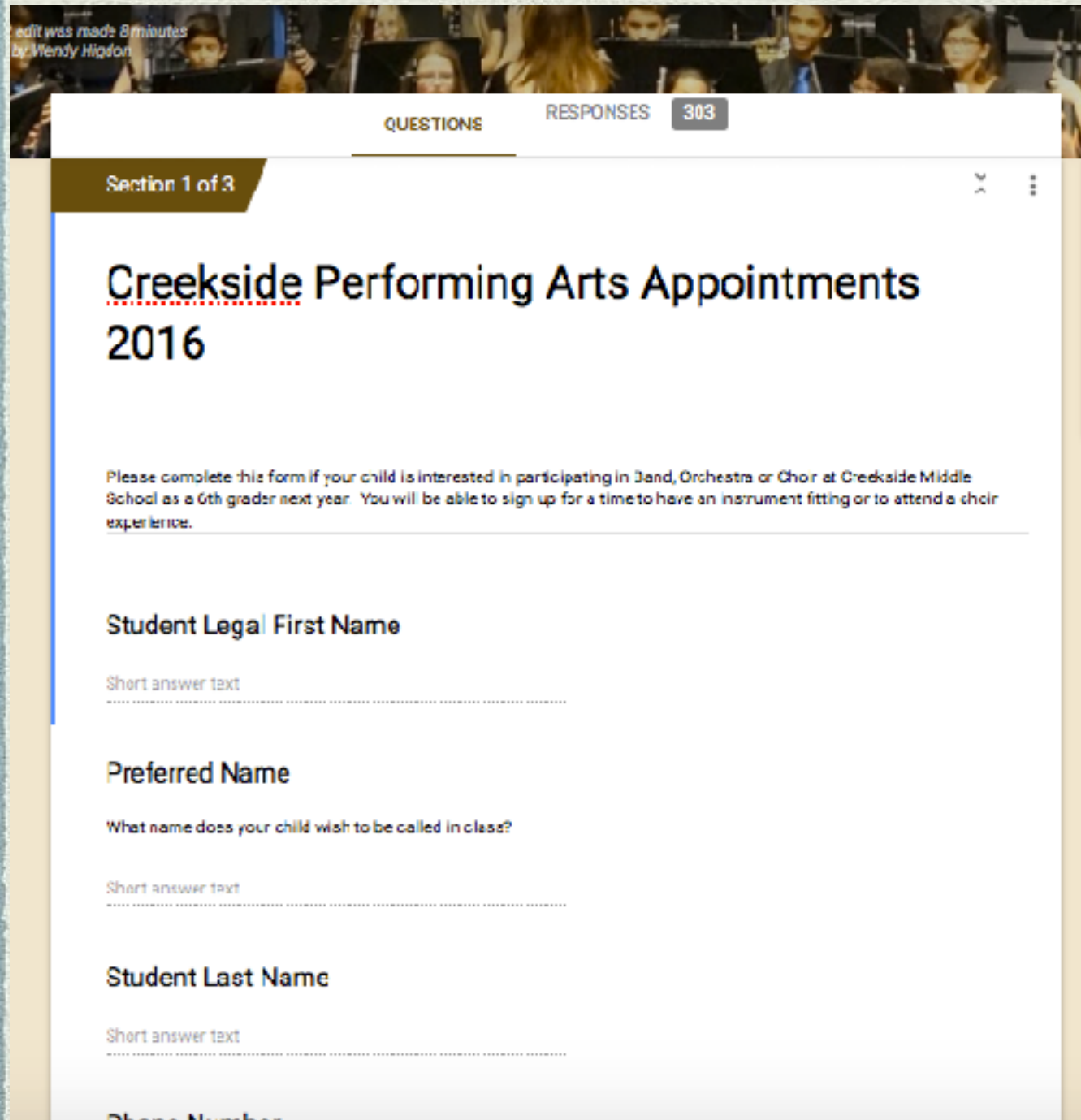
My favorite time-saving tools

Google Forms & Sheets

Mail Merge

Sign-Up Genius

Google Forms and Sheets



The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Creekside Performing Arts Appointments 2016". The form is in "Section 1 of 3" and has 303 responses. The form is titled "Creekside Performing Arts Appointments 2016" and includes a description: "Please complete this form if your child is interested in participating in Band, Orchestra or Choir at Creekside Middle School as a 6th grader next year. You will be able to sign up for a time to have an instrument fitting or to attend a choir experience." The form contains three questions: "Student Legal First Name", "Preferred Name", and "Student Last Name", all of which are short answer text questions. The "Preferred Name" question includes a sub-question: "What name does your child wish to be called in class?".

edit was made 8 minutes
by Wendy Higdon

QUESTIONS RESPONSES 303

Section 1 of 3

Creekside Performing Arts Appointments 2016

Please complete this form if your child is interested in participating in Band, Orchestra or Choir at Creekside Middle School as a 6th grader next year. You will be able to sign up for a time to have an instrument fitting or to attend a choir experience.

Student Legal First Name

Short answer text

Preferred Name

What name does your child wish to be called in class?

Short answer text

Student Last Name

Short answer text

Class Number

Set up your form to gather information online you need from prospective students.

Form can be linked, emailed or embedded in your webpage

Many types of possible question responses:

text

multiple choice

select from dropdown menu

checklist

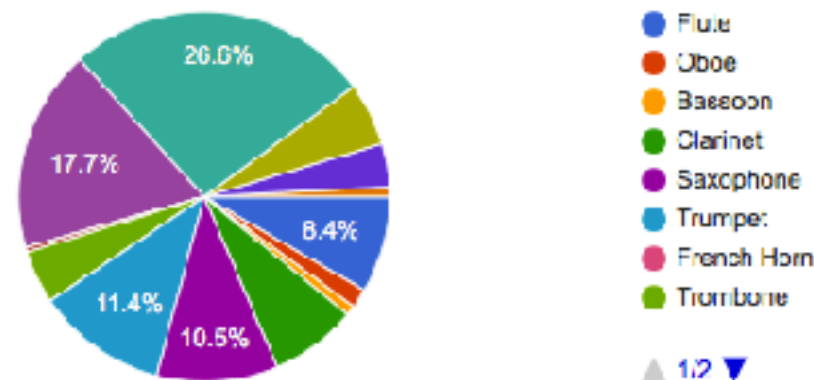
Google Forms and Sheets

2016 Creekside Performing Arts Appointments (Responses) ★								
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help All changes saved in Drive								
<div> fx Yes </div>								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Timestamp	Student Legal First Name	Preferred Name	Student Gender	Elementary School	Teacher	Are you interested in trying?	Instrument Interest
58	1/7/2016 7:49:54	Clara	Clara	Girl	Towne Meadow	Kuhn	No	
59	1/28/2016 7:35:09	Clara	Clara	Girl	Towne Meadow	Mrs Kuhn	Yes	Violin
60	1/29/2016 7:29:33	Anna	Anna	Girl	Towne Meadow	Keller	Yes	Percussion
61	1/28/2016 21:30:31	Clara	Clara	Girl	West Clay	Patno	Yes	Viola
62	1/26/2016 20:34:53	Patrick	Pat	Boy	Towne Meadow	Lyday	Yes	Trumpet
63	1/31/2016 11:04:25	Alleson	Alleson	Girl	Towne Meadow	Mr. Lyday	Yes	Flute
64	1/7/2016 7:33:43	Samuel	Sam	Boy	Towne Meadow	Kuhn	Yes	Clarinet
65	1/28/2016 14:50:41	Victoria	Victoria	Girl	Towne Meadow	Mr. Lyday	Yes	Cello
66	1/7/2016 10:15:24	Natasha	Natty	Girl	West Clay	Gilmore	Yes	Percussion
67	1/10/2016 14:30:22	Cole	Cole	Boy	College Wood	Leonard	Yes	Violin
68	1/24/2016 20:51:28	Tarunika	Tarunika	Girl	College Wood	Kristin Leonarde	Yes	Flute
69	1/6/2016 16:18:27	Ryne Goldsmith	Ryne	Boy	College Wood	Mr. Gasser	Yes	Percussion
70	1/21/2016 11:22:14	Isaac	Ike	Boy	College Wood	Walsh	No	
71	1/12/2016 20:05:07	Lyla Jane	LJ	Girl	College Wood	Leonard	Yes	Violin
72	1/31/2016 19:51:29	Ava	Ava	Girl	West Clay	Patno	Yes	Violin
73	1/8/2016 20:37:22	Avery	Avery	Girl	West Clay	Mrs. Butz	Yes	Violin
74	1/31/2016 23:40:04	arjun gupta	arjun	Boy	West Clay	King	Yes	Saxophone
75	1/15/2016 9:51:00	Blake	Blake	Boy	West Clay	Mrs. Libby Patino	Yes	Percussion
76	1/25/2016 16:18:31	Alden	Alden	Boy	West Clay	Butz	Yes	Saxophone
77	1/13/2016 19:48:14	Isabella	Izzy	Girl	Towne Meadow	McKav	Yes	Percussion

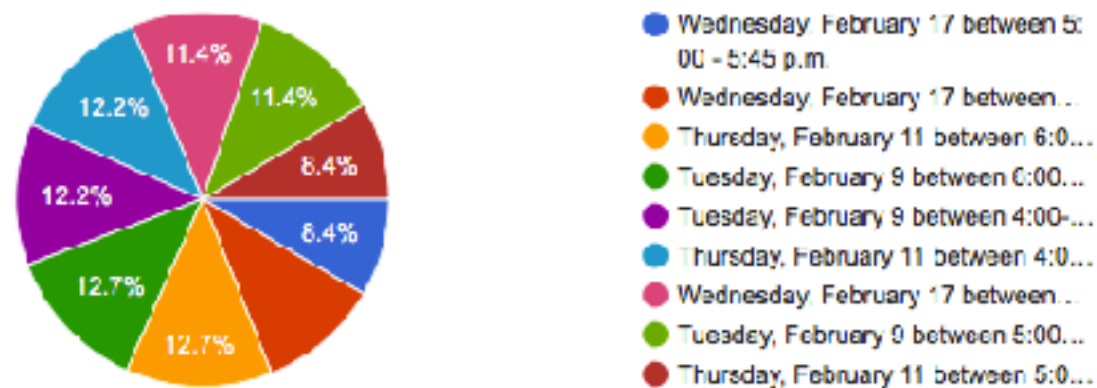
Google also lets you analyze responses!

Instrument Fitting Information

Instrument Interest (237 responses)



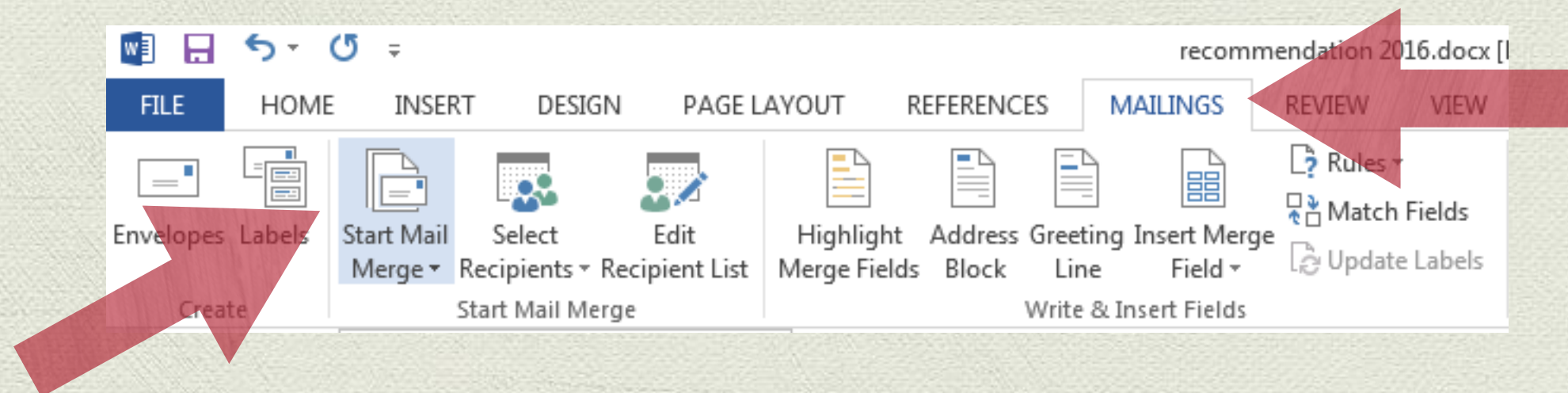
Instrument Fitting Appointment Time (237 responses)



Mail Merge



Part of Microsoft Word: Make Personalized Documents and Forms



To the parents of «First_Name» «Last_Name»:

Thank you for attending our recent Instrument Fittings! Based on the instrument fitting, we are *very pleased* to be able to recommend «First_Name» for participation in Performing Arts on «Instrument».

To the parents of **Claire Reid**:

Thank you for attending our recent Instrument Fittings! Based on the instrument fitting, we are *very pleased* to be able to recommend **Claire** for participation in Performing Arts on **French horn**.

Student Info

Collected Online via Google Forms &
Mail Merged into Document

The diagram illustrates a mail-merged document template for student information. The template is a light green rectangle. On the left side, there is a vertical logo that reads "Try=ONS". Inside the template, there is a table with the following structure:

Student Info	1. French horn 2. Flute 3. Bassoon	Claire has played Piano for 2 years
--------------	--	-------------------------------------

Other elements in the template include:

- School Code:** TM
- Student Name:** Claire Annette Reid
- Appointment Time:** 5:00 on February 10, 2016
- Email/ Phone:** Claire@email.com
317-555-1234

Labels with arrows pointing to the template elements:

- School Code points to TM
- Student Name points to Claire Annette Reid
- Appointment Time points to 5:00 on February 10, 2016
- Email/ Phone points to Claire@email.com
317-555-1234
- Notes points to Claire has played Piano for 2 years
- Instruments the Student Wants to Try points to the list of instruments (1. French horn, 2. Flute, 3. Bassoon)

Use volunteers to help with
non-musical elements of your
recruitment and easily sign them
up through Sign-up Genius

Sign-Up Genius

02/09/2016 (Tue)	Creekside Music Dept.	3:45PM - 5:30PM EDT	Student Check-In (2) Check in students as they arrive for their try-on. 1 of 2 slots filled ✓ Megan Babu Sure Sign Up
		5:15PM - 7:15PM EDT	Student Check-Out (3) Check out students. Complete exit interview about their instrument preferences Computerized Test Assist student with logging into the computer to take rhythm test. No music experience necessary.

1. Set your dates, times and details on the website.
2. Email a link to your group.
3. You are notified when someone signs up.
4. Sign-up Genius emails your volunteers a reminder a few days prior.

Ways to Involve Your Current Parents & Students

Parent Jobs

- Greeters
- Sign-in
- Check-Out
- Talk up program
- Answer basic questions

Student Jobs

- Greeters
- Guides
- Connecting with visiting kids
- Set-up/ Tear Down
- Clerical Tasks

Step 6: Partner with your Local Music Store



Your successful
recruitment is good
business for them!

How can my music retailer help?

- ◆ Provide instruments, mouthpieces, reeds and sterilizing solution for instrument fittings and demonstrations.
- ◆ Provide professional staff to assist with your instrument fittings
- ◆ Participate in parent meetings
- ◆ Help with postage expenses for recruitment mailings
- ◆ Work with you to personalize and tailor your plan. They help with many school recruitment processes each year. Value their expertise!



Once you have planned and prepared, the fun begins!

Part Two:

The Instrument Fitting Process

“Curious indeed how these things happen.
The wand chooses the wizard, remember.”

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Two ideas to consider:

- Getting kids on the right instrument jump starts their learning and puts them on a personal path toward success.
- It is the Band Director's responsibility to try to place each student on an instrument where he/ she has a strong chance of succeeding.



Success on an Instrument Can Be Influenced By:

- Musical Aptitude
- Shape and size of lips
- Formation of the teeth and jaw
- Size of hands, fingers, arms and body

What should a student be able to do at an instrument fitting?

1. Form a very basic embouchure (does not have to be perfect!) after instruction and guidance
2. Sustain a tone on the mouthpiece / small instrument for 3-5 counts after instruction and practice
3. Create sounds on the full instrument
4. Hold the instrument by themselves



Why do an instrument fitting?

Going through each of these steps allows the teacher to determine which instruments best suit each student by:

Evaluating any potential embouchure issues related to the physical characteristics of the lips, teeth and jaw

Checking for any issues with the size of hands, fingers, arms or body that might influence success

Comparing the student's embouchure and sound on a variety of instruments to determine which are a good fit.

And it helps the student know what instrument feels most comfortable and natural to play.

What Do Instrument Fitting Nights Look Like?

- Several tables with instruments, sterilizing solution, paper towels, pencils
- Chairs for parents a few feet away (they can observe everything, but are not in the way)
- Have enough testers and enough time to allow 5-10 minutes per instrument, per child (hire help or trade time with colleagues)



What Do Instrument Fitting Nights Look Like?

- Have lots of current band kids and/or parents to welcome everyone and direct traffic
- Sign In
- Try the instruments
- Sign Out/ Preferences



A Quick Look. . .



Sign-Out

PERFORMING ARTS SIGN-OUT FORM

CLAIRE ANNETTE REID

I TRIED: **FRENCH HORN** **FLUTE** **BASSOON**

OTHER INSTRUMENTS I TRIED:

WHAT I LIKED THE BEST WAS: _____ RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

WHAT I LIKED 2ND BEST WAS: _____ RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

WHAT I LIKED 3RD BEST WAS: _____ RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The directors will make every effort to place students on their first or second choice. Please note that this may not always be possible, particularly if your child's first two choices are instruments with limited enrollment such as percussion and saxophone.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU TRIED THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO PLAY?

STUDENT SIGNATURE _____ PARENT SIGNATURE _____

Wendy's Forms

- Color Coded for easy sorting!
- Pre-printed with student info via Mail Merge
- Helps you keep information organized
- Download wind and percussion forms free from my website

www.onandoffthepodium.com

Creckstone Middle School Band Try-out
 Thursday, February 11 between 5:00 - 5:45 p.m.
 1. Surname
 2. First Name
 3. Instrument
 4. Date
 5. Signature
 6. Grade
 7. Teacher
 8. Parent/Guardian
 9. Address
 10. City
 11. State
 12. Zip
 13. Phone
 14. Email
 15. Website
 16. Social Media
 17. Other
 18. Comments
 19. Focus and Attention
 20. Flute
 21. Oboe/Bassoon
 22. Clarinet
 23. Saxophone
 24. Trumpet
 25. Trombone
 26. Euphonium
 27. Tuba
 28. Percussion
 29. Drums
 30. Mallets
 31. Cymbals
 32. Gong
 33. Triangle
 34. Castanets
 35. Tambourine
 36. Maracas
 37. Shaker
 38. Rattle
 39. Bells
 40. Chimes
 41. Wind Chimes
 42. Harmonica
 43. Accordion
 44. Piano
 45. Keyboard
 46. Guitar
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A Closer Look

Low Brass Student produces buzz on the mouthpiece, then produces sound on instrument. If more than one brass instrument is tried, list aptitude on each.	Embouchure (circle): Excellent Adequate Deficient How? _____		Physical Considerations (body or lip size, braces, etc.)	
	Buzz on mouthpiece (if more than one brass instrument tested, indicate each): Strong Adequate Weak None			
	Sustain pitch # of seconds on mouthpiece 1 2 3 4 5 More		Circle all pitches played on instrument: Trb/Bar: Lower Bb F Bb Higher Tuba: Lower Bb F Bb Higher	

Making the First Sounds

Brass instruments use a natural embouchure

Woodwind embouchures must be “built”

But don't get too technical at the instrument fitting

Quick Tip - All Wind Instruments



Start with the “small instrument”

It is crucial that the teacher place the mouthpiece in the correct position.

Quick Tip - Flute



Pout with your bottom lip over your finger
and blow as if you are saying “poooh”

Quick Tip-Double Reeds



Don't be afraid to start students on oboe or bassoon.

Use a synthetic reed for instrument fittings.

Quick Tip-Clarinet



To get that characteristic clarinet embouchure shape, tell students to “pretend to put Chapstick on their bottom lip.”

Always start with the mouthpiece and barrel

Use a #2 or #2 1/2 strength reed

Quick Tip - Saxophone



Too many saxophones? Have them all try clarinet too.

I do not recommend using a hard reed as a method of “discouraging” students from playing saxophone, as you will wind up with students prone to forcing the sound. Instead look for students who can maintain a relaxed but steady air stream on a 2 or 2 1/2 reed.

Quick Tip - Saxophone



To further distinguish your potential sax “superstars,” put the neck strap & instrument on the student and see if they can add a finger at a time and play from B all the way down to low D.

Some won’t like the weight of the instrument or will find this task too difficult and will gravitate to another choice.

Quick Tip - Brass

If a student has trouble creating a sound on a trumpet or horn mouthpiece, “move up” to a larger mouthpiece.

Many students will have an easier time, and then you can go back to the smaller mouthpiece once they get a sound going.

And you might gain a low brass player in the process!



Don't Be Afraid To Guide Students



- Trumpet buzz weak - try low brass
- Great sound on trumpet/ good ear try French horn
- Too many saxophones - try clarinet
- Motivated student interested in woodwinds - try double reeds
- Natural fit for everything/seems excited about everything- sell instruments that you need

Percussion

- Educate students and parents about what being a percussionist “is” and “is not”
- Depending on your situation, you may want to cap percussion enrollment
- Develop well-rounded percussionists, not drummers




Percussion Characteristics

- Excellent sense of rhythm
- Excellent coordination
- Willing to learn and play all percussion instruments
- Organized
- Focused
- Piano background helpful

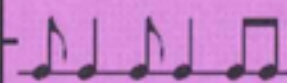
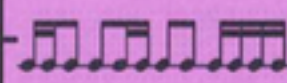



Percussion- Coordination

 <p>Tester demonstrates each exercise <i>by rote</i> before student performs.</p>	Tap quarter notes with right hand and right foot	GOOD	OK	WEAK	NOT AT ALL
	Tap quarter notes alternating R and L hands and right foot	GOOD	OK	WEAK	NOT AT ALL
	Hand taps eighth notes. Foot taps quarter notes.	GOOD	OK	WEAK	NOT AT ALL
	Student performs minimum of 4 paradiddles, alternating hands	GOOD	OK	WEAK	NOT AT ALL

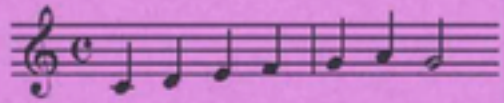
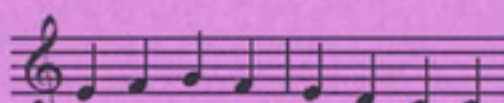
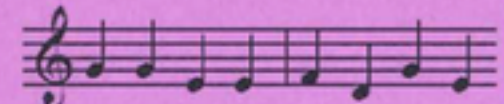
All exercises are demonstrated by teacher and then repeated by the student. Musical terminology is for teacher reference only.

Percussion- Rhythmic Discrimination

Rhythmic Discrimination Tester taps rhythm (up to 3 times), Student echoes rhythm.		Correct on 1 st attempt	Correct on 2 nd attempt	Correct on 3 rd attempt	Nearly correct	Not at all
		Correct on 1 st attempt	Correct on 2 nd attempt	Correct on 3 rd attempt	Nearly correct	Not at all
		Correct on 1 st attempt	Correct on 2 nd attempt	Correct on 3 rd attempt	Nearly correct	Not at all

All exercises are demonstrated by teacher and then repeated by the student. Notation is for teacher reference only.

Percussion- Mallets

Mal-lets Tester performs each two measure pattern. Student echoes pattern.		Correct on 1 st attempt	Correct on 2 nd attempt	Correct on 3 rd attempt	Nearly correct	Not at all
		Correct on 1 st attempt	Correct on 2 nd attempt	Correct on 3 rd attempt	Nearly correct	Not at all
		Correct on 1 st attempt	Correct on 2 nd attempt	Correct on 3 rd attempt	Nearly correct	Not at all

All exercises are demonstrated by teacher and then repeated by the student. Notation is for teacher reference only.

Rhythm Aptitude Testing



IMMA Rhythm Aptitude Test is an additional data point, used to help confirm what is seen in the instrument fitting.

It is never considered alone.

Requires a computer and headphones and takes about 15 minutes to complete

Available from GIA

After the instrument fitting...

You must take the time to find out what instruments the student prefers and feels most comfortable playing.

Student buy-in is essential if you want to retain them in your program

Recommending an Instrument

Consider (in this order)

- Child's Preferences
- The Best Fit
- Needs of the Ensemble



Get students on an instrument
that they love AND can be
successful playing, and your
band will blossom.

Where Can I Get More Ideas?

- ◆ Videos for parents, kids, teachers and administrators
- ◆ Instrument Demonstrations
- ◆ Tons of downloadable documents! (Letters, Social Media Posts, Advocacy Materials, Posters, etc.)
- ◆ It's all FREE!



bepartofthemusic.org

Where Can I Get More Ideas?

- *Teaching Music Through Performance in Middle School Band* (Chip De Stefano's chapter on Recruitment)
- NAMM Foundation Educator Resources
<https://www.nammfoundation.org/educator-resources/mac-practical-guide-recruitment-and-retention>
- Wendy's Website www.onandoffthepodium.com (blog posts and downloadable materials)
- Wendy's articles in *The Instrumentalist Magazine* (February and March 2016)
- Talk to colleagues and share your best ideas - we all have something that works!

Thanks to my sponsor!



Many thanks to Paige's Music for sponsoring my session with special appreciation to Tim Dawson, Director of School Sales, and Steve Purcell, my District Manager for the past 18 years, for their support!

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Q & A

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