



High School
Music Department
Student Handbook

2025-2026

A STATEMENT OF POLICY

To support music members and parents in understanding areas of responsibility, a statement of policy is herein set forth. Becoming familiar with this policy will enable everyone to make the most of this great opportunity to be a member of the AAHSS music program, becoming a better person and a better musician. We firmly believe that the student should improve through regular practice. The happiest student is the one who is improving through regular habits of practice and daily progress. They must not only know right from wrong but must be able to stand for principles. They must develop a high sense of purpose toward which they are willing to work. responsibility is the focus behind any level of achievement within this program. We intend to conduct ourselves in a manner that will facilitate all students in learning and bettering themselves.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MUSIC PROGRAM

- To provide a means through which students can express themselves musically, while sharpening and perfecting their talents
- To promote a sense of responsibility, citizenship, and a well-rounded character for students
- To function as positive representatives of the school
- To entertain with passion and dedication

GENERAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June:	Pre-Camp
July / Aug:	Band Camp
	School starts / Football
September:	Football/Festival season
October:	Football games
	PMEA Honors Chorus Auditions
November:	Veterans Day Parade
	PMEA Honors Band Auditions
	Musical Auditions
	PMEA Honors Chorus Festival
December:	Honors Band Festival
	Christmas Parade
	Christmas Concert
Jan/Feb./Mar:	PMEA District Band/Chorus/Orchestra/Jazz
	PMEA Region Band/Chorus/Orchestra
	School Musical
April:	PMEA All-States
	Spring Band/Choir/Jazz Concert
May:	Spring Steel Concert
	Memorial Day Performance
June:	Graduation

CURRICULUM IN BRIEF

CONCERT BAND

The Concert Band is the principal performing organization in the instrumental music department during the winter and spring. It is comprised of students with the performing ability necessary to perform a minimum of level III music.

MARCHING BAND

Membership in the marching band requires demanding physical exercise and the ability to play the intricate literature that is required in the activity. All students enrolled in the band program are required to march except for students outside of the program who are eligible to audition for the band auxiliary. The marching band performs mainly in the fall.

JAZZ BAND

Students may elect to participate in jazz band. The jazz band plays for community events and performs in the Christmas and Spring concerts. Jazz band is a yearlong class.

CHOIR

The choir is the performing organization in the vocal music department. The choir sings for community events and performs in the Christmas and Spring concerts. Choir is a yearlong class.

STEEL DRUMS

This class creates a distinctive performing ensemble that will enable students to play unique percussion instruments and at the same time learn the cultures of other countries. Students in the performing group will be asked to perform at a variety of functions, both in and out of school, during and after school. A commitment to the program as well as the talent to perform is required. Students must participate in band or choir to be considered for this group.

BAND AUXILIARY

Students who are interested in dance, choreography, and movement may choose to audition for one of our marching auxiliary units, either the Bridger Belles (dance team) or the Color Guard (flag and rifle team). Auditions for these groups are usually held in May.

PRIVATE LESSONS

As some might expect private lessons are the best way to improve performance skills. The one-on-one approach allows the student to benefit from individual attention as opposed to a teacher monitoring a class of over one hundred. Students are generally more inclined to practice conscientiously for a weekly music assignment and this discipline increases the student's enjoyment with their instrument. AAHS music staff will be more than happy to assist in the selection of a private teacher.

PMEA All-State, Region, District, Honors and Beaver County Festivals

Members of the music program are eligible to audition for PMEA festivals, as well as the Beaver County festivals. Participation in PMEA Region and State festivals requires participation in Honors/Districts and top audition scores from these festivals.

GRADING POLICY

Grading during each 9-week period will be based on attendance, class participation, and musical skills on which the students will be periodically tested. Participation points will be given for every rehearsal and performance, both during the school day and outside of it. If a student is not present 100% of the time, it is impossible to give a grade of 100%. Therefore, if a student is late to any rehearsal or performance, points will be deducted from the grade for every minute that the student is late. Additionally, if a student

is missing any part of the uniform for a performance, 5 points for every missing uniform part will be deducted from that performance's grade, and the student may be required to sit out of the performance. If a student is benched for any reason, that student's participation score will automatically be cut in half.

DUTIES OF THE ENSEMBLE MEMBER

- Be on time for all rehearsals and performances.
- Upon entering the rehearsal setting, acquire your instrument or music and go directly to your seat.
- When the director/staff member steps on the podium/asks for your attention, all talking stops.
- Come to rehearsal with a GOOD ATTITUDE.
- There is no excess playing (i.e., horsing around on the instrument).
- Make a real effort to improve daily and establish a good practice routine.
- At the end of rehearsal, put all materials in their proper place.
- Maintain a strong academic standing in all course work.
- Become and assume responsibility for your own actions. Admit when you are wrong.
- Have a proper respect for yourself and those in authority.
- Read, play, and sing music with insight – have musical expectation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDE

The greatest single factor that will decide the success of any individual or organization is attitude. The kind of person that you are is an individual choice and how we feel about something, which involves attitude, is one of the few actual independent choices that we have in life. It takes deep commitment to reach goals. Students should learn to discipline themselves to daily practice on fundamentals. The "right attitude" must be present along with sincerity, attention, and dedication as the foundation. Such an attitude makes an artistic performance inevitable and is the difference between a winning organization and a mediocre group.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINE

Because of the nature of these organizations, discipline must be strict! Students and parents must believe in the ideals, principles, and philosophy of their organization. Each member must always be aware of good behavior and think for themselves. Any misbehavior casts a bad light on the school, community, and music program. Any member who brings dishonor to the organization by their conduct in any ensemble, class, or trip, shall be subject to possible dismissal from the program or may lose a privilege within the program. This may include the chance to go on trips. This decision will be at the director's discretion.

PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of every parent and guardian to see that the policies outlined in the HANDBOOK are followed and that the form in the back is signed and returned. This states that you UNDERSTAND the policies as set within, and that any questions are to be directed to the ensemble director by making an appointment. Each parent IS responsible for the attendance of his/her child at all band/choir/steel/jazz functions. It is the responsibility of each parent to see that their child practices daily. The hands of the directors are tied without the help of parents.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

When a question arises, it is important that you get information before discussing it with others. We do

more harm to ourselves when we talk about things that contain one or more “falsehoods” but consider them facts. If questions arise, it is important to remember this axiom: If it is a performance issue or anything dealing with the ensembles proper, contact the ensemble director. If it is a fundraising question or anything dealing with parent issues, talk with the booster club president.

- Show an interest in the music study of your child.
- Arrange a regular time for your child to practice.
- Find a quiet place where he/she can practice without interruption.
- Listen to performances of practice material, when asked to do so.
- Keep the instrument in good repair and keep at least three reeds in the case; get a metronome!
- Be extra-careful with school-owned instruments. Repair costs are high!
- Teach your child to be prepared and on time to each rehearsal or lesson.
- Provide private instruction!
- Make faithful attendance at all music activities important.
- Notify the teacher if the student is to be absent for rehearsals or lessons.
- Double-check behind the student to make sure that they have their instrument or music.
- Attend booster meetings, concerts, games, and contests.
- Turn in fundraising money on time.

STUDENTS’ RESPONSIBILITY

As members of these organizations, you have a great deal of responsibility. It is critical to any program that if certain expectations are to be met that they coordinate with the privileges, rewards, and duties of the music program.

TO OURSELVES

YOU have the primary responsibility of developing your own abilities. The benefits of a good instrument and private instruction can never be underestimated. What you put into it is what you will get out of it. The director is ALWAYS available for your guidance and encouragement – just ask!

TO THE SCHOOL

The Ambridge Area School District provides us with the resources for rehearsals, performances, and equipment. The Band Booster Club also provides a support network, both financially and philosophically. WE have the responsibility to provide the best possible services to our community.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

As members of the Ambridge Area High School music program, there are no financial obligations to the school district for participation. There are, however, financial obligations to our booster organization, and without their support we could not participate in many of the fun activities that are part of the ensemble experience. A detailed description of band booster fees is detailed in the booster information that you have been given.

MARCHING BAND

CAMP

Pre-camp starts this year on June 9th. The actual “camp” weeks are the following 2 weeks: July 28-31 and Aug 4-8 and it runs from 8:30AM – 3 PM. Camp is taught by the Ambridge Area High School directors,

camp staff, and student leadership. Camp is required of all students in the band, and attendance at camp will be included in the first nine weeks' grade. Approximately "seven weeks" of normal rehearsal time is crammed into the 2 weeks, so attendance is a must. Expect to work harder than you've ever worked but remember if you do that you will feel a great sense of accomplishment at your first performance! Make sure that you are wearing closed athletic shoes for all rehearsals and remember that you will be in the sun for a good part of the time, so wear appropriate sunscreen. Parent volunteers will be in attendance to help with whatever needs may arise.

***Students are not permitted to leave the school campus AT ANY TIME unless Mr. Rodgers and/or Dr. Zupsic have received a parent's excuse prior to the situation. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in punishments consistent with the AAHS Student Code of Conduct, as well as possible band-specific punishments. This policy is not to limit your freedom, it is for your safety.**

REHEARSALS

Students are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances. If there is a situation that will prevent this, an excuse must be emailed BEFOREHAND. Additional rehearsals will be on Thursdays from 6-9PM, beginning the first Thursday of the school year, and running through the marching season. These rehearsals will also be mandatory.

UNIFORMS

The band will provide the following regarding the uniform:

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| • Hat & plume | • Coat and accessories |
| • Trousers | • Band Raincoats |

The student will provide the following:

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| Black marching shoes (available online) | • White gloves (boutique) |
| • Band bag (from the boutique) | • Band t-shirt (summer uniform, boutique) |
| • Garment bag (boutique) | • Band black crew socks (boutique) |
| • Band summer uniform (available from the boutique) | |

Uniforms will be kept at school and issued prior to each event and returned after the event. They will be cleaned by the booster club. The uniform code includes having all necessary CLEAN accessories (shoes, socks, gloves, raincoat, shoe bag, band tee shirt, and proper pants for under band uniform), the removal of all visible jewelry for ALL marching performances (band auxiliary may be permitted to wear uniform jewelry). Any hair hanging over the collar must be put up in their hat. Makeup is not allowed.

INSPECTION

Prior to all performances of the band, all band members will stand inspection. Any member that does not pass the inspection may not participate in the given performance. Band members will be checked for:

- Cleaned, pressed, complete uniforms (including accessories)
- Clean shoes
- Hair correctly worn-all hair will be up off the collar at all performances
- Jewelry – only watches and own class ring showing (auxiliary may have other uniform jewelry)

- Clean, lubricated instruments

Do not get your ears pierced during marching band season!

SUMMER UNIFORM

A summer uniform will be required for smaller performances that do not require the full uniform or concert attire (for example, at the Memorial Day performance), or for a performance in unusually hot weather. The summer uniform will consist of the band polo shirt and black shorts (purchased through the boosters).

FOOTBALL GAMES

- Call time for all games will be announced by Thursday prior to the game.
- Students should wear the full uniform. It is ALL or NOTHING.
- For home games, students will be dismissed following the proper return of uniform & instrument.
- For away games, students may ride home with another individual, but the Band director and the bus chaperone must have a note signed by parents prior to departure and the said person must contact the director at dismissal time.
- When marching to and from the stadium, the band will remain at ATTENTION.
- Only uniformed band members are allowed in the band section.
- All members are to remain in their "section."
- There will be no eating or drinking in the stands.
- Members should be paying attention. Be ready for instructions given by the drum major/director.
- If a student must leave the band section, a chaperone must accompany them, and they must have permission from the director.

BAND TRAVELING

- If a conversation can be heard in the front of the bus, it is TOO LOUD!
- There will be no hanging out of or talking out of bus windows.
- Lower the volume when entering stadiums. This is for your safety and courteous to the bus driver.
- Please keep the bus clean; pick up after yourselves and always thank the chaperones and driver!

BAND FESTIVALS

Band Festivals are special events where we get to perform for a sophisticated audience and many supportive fans. WE ARE THERE TO DO OUR BEST – NOT TO WIN!! If we do our best, then everything will take care of itself. Specific information is given prior to festivals as to directions, departure, and anticipated return time. All parents are encouraged to attend festivals and support the band.

MARCHING BAND ATTENDANCE POLICY

Marching band is unique, in that it is a co-curricular activity. Each student is enrolled in the marching band as a class, even though it often meets outside the school day. Students and parents must understand that attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory.

THE ONLY AUTHORIZED ABSENCES ARE PRE-ARRANGED* SCHOOL CONFLICTS AND THOSE THAT WOULD BE EXCUSED BY THE SCHOOL FOR REGULAR ATTENDANCE RECORDS, I.E. ILLNESS, DEATH IN THE FAMILY, RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY.

*Individual needs will be addressed as they occur. This system is subject to modification by the director.
NO SHOWS! = a grade of “0” for that performance

The above policy is cut and dry regarding what is excused. If a parent writes a note, but the reason for absence is not an authorized excuse (i.e. “other obligations”, “family plans”, etc.), the grade for that performance will be 50/100. All excuses must be submitted within one week of the student’s absence, or an automatic grade of “0” will be recorded.

For ALL absences, the following procedure must be followed by the student and parent:

- Director must be notified in advance in writing (email is preferred). Please use the following email: srodgers@ambridge.k12.pa.us or thartman@ambridge.k12.pa.us.
- For illness, a parent note or doctor’s excuse must be submitted.
- Although cleared by the school office, absences from a band activity that same day should be cleared with the director as well. Please email Mr. Rodgers.

CONFLICTS WITH MARCHING BAND

Conflicts between band and other activities or events are the responsibility of the student. Rehearsal and performance schedules are given out in advance so that arrangements can be made. When outside activities create hardships concerning band, unless it is a rare and unusual situation that may only happen once, the student will need to consult with the director. Students should have a list of calendar dates and be aware of all band dates well ahead of schedule. It is the policy of the band to assist students when conflicts occur within the scope of the band policy. Students are reminded that band is a very demanding activity and that involvement in outside activities should be limited to those that are compatible with the band schedule. Work is not an excuse for missing any band activity. If less than one month’s notice is given for any additional performances to the calendar, exceptions may be made to the above policy on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss these conflicts with the band director as soon as possible.

BAND TRIPS

Trips are a privilege, not an entitlement! To be considered for a place on the band trip, you must be prepared to earn it. The following behaviors may be cause for possible forfeiture of the trip privilege:

- failing any classes
- any band fees or paperwork that are unpaid or not submitted
- multiple tardy or uniform infractions
- school disciplinary action

IF YOU LOSE THE PRIVILEGE OF TRAVELING WITH THE BAND AND IF YOU ARE A SENIOR, ANY MONEY RAISED FOR THE TRIP WILL BE FORFEITED TO THE BOOSTER ORGANIZATION. UNDERCLASSMEN WILL HAVE THEIR ACCOUNT CREDITED FOR FUTURE USE. MONEY THAT IS FUND-RAISED WILL NOT BE RETURNED TO THE STUDENT. ANY PERSONAL MONEY GIVEN TO THE BOOSTERS WILL BE RETURNED ON THE PREMISE THAT THE TOUR COMPANY RETURNS THAT MONEY TO THE BOOSTERS. THE PERCENTAGE OF THE MONEY RETURNED BY THE TOUR GROUP DECREASES AS THE TRIP DATES GETS CLOSER. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT NO FUND-RAISED MONEY WILL BE RETURNED, AND THAT CASH PAID TOWARDS THE TRIP WILL ONLY BE RETURNED UPON DISCRETION OF TOUR COMPANY.

CONCERT BAND

AUDITIONS

In October, there may be auditions to determine chair placement. Auditions will be announced well in advance and will consist of scales, technique, a required solo, and range. The auditions will determine chair placement for the rest of the year. In some cases, a student on a brass instrument with a higher score may be put on a lower part to achieve balance or to allow a younger student to develop their range.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Concert attire for the concert will be ALL BLACK, such as black pants and a black dress shirt (no T-shirts). Any student wearing a uniform for another performing ensemble that is performing in the same concert may wear the uniform for that ensemble. Any student that does not comply with the uniform policy may be subject to a grade deduction for the concert.

CHOIR

The choral program at AAHS consists of the Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, and the Show Choir. In the past, the Chamber Choir has met 3rd period, while the Concert Choir has met 6th or 8th periods. The Concert Choir is a group for any student to join that wants to sing. There are no auditions to be in, though the director may wish to hear students sing alone to determine vocal range. The Chamber Choir is an auditioned group. The Show Choir is an auditioned group that rehearses outside of the school day.

AUDITIONS

The Chamber Choir typically auditions in February or March for the following school year, around when scheduling is being completed. Once a student has successfully auditioned for the Chamber Choir, they do not need to audition again. The auditions will be announced well in advance and may consist of scales, a required solo passage, and range to determine vocal part.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Concert attire for the concert will be ALL BLACK, such as black pants and a black dress shirt (no T-shirts). Any student wearing a uniform for another performing ensemble that is performing in the same concert may wear the uniform for that ensemble. Any student that does not comply with the uniform policy may be subject to a grade deduction for the concert.

JAZZ BAND

As an extension of the core band program, the Jazz Band will follow the same policies. This is a curricular class that meets five days a week for the entire school year. Jazz Band is a non-auditioned ensemble that is offered to all 9th – 12th grade band students. This performance-based class allows students the opportunity to gain an understanding of jazz history, style interpretation, improvisation, and technique. At the same time, this ensemble will help students develop their overall musical literacy and performance skills. This will be the basis for at least two evening performances being given to the public each year.

CONCERT / OUTREACH ASSEMBLY ATTIRE

For the evening concerts, a school-owned white button-down shirt and a vest will be provided. Students will be responsible for their own black dress pants and black dress shoes. Attire for outreach assemblies will require students who are not in the advanced steel band to wear their band polo shirt (purchased through the boosters). Any student that does not comply with the uniform policy may be subject to a grade deduction.

STEEL BAND

As an extension of the core band or choral programs, the Steel Band class will follow the same policies.

This is a curricular class that meets five days a week for the entire school year. Steel Band is a non-auditioned ensemble that is offered to all 9th – 12th grade band or choral students. Once students have successfully completed the beginning level class, they will have the opportunity to enroll in the advanced level class as per the director's recommendation. This performance-based class allows students the opportunity to gain an understanding of steel pan history, style interpretation and technique. At the same time, this ensemble will help students develop their overall musical literacy and performance skills. This will be the basis for one evening performance being given to the public each Spring along with several other performance opportunities that take place both during and after school hours.

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

The evening Spring concert attire for 9th and 10th grade students should be tropical themed. Performance attire for the advanced steel band will include the Sun and Moon T-shirt purchased through the boosters. For more formal performance settings, advanced steel band students will also need to include black pants and black shoes. Any student that does not comply with the uniform policy may be subject to a grade deduction for the concert.

ENSEMBLE CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

REHEARSAL PROCEDURE

- You must be in the music area or your seat when the bell rings; a downbeat will be given five minutes after the bell. During the five minutes you should move to your seat, obtain music, a music stand, and a pencil, and begin warming up for the day's rehearsal.
 - Talking will not be tolerated during a rehearsal.
 - The purpose of rehearsal is for you to learn the parts of others and how they relate to you.
 - Please ask before leaving your seat. Restroom breaks should be taken between classes.
 - In your individual warm-up, it is important to do each of the following daily:
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LONG TONES (Band & Jazz) • LIP SLURS (Band & Jazz) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCALES (All) • THAT DAY'S ASSIGNMENT (All) |
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SCHOLARSHIPS

There are a variety of scholarships available for both music majors and non-music majors on the collegiate level. Many universities grant partial scholarships or a one-time scholarship to students who simply agree to play in an ensemble, and some will waive out-of-state tuition. Information varies at each school. Ask your ensemble director and we will do all that we can to help in your future endeavors.

BAND/JAZZ INSTRUMENT POLICY

Each student who uses a school-owned instrument is completely responsible for the care of the instrument. If an instrument is damaged due to negligence, the student is responsible for the entire cost. An instrument check-out form must be filled out and on file with the director. ALL instruments must be properly stored when not in use (instruments in cases – closed and in a locker - locked!). Instruments and their care are expensive, and we want to make sure that we take the best care of them possible.

BAND/JAZZ INSTRUMENT STORAGE

All students will be issued an instrument locker. This space is to be used for storing instruments, music

and any other supplies needed for class. Your cubby should be locked when your band materials are in it.

USE OF THE FACILITY

BAND/CHOIR, STEEL, JAZZ ROOMS

The use of music facilities before, after, and during school is a privilege. Students who abuse the facility will be disciplined accordingly. Any abuse or damage will be considered vandalism. NO OUTSIDE STUDENTS ARE PERMITTED IN THE MUSIC ROOMS except for business with the director. There will be no horseplay, i.e. throwing of things, in or around the music rooms. All percussion and guard equipment is off limits to anyone not specifically designated to use them.

PRACTICE ROOMS

The practice rooms are to be used for practicing only. Please keep the room neat.

PRACTICE

As with any activity, you get out of it what you put into it. Your ensemble will not be “FUN” unless you practice! There are many values in the study of music as a discipline that transfer to other areas of life. Although this will not immediately happen, persistent practice will lead to enthusiastic, motivated practice. Here is a suggested plan of study

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| • Use a tuner and Metronome | • Increase range |
| • Increase dynamic range | • Take a break every 20 minutes |
| • Practice scales every day | • Work on technique |

BAND/CHOIR LETTER AND PINS

Letters are distributed at the end of the school year to all students that have successfully completed two years of high School band or choir. Silver pins are distributed after three years and gold pins after four. Letters and pins will be distributed first at the Band Banquet, and then during band class to any students that were unable to attend the banquet.

PERCUSSION ACCESSORIES

All percussionists should have their own materials, including but not limited to:

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| • A pair of marching sticks | • A stick bag |
| • A pair of general snare sticks | • Mallets (for keyboard mallet players) |

HAZING

Any form of hazing or “initiation” will not be tolerated during any music activity! All school rules regarding hazing will be strictly enforced.

MISCELLANEOUS ADDITIONAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

- Drinking and drugs are STRICTLY PROHIBITED. All school district policies apply.
- Students should not damage property or equipment.
- Locks can be provided for student instrument storage. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal property that is left unattended and/or unsecured.

2025-2026 School Year

Letter of Mutual Consent

I, the undersigned student, accept membership in the Ambridge Area High School Music Department and understand that I am responsible for all the policies as set forth in the Handbook. I fully agree to carry out my responsibilities to the very best of my ability.

(Student Signature)

(Date)

Student email address

I, the undersigned parent or guardian, have read and understand the policies as set forth in the Music Handbook. I also grant full permission for my child to be an active member of the Ambridge Area High School Music Department. In addition, my child has full permission to attend all music functions. Furthermore, I understand that I must meet all financial obligations.

(Parent Signature)

(Date)

Parent e-mail address

Parent Cell #