



Dear Future Hawk,

Hello from the River Hill Bands! My name is Mr. Blackman and I have been the proud Band Director at RHHS for the last 17 of my 35 total years teaching in Howard County. I wanted to reach out and let you know how excited I am to welcome you to River Hill. It is time to get started with registration for Band, so here is some information that you'll need.

At this point, the most important thing is to get Band on your schedule for next year. It's easy - just register for course #MU-400-1 - Concert Band (if you play a wind instrument) or #MU-480-1 - Percussion Ensemble (if you play percussion). More info (including placement audition procedures) can be found later in this packet, so please read on. Another great way to learn about the RHHS Band Program is to check out at informational video that I posted on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPcJlqcPdbw>). Some of it is slightly outdated, but it includes a typical year's schedule, along with clips of some of our most awesome performances.

Speaking of performances, I would also invite you to check out any of the concert recordings that I have posted online. Just search for "River Hill High School Band" on YouTube. If you like what you hear, please leave us a comment!

You've probably heard this before, but I agree with your other Band Directors about the importance of private instruction. There is no better investment you can make in your music education than private lessons, because spending an hour a week with a true expert on your instrument is the absolute best way to improve your playing. If you are ready to start lessons, please let me know, and I will help you find a teacher whose approach coordinates best with what you'll be doing at River Hill.

I'd like to share a statement made by one of my students who wanted to let you know how much Band means to her: "I am glad that I played in the RHHS band for all four years because it turned out to be so much more than what I expected. Not only did I improve immensely, but I also made unexpected and amazing friends through the bond of music. It's awesome to have that one steady class throughout high school that you can always count on." And you know what? It means that much to ME, too. Welcome to the RHHS Band Family - we are going to do amazing things together!

Musically,

*Mr. Blackman*

Michael Blackman@HCPSS.org

P.S.: DID YOU KNOW.....The River Hill Bands placed 35 students in the All-State ensembles this year. That's more than ANY OTHER HIGH SCHOOL BAND PROGRAM IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND!

# River Hill Bands!



proud Band Director: Mr. Blackman - [Michael\\_Blackman@HCPSS.org](mailto:Michael_Blackman@HCPSS.org)

## how to register:

Sign up for: MU-400-1 - "Concert Band" or  
MU-480-1 - "Percussion Ensemble"  
Mr. Blackman will hear you play in February, and  
change your placement if necessary. The bottom line  
is: EVERYONE PLAYS - nobody gets left out!

## Playing opportunities include.....

\*CONCERT BAND, SYMPHONIC BAND, PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE, & WIND ENSEMBLE G/T - The heart of our program.  
Check us out on YouTube!

\*MARCHING BAND - What we do for the first few weeks of the year. A great chance for us all to work together and shine!

\*PEP BAND - Travel to the away football games, get in free, and support the team!

\*SMALL ENSEMBLES - Brass choir, quartets, quintets.....you name it - we can do it!

\*JAZZ COMBO/JAZZ BAND - Swing, Latin, rock.....meets after school

\* PIT ORCHESTRA - Play for River Hill's Theatre productions

\*"SONGS FOR SENIORS" - Bring your love of music out into the community and share it with older folks who really appreciate you!

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

please read on.....

**Q: I'm really busy. Should I continue to play my instrument?**

**A:** ABSOLUTELY. Your life will be happier with music in it (truly!), and kids who plan to "just take a year off," ALMOST NEVER RETURN (so don't do that). Furthermore, colleges REALLY like to see that you have studied music because they know that it makes you a very hard worker and a strong thinker and problem-solver. Everyone at River Hill is busy, and still almost every Band student plays for all four years of high school before going on to colleges like Harvard and M. I.T.! Need to see a sample schedule with four years of Band in it? Just let me know and I will send it to you!

**Q: I hear that the River Hill Bands have done some traveling. Is that true?**

**A:** Oh yes it is! We have performed in some truly awesome places, including Indianapolis, Nashville, Universal Studios, and Disney World. This year we are back in Orlando!

SO WHAT  
NOW....?

Register for Concert Band or Percussion Ensemble....start getting excited....and contact me with any questions! Then, check out audition information at our Band Booster website:

<https://rhhsbands.wixsite.com/boosters/future-hawks>

Remember - the most important thing is that you continue to play, so please be sure to let me know if you have any concerns. I want to make this work for YOU.

See you soon! Can't wait!

-Mr. B.

Michael Blackman@HCPSS.org



**Q: Are there many opportunities for individual growth in the Band program?**

**A:** Yes there are. We always get a lot of kids participating in All-State auditions, Solo/Ensemble Festival, and Tri-M Music Honor Society. There are leadership opportunities within the ensembles (drum major, section leader, music librarian, etc.), and also some great music "elective" classes like piano, guitar, music technology, and music theory. You even get G/T credit once you place into the Wind Ensemble!

**Q: How can I hear the River Hill Bands?**

**A:** Well, the best way is to come out and hear us live! All of our concerts are free. If you can't wait until concert time, check us out on YouTube by searching for some of my favorites:

River Hill Wind Ensemble 2025 Band Assessment

LIGHTS OUT - River Hill Talent Show 2017

River Hill High School Bands 2025 Spring Concert

River Hill at 2025 Marching Band Showcase

Wizards in Winter (RHHS Percussion)

## **RHHS Bands**

### **audition information**

First, and most importantly, this is a non-stress situation. I just need to get you placed in the appropriate class so that you are challenged at the right level. Here we go.....

#### **Step 1**

Think about what you'd like to play for me at your placement audition. It can be ANYTHING - something that you played in Band, something that you've learned for your private teacher....whatever demonstrates your strengths as a player. If you would like to be considered for placement in our Wind Ensemble, there will be some specific music that you need to learn, and it will be available by January 1st. Just go to the RHHS Band Booster website at <https://rhhsbands.wixsite.com/boosters/future-hawks>.

Click the audition music icon, select the appropriate page for your instrument, and take a look. If it appears to be something you can learn, great - get started! If not - no worries. Just play something else!

#### **Step 2**

Sign up for an audition time. The link will be on the same page as the audition music link. Auditions will take place in the RHHS Band Room (Room 206) on Saturday, February 14th. If you can not make it on that day, please let me know and we will figure something else out.

My email address is  
[Michael.Blackman@HCPSS.org](mailto:Michael.Blackman@HCPSS.org)

#### **Step 3**

On audition day, please feel free to arrive as early as you like. You will be greeted by some of my current Band members and then you can warm-up. *Be sure to bring a parent with you*, because we will need him/her to share some info with our Boosters while you are with my students and me.

And that's it! I look forward to seeing you. Please be sure to let me know if you need anything before I see you in February.

Musically,  
Mr. B.



## Some thoughts on continuing to play your instrument in high school.... from River Hill Band students

"The River Hill Band program allowed me to form a great group of friends weeks before my freshman year began. I was able to go into my freshman year knowing students in each class and understanding the social aspects of high school." -Nick Bakhtiar, saxophone ([nickbakhtiar.nb@gmail.com](mailto:nickbakhtiar.nb@gmail.com))

"I was always excited to continue band in high school because I enjoyed it so much in middle school, but I didn't fully understand how much it would affect me. Your classmates in band are some of the kindest, most caring, and all-around awesome people you'll ever meet, and they will always be there for you in any situation you are in. One of my favorite parts of the RHHS band program is marching band. The best thing about it is that you make tons of friends before school even starts. Marching band also gives you the unmatched feeling of succeeding in an outcome that you worked incredibly hard to achieve." - Justin Blackman, horn ([justin.blackman05@gmail.com](mailto:justin.blackman05@gmail.com))

"I think that not choosing to do band in high school would have been the worst mistake of my life. Band is one place where I feel like I can try my best and not worry about my grades. I got to use so much musical equipment that I would never have gotten to use and meet people that I would never have met. Oh, and wait until you play at the prism concert, because that is a concert unlike any other. If you need any help, you can get it. The band program is filled with supportive people who care about you." -Chloe Garcia-Zamor, percussion [cgarcia6890@inst.hcpss.org](mailto:cgarcia6890@inst.hcpss.org)

"I was quite nervous entering high school, especially after a whole year of virtual high school. Two weeks before school started, we had marching band camp, and that immediately introduced me to over 100 people who I knew I could depend on. Coming from a middle school with a large band program, I found my transition much easier and the first weeks of school much more fun than many of my peers! Friday nights in the stands with my friends playing awesome music is something that I will never forget. The people in the band program are some of the kindest, most hilarious, and most importantly, dependable people that I know. I can always count on one of my band classmates if I ever need anything! There are so many opportunities for you to get involved in your section and grow with each other! Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions!" - Divya Kumar, clarinet ([divyaskumar@icloud.com](mailto:divyaskumar@icloud.com))

"The River Hill Band program is filled with wonderful people that will welcome you with open arms. Band is a nice break from all of the stress that comes with other classes and it is a space where you can really express yourself. Especially with marching band, coming into school with an additional 2 weeks of experience after band camp can be super helpful. The football games and other opportunities are fun, too! Along with in-school stuff, there are many events they you can participate in that are out in the community, which is very rewarding. All of the moments and memories you have while in band will last a lifetime and it is not something I would miss out on for anything. If you have any questions, feel free to email me." -Collin Blackman, bassoon ([collin.f.blackman@gmail.com](mailto:collin.f.blackman@gmail.com))

"Band is not like any other class at school. It teaches you not only how to play an instrument, but also discipline, compassion and a strong fondness for learning new things. Life without music wouldn't really be much of anything. Life is full of music; and there are only a handful of people in the world who get the gift of making and sharing it. In band, you're making friends before school even starts. You're making them on the side of the football field at a random high school as you're cheering on your team on a Friday night. You're making them in the back of the school bus on the way to assessment. Many people I know regret not continuing band in high school. They miss the camaraderie and friendship we have. Band kids are some of the friendliest and most caring people I have ever met. If there is one language we all can speak, it would be that of music. Don't ever quit." -Dorothy Seylar, flute ([dorothy1million@gmail.com](mailto:dorothy1million@gmail.com))