

Music Program



The Music Program at Eltham High School is nationally renowned for its excellence and is recognised as one of the finest of its type in Australia. With four Wind Ensembles, three String Ensembles, three Jazz Bands, two Choirs and various Chamber Ensembles, students have the opportunity to be involved in a variety of ensembles.

Vision

The vision for Eltham High School's Music Program is to promote a life-long love for music and the creative process. At Eltham we believe in educating the whole child and by providing opportunities in music we ensure that your child is given every opportunity to develop in all dimensions of educational and human experiences. Instrumental music at Eltham provides students the opportunity to expand their educational horizons and to take part in the rich and vibrant cultural life of our school.

As parents and as teachers, we know that education is the way to shape the future. Music education is an important tool for accomplishing this goal. Balanced alongside the development of the physical and technical skills of playing and performing, the Music Program at Eltham High School encourages students to become creative thinkers, build strong friendships, socialise with students in other year levels and develop the confidence to perform publicly. We emphasise the importance of developing leadership skills and involvement in team environments, while increasing self-confidence and a strong sense of ownership and belonging.

The Instrumental Music Program is a very important part of the school curriculum at Eltham High School and is viewed as an integral part of a student's total development. It is certainly not a coincidence that many of the strongest academic students in the school are also students involved with the Music Department. All ensembles are built around a strong sense of community, dedication and pride. What the students in our Ensemble Program achieve is outstanding and requires an extraordinary commitment.

All of the ensembles at Eltham High School achieve outstanding results each year at the various music eisteddfods and festivals in the state. One example of the outstanding ensembles in our program is the Symphonic Band, which is the most senior of our four Wind Ensembles.

Students involved in the Music Program will be provided with many life changing opportunities. 2014 saw the Symphonic Band tour Washington, New York and Chicago. As part of this tour students had the opportunity to perform with some of the world's greatest composers and educators, as well as attend concerts by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The United States Air Force Band.

In December 2017 the Symphonic Band toured Japan, once again representing Eltham High School on the world stage.

*Music gives a soul to the universe,
wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and
life to everything."*

~ Plato ~

Instrumental Music Program Structure

Being part of this Program involves:

- learning a woodwind, brass, percussion or string instrument; and
- playing in one of our 'large ensembles'. For our Year 7 students this would typically mean being a member of our Training Band or Junior Strings (as a beginner) or the Intermediate Band (for advanced students).

Instrumental lessons are scheduled during school hours and are rotated through a student's timetabled periods to ensure students do not miss the same subject each week.

Applying for Enrolment under Curriculum Grounds: Music

Students who are accepted into Eltham High School under Music Curriculum Grounds are expected to learn a woodwind, brass, percussion or string instrument. In accepting enrolment under this curriculum ground, a student and their family will be agreeing to commit to our Music Program for a minimum of two years. It is an expectation that the student will continue instrumental lessons on the instrument that they start learning as part of the Music Program in 2021.

You may audition on any musical instrument (including voice), but the following are not instruments that you can continue to learn at Eltham High School as part of your Music Grounds commitment as they are not instruments that form part of our major ensemble program: piano, keyboard, voice, drum kit, guitar and Bass Guitar. Whilst you may wish to continue with these, in the After School Program you are required to take up one of the band or string instruments.

Instruments Available:

Woodwind Instruments: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Alto Saxophone and Tenor Saxophone.

Brass Instruments: Trumpet, French Horn, Euphonium, Trombone and Tuba.

Percussion: Orchestral Mallet Percussion and Snare Drum (drum kit is not considered a percussion instrument as part of Music Grounds commitment).

Strings: Violin, Viola, Cello and Double Bass.

“While at Eltham High, the Music Program provided me with a community connected by a love of music. This gave each of us a valuable support network and a place to thrive as growing young people.

I forged great friendships that I know will last long past the end of my high school years.”

*Charlie Evans
Symphonic Band Leader,
Class of 2018*

Instrument Families

When we talk about musical instruments, we often talk about them as being part of a family. That's because, just like in human families, the instruments in a particular family are related to each other. They are often made of the same types of materials, usually look similar to one another, and produce sound in comparable ways. Some are larger and some are smaller, just as parents are bigger than children.

The Brass Family: Like the woodwind family, brass players use their breath to produce sound, but instead of blowing into a reed, you vibrate your own lips by buzzing them against a metal cup-shaped mouthpiece. Most brass instruments have valves which look like buttons. When you press down on the valves, they open and close different parts of the pipe. The trombone uses a slide to change notes. The brass family members that are most commonly used in the ensembles include the trumpet, french horn, trombone, and the tuba.

The Woodwind Family: The instruments in this family all used to be made of wood, which gives them their name. Today, they are made of wood, metal, plastic or some combination. They are all basically narrow cylinders or pipes, with holes, an opening at the bottom end and a mouthpiece at the top. You play them by blowing air through the mouthpiece (that's the “wind” in “woodwind”) and opening or closing the holes with your fingers to change the pitch. Metal caps called keys cover the holes of most woodwind instruments.

The mouthpieces for some woodwinds, including the clarinet, oboe and bassoon, use a thin piece of wood called a reed, which vibrates when you blow across it.

The Percussion Family: The percussion family is the largest in the orchestra. Percussion instruments include any instrument that makes a sound when it is hit, shaken, or scraped. It's not easy to be a percussionist because it takes a lot of practice to hit an instrument with the right amount of strength, in the right place and at the right time. Some percussion instruments are tuned and can sound different notes, like the xylophone and timpani, and some are untuned with no definite pitch, like the bass drum, snare drum, or cymbals. Percussion instruments keep the rhythm, make special sounds and add excitement and color. Unlike most of the other players in the orchestra, a percussionist will usually play many different instruments in one piece of music.



The String Family: The bodies of the string instruments, which are hollow inside to allow sound to vibrate within them, are made of different kinds of wood, but the part of the instrument that makes the sound is the strings, which are made of nylon, steel or sometimes gut. The strings are played most often by drawing a bow across them. The handle of the bow is made of wood and the strings of the bow are actually horsehair from horses' tails! Sometimes the musicians will use their fingers to pluck the strings, and occasionally they will turn the bow upside down and play the strings with the wooden handle.

The strings are the largest family of instruments in the orchestra and they come in four sizes: the violin, which is the smallest, viola, cello, and the biggest, the double bass.

*“Where words fail, music speaks”
~ Hans Christian Andersen ~*