

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is solo and ensemble contest?

Solo and ensemble contest gives students an opportunity to learn a recital selection composed specifically for their instrument or ensemble. Students learn the process of preparing, perfecting and performing music to a high standard. Students are critiqued and learn how to become better musicians and performers. Positive reinforcement is shared in order to help students build confidence. Musicians benefit by improving performance skills and increasing knowledge of music literature and concepts. The process of performing of a solo or ensemble is an outstanding experience – not only in terms of preparation and presentation, but also in learning about stage presence and exposure. Students also have the opportunity to listen to other students perform solos and ensembles which will hopefully motivate and inspire musicians to attain higher levels of musicianship.

Is solo and ensemble required? What is the fee?

No. However, I have encouraged all students during lessons to participate. Solos were selected at the beginning of second quarter during lessons. Ensembles were chosen to reflect lesson groupings in order to facilitate easy rehearsals. This is an extra curricular event and a \$20.00 fee is due by **Tuesday, Jan. 21** for WSMA Contest. Please make checks out to FRMS. **Please be aware that only students who participate in solo and ensemble contest will be eligible for a Band Parents Band Camp scholarship.**

What do the initials "W.S.M.A." mean?

W.S.M.A. stands for Wisconsin School Music Association. Check out their web site at wsma.com. Schools all across Wisconsin participate in solo and ensemble contest.

How are students evaluated and rated?

A sample critique sheet is provided in this packet.

Who judges contest?

District contest judges are provided by WSMA and are professional musicians and teachers certified by WSMA.

How is music selected?

WSMA requires music to be chosen from a list which divides selections into categories based on difficulty level. ("A, B, and C" class)
Only students who receive a 1* on an A class solo are invited to go to State competition. Middle school students typically perform C class (first experience) and/or B class (intermediate) level selections. I will only allow students to take an "A" class solo if the student studies privately or participates in the TAG program for music. Mrs. Nelson presented options to students during lessons and played samples. Students chose their events and musical selections from the options provided in January.

Do students have to memorize solos?

Soloists are not required to memorize solos. It is an advantage to memorize solos because it shows the judge a very high degree of preparation. However, judges do not “down-grade” or consider memorization in their evaluations.

When and where are results posted?

Results commonly take at least 30 minutes to post. Scores will be posted by room number most often in the cafeteria or commons. If students need to leave prior to receiving ratings, Mrs. Nelson will collect critique sheets and hand them out the following day.

Are awards given for ratings?

Yes. Ribbons, medals or pins will be given to participants at the Spring Concert.

Can parents watch performances?

Absolutely! We encourage your presence – video taping and support! Please do not take pictures during a performance because the flash and “click” will distract the performers. Cell phones and paging devices will need to be turned off during performances. Small children need to be quiet.

Is an accompanist required?

If a selection was written for a solo with piano accompaniment, then a pianist will be provided. If you would like to provide your own accompanist, please let Mrs. Nelson know as soon as possible. An accompanist should be compensated. FR pays hired accompanists for the district event only. Mrs. Nelson will accompany any student who would like extra practice beyond scheduled times with the accompanist and for “tunes and treats” practice. Lunch times are available for extra practice, as well as special days scheduled in advance.

When will students and pianists practice?

A sign up sheet for practice sessions will be available starting in February. Students will practice at FR either during lunch, during lessons, during band or after school.

Is extra help available?

Any student who would like extra help may schedule a session with Mrs. Nelson.

What about judges' copies of music?

Unless your child is performing a selection chosen outside of school, numbered original pieces of music are provided by F.R. Students must realize that photocopied music is not allowed. Students have photocopies for practice only. Students may perform from their photocopy, but must also present an original for performance and a judges' copy to the performance site. All measures must be numbered. Please check with Mrs. Nelson during lessons to be sure this is accomplished. Several students are sharing music, so students need to follow directions very carefully if he or she is to deliver music to another room prior to a performance. Mrs. Nelson will arrange for this in advance.

What should students wear for performances?

Students need to present themselves in formal attire. Dress – up clothes or concert black is required. Jeans, t-shirts and athletic shoes are not considered dress up clothes. Be sure to dress so that students can breathe comfortable. High heels are discouraged. Ensembles do not need to be coordinated, but it is always nice when ensembles have some cohesiveness. (ie.: black and white and grey)

What can students expect the performance to be like?

Students arrive at least 30 minutes in advance to performance time and report to the band room to warm up and tune. Students should report the performance site 10 minutes before their performance. At the time of their performance, students will give a judge's copy to the judge and proceed to the piano to tune. A couple long tones and a scale is appropriate for a quick warm up before performing. When the judge acknowledges it is time to begin, the student will introduce the performance following the template included in the packet. Following the performance, sometimes judges will talk to the kids and provide immediate feedback. Students will respond positively, honestly and respectfully. Always remember to thank the judge after a performance. All performance areas must remain calm, quiet and respectful. Students may go to the cafeteria for socializing and snacks brought from home.

As a reminder, be sure to eat a solid meal, drink plenty of fluids and get a good night's sleep the night before contest. I also recommend that students avoid salty foods because excessive food can cause "dry mouth." It might be a good idea to bring a water bottle. Be sure also to have several good reeds and keep instruments clean and swabbed to avoid a "spitty" or fuzzy tone.

What are the advantages to traveling for contest?

The opportunity to see other students perform and to compare your progress with others is a valuable teaching tool. Please be sure to visit several rooms and listen to other class A, B and C soloists. Listen to the comments from the judges. Students need to hear other students in the area in order to effectively rate their progress. Hopefully, for most of our students, this will be an inspirational experiences as well as an opportunity for positive reinforcement.