

Sample Student (Personal Goals)

The objectives you listed as your personal goals for band this year:

1) I'd like to learn how to play harder music better

This is a good goal. Here are my thoughts:

- 1) Stop thinking of hard music as "hard." Think of it as being challenging or a stretch for you. It's a subtle change of mindset, but if you think that something is impossible to play, you will not be able to play it.
- 2) Practice the harder passages in small pieces. Even the most difficult music seems easy if it's played in small chunks. Try for two measures at a time. If that doesn't work practice one measure at a time.
- 3) Motor memory and tempo are mutually exclusive. You know that feeling you get when you fingers have a "mind of their own" and move in the right order even though you're not really thinking about it? Maybe you've felt this on trumpet or a video game or sports. Our muscles have a "memory" of the order and manner in which they move...they can be trained through repetition. The cool thing is that it doesn't matter how fast the task is performed during that repetition. The most important thing is that the task is performed flawlessly each time. Practice slowly (no mistakes!)...you will notice me doing this a lot in sectionals. Be patient and repeat the passage very slowly several (15-20) times. Finally, pick up the tempo. You'll find it a lot easier to play.
- 4) Make your own exercises out of the music. What makes the music hard? Is it real high? Then practice your range with scales, long tones, and lip slurs. Does it have big leaps? Practice intervals. Etc.
- 5) Become a better sight reader. The better you sight read, the less time it will take you to learn music. What does it take to become a better sight reader? Practice. Spend 10 minutes a couple times a week playing music you've never seen before. Play something you know, but play every other measure. This helps train your eyes to look further ahead in the music.
- 6) Know when to call it quits. Know when it's time to move on to different music. If you've been working on something for weeks, and it's not getting better, leave it for a while. Work on different material and come back to it after several weeks. It may be easier the second time around.

2) I'd like to get better and hopefully move up a chair.

Concentrate on getting better and let the other stuff take care of itself. I'm not saying it can't happen, but the 3 kids in front of you are 8th graders and are very, very fine players. You are on pace to become one of my finest musicians in my time here, but you are still young. Learn all you can from the older kids. Watch how they rehearse, work with focus, and mark their parts. Learn from them and you will be there when the time comes.

3) I'd like to do well on my IMEA Honor Band Audition.

Make sure you sign up after school help as soon as the sign up sheet gets posted. Making IMEA as a 6th grader is VERY DIFFICULT, especially on trumpet. It's not easy to make IMEA. It's a privilege to make the band, and it's one of the most rewarding musical experiences you can be a part of.

YOU CAN MAKE IMEA! But it won't happen by accident. There are too many good trumpet players in the area for anyone to "luck" into the band. It's not impossible, but it does mean that you'll have to work very hard to earn that privilege. I would not allow you to audition unless I thought you would do well. The experience you receive from auditioning (make it or not) will be a HUGE help to you when you audition again next year.

Last year, out of the kids from McCracken who auditioned, only two didn't make IMEA. Both of them missed making the band by **less than 1 point!** How many extra minutes of practicing does it take to earn one more point on an audition? I don't know. Practice that music every day. I guarantee you that the days you don't practice are the same days that the kids that beat you did practice.

Parent Signature _____

After having your parents sign this, show it to Mr. De Stefano (so he can check you off), and put this somewhere that you will see it every day. DO NOT JUST STUFF THIS IN YOUR FOLDER. Tape it up in your locker...tape it to your desk...put it under your pillow.

You will meet these goals if you think about them daily. Make sure you talk to Mr. De Stefano if you think you will need help achieving these goals.