

# Archdiocesan Band Program, New Orleans, Louisiana

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## **History:**

The Archdiocesan Band Program (ABP) is an outgrowth of the Dominican Sisters Instrumental Program initiated in five Dominican Elementary Schools staffed by members of ST. Mary's Dominican Congregation of New Orleans. Sister Mary Hilary, O. P., was the director of the program from 1967-1971 and is still involved with the program today.

The ABP, as it is structured today, was begun in 1973, after several periods of evaluation. The program began with eighteen schools. Today there are forty schools in the program with better than 1200 students, receiving instruction at least once a week. The forty schools are located in six different civil parishes, all within a twenty-five mile range from metro New Orleans.

## **Course Offerings:**

Over the past five years great stride has been made in being able to offer as many as 750 third graders some experience on recorder as a pre-band class. The objective is to introduce students to music fundamentals prior to placing a band instrument in their hands. Some administrators, who have noticed the difference a music program makes in their schools, have hired one or more music teachers as full-time faculty.

## THE ARCHDIOCESAN BAND PROGRAM IS ABOUT....

IT IS ABOUT STUDENTS – who deserve an opportunity to explore, discover and develop musical abilities.

IT IS ABOUT TEACHERS – who are good, value conscious role models for our students. Teachers who are dedicated to passing on to students what was so meaningful in their lives that they want to share it with another generation.

IT IS ABOUT PARENTS – who are willing to go the extra mile financially, paying additional tuition for lessons and investing in the rental and/or purchase of a musical instrument. It is about parents who are willing to transport children to extra Saturday rehearsals or honor band concerts, band festivals, parades, or band camp.

IT IS ABOUT CROSSING OVER SCHOOL BOUNDARIES and sponsoring an annual band festival that is an open invitation festival to public and private schools at all levels. Over the past twenty years, the five-day festival has become the largest in the state with about 1800 students from twenty-six Louisiana cities participating.

IT IS ABOUT PERSONAL CONCERN FOR STUDENTS like the little girl who wants to play flute but who has only three normal fingers on one hand and two on the other --- so a teacher spends time with that little girl and her parents, devising a way that she can manipulate mallets so that she can play bells rather than have no musical experience at all.

It is about a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade boy I met three weeks ago who has discovered a natural talent for being able to play whatever melodies he hears on his flutophone “by ear” as it is sometimes referred to --- and then being able to embellish, improvise, “jam” around that melody to the delight of his peers.

It is about a youngster whose achievements at district festival won for him several medals – that achievement, that recognition meant so much to that child and to his parents, that when he was buried as a result of an automobile accident, those medals were buried with him.

IT IS ABOUT A DREAM – when teachers could be provided with better salaries and benefits, when instruments can be provided to students whose parents cannot afford to purchase them, when scholarships could be given to students making it possible for them to attend special programs both during the school year and during the summer months.

CAN AN EDUCATION BE COMPLETE WITHOUT EXPOSURE TO MUSIC AND ART? I BELIEVE THE ANSWER IS A RESOUNDING “NO” ----

BRINGING MUSIC INTO THE LIVES OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IS NOT A MATTER OF CHOICE – IT IS A MATTER OF JUSTICE.