

New musicians now headed to Eastside High marching band thanks to first-ever beginning band class

When the newest members of the Mighty Ram Band reported to Eastside High School for a one-day band camp the day after school ended, students who first picked up their instruments less than a year ago were among them.



The students are members of the school's first-ever beginning band class, taught by EHS' band director Joseph Hughes. Many students in the class had never played an instrument in their lives. Others had tried earlier but given up for some reason. Some had played another instrument, like guitar or piano. Hughes told them he would teach them a new instrument that would allow them to become part of the award-winning band.

"I told them that everyone was welcome, that their job was to come to class and work as hard as they could, and my job was to teach them the best I could," said Hughes. "I knew they could benefit from being part of our band family and that the band could benefit from their talent and dedication and smarts."



Tenth-grader Jordan Lett, who had no musical background, had actually signed up for a guitar class at school. But Hughes convinced him to stay in the beginning band class and taught him to play the trumpet. He's now going to be in the marching band.

"These people are friendly and cool, and I want to keep learning," he said. "I want to be part of a team that's bigger than myself."

Sophomore Jaeden Moore actually played the guitar last year, but this year learned to play the trombone, which gave him the opportunity to play with the marching band at pep rallies and a football game.



"I never thought I would be playing an instrument in the band," said Moore. "But I had such a good time, we all laughed and talked, it was really fun."

The beginning band students also performed at recent school concert and did extremely well. Hughes says many of the young musicians had to overcome significant anxiety about performing.



"I think that's one of the most valuable experience of high school band," he said. "Students try something new, something hard, and realize that they can do it. They can apply that lesson to the rest of their lives."

Beginning band programs are not typically offered at the high school level. Most high school bands draw students from middle school programs and/or those who took private music lessons. But with the success of the of the Eastside program, it's possible that another beginning band class will be established at Santa Fe High School for the next school year.

During the school year, some students in EHS' beginning class actually progressed enough on their new instruments to be moved into the school's concert band class. About half the beginning students will be part of the marching band in the next school year.



"I think kids are capable of so much, and with quality teaching I think almost any student can achieve their goals," said Hughes.

