



ignite bands

By **Kimberly Jones**

Dawson Music Academy Director

One of the most important callings that God gives us is the call to invest in the next generation. In Psalm 145:4, we're reminded: One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. As we choose to share our testimony, time, and talents with the next generation, the Lord stirs the hearts of a new generation of worship leaders, pastors, and prayer warriors.

Through a variety of ministry opportunities, the Dawson Music Academy prioritizes an intentional investment in the next generation of worship leaders. Sometimes that investment comes in the form of private weekly music lessons to develop a student's individual talents to sing or play in worship. However, sometimes the investment takes a different path.

Ignite Student Bands provide a pathway for youth musicians to explore their talents while also gaining new insights about leading in worship.



Ignite Bands first launched several years ago when a few Dawson Music Academy instructors had a vision to invest in the next generation of worship leaders. After prayerfully exploring several different ideas, the instructors created Ignite Bands. The name "Ignite" reflects the goal of the bands: to "ignite" a love for music, a connection with other musicians, and a passion to lead in worship.

In keeping with our commitment to invest in the next generation, Ignite Bands provide opportunities for young musicians, ranging from elementary-age to high school, to explore their talents with other musicians. Each Ignite Band includes a small group of 4-8 band members of similar age and ability level. In weekly sessions, vocalists, guitarists, keyboardists, and drummers come together to rehearse worship songs. Students and coaches create the playlist of worship songs each semester. Some of the favorites through the years have been "How Great Is Our God" (Tomlin), "Glorious Day"

(Ingram & Smith), and "House of the Lord" (Wickham). Led by an Academy Band Coach, each rehearsal provides students the opportunity to develop new musical skills while also learning how to lead in worship. Band Coaches collaborate with band members to create song maps for each of the songs they are playing. Through these discussions, band members think through different dynamics that are important to incorporate when serving and leading in worship. At the end of each semester, Ignite Bands host a Band Showcase where they lead their family and friends in a night of worship.

Through the years, a variety of different students have participated in Ignite Bands. Many of the students and their parents have shared with me that Ignite Bands have provided an encouraging foundation for students both musically and spiritually. The soundtrack of worship songs learned through Ignite Bands has encouraged teenagers on difficult days, through challenging

times, and through lonely seasons. The promises of scripture sung over the seasons of life is a firm foundation that won't be shaken. In addition to building a strong spiritual foundation, Ignite Bands provide a positive connection point for youth to build relationships. Some of our Ignite Band students have been part of bands since their beginning in 2018. It has been truly amazing to watch those students grow in their friendships with each other over the past several years. The strong relationship between band members helps them as they learn to communicate with each other about musical details (how fast to play, how loud to play, which instrument has the lead, etc.). Band members also develop new musical skills of listening to the group and following the band leader. They grow in their confidence with playing their musical instrument as well as in their ability to lead others in worship.

Ignite Bands are open to any interested

musician, not only students at Dawson Music Academy. We've had some students from other Birmingham-area churches join Ignite Bands for one semester to gain musical experience in worship. After a semester, those students felt prepared with the skills they needed to participate in youth worship bands at their churches, so they plugged into their local church leadership teams. Additionally, several Ignite Band students have moved on to serve as leaders in worship at Dawson or other area churches. We're grateful for the opportunity to equip and encourage these young musicians to use their God-given talents in worship.

As we look ahead, we're excited to continue to invest in the next generation of worship leaders through Ignite Bands. It's a privilege to connect with youth and "ignite" a love for music and worship. Thank you for joining with us in prayer for the worship leaders of tomorrow!

If you are interested in learning more about connecting with the ministry of Dawson Music Academy, please email Kimberly Jones at kjones@dawsonchurch.org.



Kimberly Jones serves as the Director of Dawson Music Academy. She is passionate about helping students of all ages and backgrounds experience the joy of music and use their gifts to worship God. In her free time, she loves spending time with her husband Greg and son Garrett.