

Middle School Orchestra 2008-2009 New Student and Beginner Information

Welcome to Middle School Orchestra! Middle School Orchestra is an ensemble of approximately 120 sixth to eight grade students from Plymouth-Canton's five middle schools. The class meets daily from 7:00 to 7:45 AM in room 300 of the Canton High School North Building, formerly known as Phase III. During the first semester, the ensemble will be split in two groups. Mrs. Zurbuchen teaches beginning students, and Mrs. DePentu teaches intermediate and advanced students. Near the end of the school year, all students will be combined into a single ensemble.

Class Attendance:

Orchestra meets daily from 7:00 to 7:45 AM, with the exception of the day after an evening concert. **There is no middle school orchestra the day after a concert.** Although students are expected to attend daily, we understand that orchestra is an extra hour in middle school day. Sometimes students will need to miss orchestra due to an important school project or test. Students' grades will not be lowered for such absences. If your child becomes overwhelmed by this extra hour in the school day, please contact Mrs. DePentu or Mrs. Zurbuchen at 416-2909 and let us know.

Concert Attendance:

Students are required to perform in four evening concerts during the school year. Our schedule is posted on our website at www.pccsorchestras.com. The only excused absences for concerts are illness, family emergency, or conflict with another middle school music concert. Please contact us if you have any questions at 416-2909.

Materials:

Please obtain these materials by Monday, September 15th.

- Instrument, case, bow, and rosin
- Book: *Strictly Strings Book 1* (keep at home)
- Folding music stand (keep at home)
- Pencil to mark music
- Shoulder rest, cloth, or sponge for violin or viola (supports instrument)
- Old clean rag or sock to wipe rosin from instrument after playing

Instrument Rental:

We advise our beginners to rent their instruments rather than buy them. Often students have not grown enough to play on full-size instruments. Students may play on a different size instrument each year of middle school. **Please consult Mrs. DePentu, Mrs. Zurbuchen, or a private string teacher before purchasing your child an instrument.** Do not buy from catalogs, the internet, or department stores. Apparent bargains are often not bargains at all. Sometimes these instruments are of such poor quality that they need many adjusts (and a large investment) before the student can play them.

Please rent an instrument for your child by Monday, September 15th. Here are some local music shops where you may rent string instruments. They will measure

your child and determine the proper size instrument. Please call first to check availability and compare rental plans.

Baroque Violin Shop: 734-240-3428

Evola Music: 734-455-4677

Hewitts Music: 313-846-8850

Northville Center: 248-374-1920

Novi Music Center: 248-477-6666

Marshall Music: 248-661-1260

Shar Music Company: 734-665-7885

7170 N. Haggerty, Canton

13936 Michigan Ave., Dearborn

145 N Center St., Northville

32716 Grand River, Farmington

7470 Haggerty Rd., West Bloomfield

2465 S. Industrial, Ann Arbor

Note to cello and bass students: The orchestra has a number of instruments available for use during class. Whenever possible, we provide an instrument for school use and families provide an instrument for home use.

Instrument selection:

Students may choose to play the violin, viola, cello, or bass. The majority of students choose to play violin. The orchestra always needs more violas, cellos, and basses. If your child has selected the violin because of its sound and portability, we encourage your child to consider playing the viola. The viola is extremely similar to the violin, but it is slightly larger than the violin, has a deeper tone, and tends to play harmony within the orchestra.

Some parents completely reject the idea of their child playing cello or bass because of the lack of portability. To solve this problem, cello and bass players often keep one instrument at home and one instrument at school. In most cases, the middle-school orchestra will provide an instrument for school use. This is dependent on the number of students who choose cello and bass. **We make every effort to allow students to play their first choice instrument.**

If you have any questions at all, please contact us at 416-2909. We look forward to working with your child!

Sincerely,
Catherine DePentu
Erin Zurbuchen

Directors, Middle School Orchestra