

# Fisher Middle School Orchestra

Ms. Colleen Ferry, Orchestra Director

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Dear parents and guardians,

My name is Colleen Ferry and I teach Orchestra at Fisher Middle School.

Transitioning to middle school is exciting, and there are many great opportunities waiting for them there! Including continuing in the Orchestra. This packet contains my contact info as well as information about the orchestra, but please reach out if you have any further questions.

## Frequently Asked Questions ...

### **I'm not 100% sure I want to do orchestra in middle school what should I do?**

#### ***You should join orchestra!***

It is easier to try, and decide to leave later if it is not for you than to try to join later! Because of scheduling classes like gym and world language, it is ***very difficult and often times impossible to change your schedule later.*** It is also very difficult to join again as a 7th grader, as there is significant progress made during the 6th grade year.

### **What does the FMS Orchestra look and sound like?**

You can see pictures of us here: <https://fms-orchestra.weebly.com/>

You can also see videos of past concerts on the Ewing YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/EwingPublicSchools>

### **How do I get into orchestra at FMS?**

You need to write down "6th Grade Orchestra" when choosing your enrichments. Check with your parents, teachers, guidance counselors and see if you are signed up for next year.

### **When does orchestra meet?**

At FMS, we have A and B days which alternate. Orchestra meets every A day during period 3 for 41 minutes. It is part of your class schedule for the entire year, unlike other enrichments.

### **Do I get a grade for orchestra?**

YES. Students are graded on attending orchestra, attending their weekly lessons, turning in practice records, and occasional playing checks. Students are NOT graded on their musical ability only, but instead also on effort and improvement. Many orchestra students are on the Honor Roll (All Bs and As) or Principal Honor Roll (all As).

**Can I do Orchestra AND choir? Or Orchestra AND band?**

No. Because both are full year classes. But you can do the musical after school, which many orchestra students do.

**Do I have to try out or audition?**

NO. You DO NOT have to audition for the 6th Grade Orchestra. Later in the school year, there will be an advanced group called 6th Chamber Orchestra. Students will be chosen for this ensemble based on their performance during the first few months of orchestra.

**Do I have to practice?**

YES. The music becomes more difficult as you move up from 5th to 6th grade. While we take a lot of time to review at the beginning of the year, the music will be more difficult and requires practice at home.

**How many concerts do we have?**

Two **mandatory concerts** in January and May. If students fail to attend it will significantly impact their grade. There will also be opportunities to play at community events and local nursing homes (optional).

**I'm pretty advanced...will I be challenged in any way?**

Later in the year, you may be selected for an advanced group called 6th Chamber Orchestra. Students are also placed in smaller groups, called quartets which rehearse during lunch. Students will be chosen for these groups, but can decline. Some pieces will also have solos, which students will have the opportunity to audition for. Later in 7th and 8th grade, we have an Honors Symphony orchestra which combines advanced Orchestra and Band students into one ensemble.

**Sometimes I need extra help with my music...will I get that in middle school?**

YES. Many students come for extra help during their lunch period, or during gym upon request from myself and the gym teacher.

**Can I do sports, the musical, or after school clubs if I do orchestra?**

YES. Those happen after school and do not interfere with orchestra. Current orchestra students participate in: the musical, Odyssey of the Mind, cheerleading, baseball, wrestling, softball, girls and boys basketball and many more activities.

# Why should I keep doing orchestra?

## 1. RESEARCH SAYS IT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

- U.S. Department of Education data show that students who report consistently high levels of involvement in instrumental music during the middle- and high-school years show **"significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12."**
- When you listen to music, multiple areas of your brain become engaged and active. But when you actually play an instrument, that activity becomes more like a full-body brain workout.
- Music helps the release of dopamine, an organic chemical released by our neurons that **boosts reward, motivation and reinforcement.**
- Children who study a musical instrument are more likely to **excel in all of their studies, work better in teams, have enhanced critical thinking skills, stay in school, and pursue further education.**
- It's notable that both teachers (89%) and parents (82%) rate music education highly as **a source for greater student creativity, a 21st century skill** that's highly likely to help young people stand out in an increasingly competitive global economy.
- **Music can enable the production of endorphins** from the pituitary gland and the central nervous system. Endorphins are usually produced to inhibit pain, but they can also give a feeling of euphoria.
- **Music can help reduce the production of the stress hormone, Cortisol,** that in the long run affects our learning capability, memory, blood pressure, cholesterol, and can increase the chances of heart disease.

## 2. IT IS FREE

- Students will be provided with an instrument and all necessary supplies for no cost.

### **3. IT LOOKS GOOD ON YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD!**

- Having 5 years of playing an instrument (grade 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) looks good if you are going to apply to **private high schools or STEM schools. It shows you are committed!**
- Participating in orchestra will help you learn to manage your time

### **4. YOU WILL MEET NEW PEOPLE AND HAVE A GOOD TIME!**

- It's a great way to **meet new friends**, and stay with old orchestra friends from your elementary school!
- Because of the way schedules are done, you will have orchestra friends in your lunch, gym, and many of your classes. So you will automatically know people in all of those places!
- **We play awesome music!** Past favorites include pop tunes and music from movies and TV like Pirates of the Caribbean, The Avengers, The Incredibles, Game of Thrones and more
- **The orchestra performs at community events**, including those at FMS, TCNJ, and also at local nursing homes. This can count towards community service or volunteer hours.
- **Outside of school performances have included** the EPEF reception, PES/FMS Pasta Dinners and Basket Auctions, Community Fest 2018, and concerts at the 1867 Sanctuary.