

West Des Moines
Elementary Orchestra
Developing Habits for Success
Guide Book
for Students and Parents
West Des Moines, Iowa

2024-2025



"I would like to teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music, for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys to learning." - Plato

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WELCOME TO ORCHESTRA!

Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning after summer break, we welcome you. Your child is on his/her way to a magical musical adventure. Please come along and enjoy the journey with us. Your support and encouragement are keys to developing habits for success. The West Des Moines Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability in educational programs and activities.

We are looking forward to a noteworthy year!

~



WDM Elementary Orchestra Faculty: Curtis Barr, Abby Hendricks, Matt Meyer, Michael Terrell and Carrie Beaderstadt

Research suggests that...

"Music more fully involves brain functions in both hemispheres than any other activity" and "that the artistic child optimizes the brain's bilateralism is theorized to be the reason for the increased intelligence."
– Dr. Frank Wilson, neurologist (UCLA Brain Scan Research)

"The life of the Arts, far from being an interruption or a distraction in the life of a nation, is close to the center of a nation's purpose – and is a test of the quality of a nation's civilization." ~ John Fitzgerald Kennedy

WDMCS Elementary Orchestra Lesson Expectations

Lessons:

- **Day of the week:** Orchestra lessons will be arranged once a week by your Orchestra Teacher.
- Elementary lessons are generally 25-30 minutes each week and are in small group format. Additionally there are group rehearsals where all the orchestra students at a particular school play together. Frequency of group rehearsals are generally every week, but can vary in frequency. *Keep in mind that not every elementary school offers group rehearsals.*
 - 4th grade typically gets 30 minute small group lessons once a week, and a 45 minute rehearsal with “everyone” mixed instruments.
 - 5th grade typically gets 25-30 minute small group lessons once a week, and rehearsals vary by school (usually 35 minutes).
 - 6th grade typically gets 25-30 minute small group lessons once a week. 6th grade meets independently before school on Wednesdays from 7:30-8:45 at Western Hills (45 minutes).
- Since each elementary school has a slightly different schedule, in order to get an exact schedule, you will need to contact Julisa Heredia. Julisa is the orchestra homeschool coordinator 4-12. You can contact her at herediaj@wdmcs.org. Please include: grade/instrument/school of interest in your email to assist Ms. Heredia with connecting you.
 - *Please keep in mind that elementary orchestra directors will start designing their lesson schedules at the beginning of each school year, so it's important to touch base with them before that occurs.*
 - ***The deadline to get placed with HSAP orchestra is October 1st of each school year. Contact the WDM homeschool coordinator Tami Prescott at prescottt@wdmcs.org for more information.***

Schedules: A copy of the Schedule will be posted in the instrumental room as well as each of the 4, 5, and 6th grade homeroom.

Punctuality: Students need to be ready to play ASAP when lesson time begins. It is important to be on time to your lessons each week.

Attendance: If your student is at school, he/she is expected to attend lessons.

West Des Moines Schools Orchestra Faculty

Curtis Barr

Indian Hills, Crestview
515-633-4727
barrc@wdmcs.org

Michael Terrell

Hillside, Western Hills
515-633-5814
terrellm@wdmcs.org

Matt Meyer

Jordan Creek, Fairmeadows
515-633-5285
meyerm@wdmcs.org

Carrie Beaderstadt

Clive, Crestview
515-633-5820
beaderstadtc@wdmcs.org

Abby Hendricks

Crossroads, Westridge,
CR 515-633-5607 WR 515-633-5485
hendricksa@wdmcs.org

Xavier Quinn

Valley Southwoods, Valley High School
515-633-4510
quinnx@wdmcs.org

Julisa Heredia

Stilwell Junior High
515-633- 6045
herediaj@wdmcs.org

Joyce Beyer

Valley High School
515-633-4219
beyerj@wdmcs.org



Supply List for Orchestra

Violin and Viola players will need a shoulder sponge and a large rubber band.



Cello and Bass players will need a rock stop (pictures below) These can be found at music stores: Beckers, Reimans and Amazon.



Music Books- Essential Elements Book 1.
Make sure it's the right instrument for your student.



Most instruments come with Rosin, but be sure you ask the local music stores to include it.



CARE OF INSTRUMENT



- Be responsible. Practice the habit by taking care of your instrument.
- Keep your instrument clean! Wash your hands before you play. After playing, wipe off the rosin dust, smudges, fingerprints, etc., with a soft, clean, cloth.
- Handle with care! Your instrument is made of breakable wooden parts, so repairs can be expensive and time-consuming.
- Store your instrument safely when you are not playing it.
 - * Cello and basses can stand in a corner of the room with the strings facing the corner.
 - * Violins and violas should be in their cases.
- Do not let your instrument get too hot or too cold. If the temperature is uncomfortable for you, it is also bad for your instrument. For example, never leave it in a car on a hot or cold day.
- Allow only your teacher or an experienced repair person to fix your instrument.
- In the Case:
 - * Violins and Violas

Before you pick up your case, make sure the latches are closed! Never push down on the case lid to make it close all the way. Before closing and latching it, check for things that may be out of place inside.
 - * Cello and Basses

The bow pocket of the case goes on the same side as the strings.
The music pocket is on the back.



PRACTICE GUIDELINES

"The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is the extra." ~ Anonymous



"Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good" ~ Malcolm Gladwell

Progress depends a great deal on what is achieved during daily home practice sessions. Proficiency is gained only through frequent use of the skills.

Practice Chart: Students will receive a practice chart from his or her orchestra instructor. Also, the chart in the front of the Essential Elements Book may be used.

Recorded Practice Time: HONEST practice time should be recorded on the practice chart and turned in during lessons each week. Parents, please check and sign practice charts. The practice charts are a means of communication.

Environment: Practicing should be done in an area free from distractions — away from the T.V., stereo, telephone, and family traffic with good lighting and a music stand.

- Violinists and violists should practice while standing although occasional practice while sitting with good posture is Okay too.
- Cellists need a chair with a flat seat
- Bassists should stand or use a stool approximately 2 inches shorter than his/her inseam.

Goals: While a sufficient amount of time per day is important, practice time will be used more efficiently if the student has specific goals in mind. These goals might include such things as:

- being able to keep the bow thumb bent or the pinkie curved
- being able to play a tune or exercise rhythmically correct
- attending to accurate finger placement — make it 'sound' right

I will try to help guide these goals from the lessons, but students who set their own goals will become independent musicians much more quickly.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Length of Time

- Beginning Students - 10 or 15 min at a time twice a day. Usually, beginners do not have the muscle tone or endurance to practice for long periods of time. It is counterproductive to practice with tired muscles.
- 2nd and 3rd Year Students: 30 — 45 min once a day or two shorter sessions. By the 2nd and 3rd year, students have developed some of the muscle tone and endurance needed for longer periods of time. However, two 15 or 20 min. sessions are often more productive even at this stage. Whatever works best for your family.

Parent Responsibility: Your child's success depends a great deal upon your sincere interest in his/her progress and participation. Spend some time listening to your child practice. Choose your words carefully when offering praise or constructive criticism. Your child is in a very vulnerable state right now. Help your child understand the more he/she practices now, the more fun it will be later.
PRACTICE REALLY DOES MAKE PERFECT - EVENTUALLY!

FINGERNAILS



String players need to keep their fingernails clipped short. Parents, please check to see this is done before each lesson and as necessary in between.

CRITICAL LISTENING

- **Listening:** Critical listening is essential for string players. Listen together or encourage your child to listen to recordings of his/her instrument. Take advantage of the special student ticket offers from the Des Moines Symphony. Or, try to identify the instruments of the orchestra by sound in music on the radio 90.1 FM. Listen especially for string instruments. This type of listening will help develop a role model for tone quality.
- **Singing:** Ask your child to sing a tune or exercise he/she is learning to play on the instrument. This encourages a mental image of the sound. Singing helps us develop critical listening skills which are so important for learning to play “in tune” on a string instrument.



Mission Statement

Working in partnership with each family and the community, it is the mission of the WDM Orchestra Program to educate responsible lifelong learners so that each student possesses the skills, knowledge, creativity, sense of self-worth and values necessary to thrive in and contribute to a diverse and changing world.

Shared Vision

The WDM Orchestra Program is a caring community of learners and educators in which we strive to know and lift each child. We inspire joy in learning, playing, and performing. Our program is dedicated to the preparation of each student's life journey by fostering the development of habits for success.

Goals and Objectives

The West Des Moines Elementary Orchestra introduces' students to the performing art of orchestra by:

- Fostering appreciation and enjoyment
- Encouraging creativity
- Making connections to the world around us
- Introducing and developing technique
- Introducing string specific terminology and notation
- Exploring various styles of music

In addition to these general goals for musical development, we expect to see individual student development in such areas as:

- Critical listening skills
- Intonation: left hand technique
- Tone Quality: right hand technique
- Musical Expression
- Scale study
- Solo repertoire development

Finally, because an orchestra, like a team, requires group and individual efforts, we also hope to see the students develop in the areas of:

- Self-expression
- Cooperation
- Critical thinking
- Resourcefulness
- Social Skills

Area Music Stores

Becker Fine Stringed Instruments

6567 University Avenue
Windsor Heights, Iowa
515-274-9420



Rieman Music

6501 Douglas
Des Moines, Iowa
515-278-4685
800-962-3658





Check out these Websites

www.wdmvalleyorchestra.org

WDMCS Orchestras YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube/c/wdmcsorchestras>

Des Moines Symphony

www.dmsymphony.org

Area Music Stores:

<http://beckerfineinstruments.com/>

<https://www.riemanmusic.com>

<https://www.uptempomusicstore.com>

String Resources:

www.stringmagazine.com

www.cello.org

www.americanviolasociety.org/



Sheet Music and More:

<https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/welcome.jsp>

<https://www.sharmusic.com>

<https://www.johnsonstring.com/>

School Addresses

**Clive Learning Academy
1600- 73rd Street
Windsor Heights**

**Crestview Elementary
8355 Franklin Ave.
Clive**

**Crossroads Park Elementary
1050 50th Street
West Des Moines**

**Fairmeadows Elementary
807 23rd Street
West Des Moines**

**Hillside Elementary
713 Eighth Street
West Des Moines**

**Jordan Creek Elementary
4105 Fuller Road
West Des Moines**

**Western Hills Elementary
600 39th Street
West Des Moines**

**Westridge Elementary
5500 EP True Parkway
West Des Moines**

**Valley High School
3650 Woodland Ave
West Des Moines**

**Valley Southwoods
625 S. 35th Street
West Des Moines**

**Indian Hills Junior High
9401 Indian Hills Drive
West Des Moines**

**Stilwell Junior High School
1601 Vine Street
West Des Moines**