

CONWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORCHESTRAS

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

**CONWAY MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA
PARENT AND STUDENT GUIDE
2022-2023**



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ORCHESTRA

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WELCOME TO MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA!

PURPOSE: The Conway Public Schools Orchestra program offers students the opportunity to learn an orchestral string instrument beginning in the sixth grade and continuing throughout their high school career. With almost 300 students enrolled and three full-time teachers, the Conway Orchestra program is a wonderful opportunity for your child to learn the discipline of music study, make music with others their age, and develop lasting friendships. String orchestra literature of many styles will be rehearsed and performed. Various materials will be used to develop and refine technique. Student advancement will be demonstrated and assessed through individual progress and required performances.

INSTRUMENT TECHNIQUE:

- Left and right hand coordination
- Finger dexterity through the use of scales and etudes
- "Fingerboard geography" (instrument positions) and shifting
- A wide repertoire of bow strokes and when to use them appropriately
- Principles of sound production

MUSIC APPRECIATION & EXPRESSION:

- A wide variety of repertoire
- Stylistic performance of repertoire
- Music in historical and cultural context
- Music in relation to the students' lives and experiences
- Performing with phrasing and musical expression
- Proper audience and stage etiquette
- Objective evaluation and constructive criticism of performances

ESSENTIAL MUSICAL SKILLS:

- Musical symbols and their functions
- Accurate sight-reading of notes and rhythms
- Visual and aural recognition of pitch, intervals, and tonality
- Elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture)
- Playing in tune
- Playing alone and with others
- Individual practice techniques

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS:

- Proper social and job etiquette
- Professional work ethic
- Problem-solving strategies
- Musician health and the prevention of performance-related injuries
- Managing performance anxiety
- Teamwork, self-discipline, time management, and confidence
- Balancing commitments and responsibilities

PHILOSOPHY: The orchestra program emphasizes the importance of QUALITY WORK, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, and TEAM-MINDEDNESS. The orchestra provides an enjoyable learning environment where students can develop skills that are necessary to become competent and independent musicians. To contribute to the success of the group, orchestra students experience a professional environment in an educational setting. The director immerses the students in practices, protocol, and etiquette identical to those followed by professional orchestras to drive learning, stage presence, and performance standards to the highest level. Students continue to develop their knowledge of music theory and music history to further their understanding of the music they perform as facets of becoming a "whole musician."

2022-2023 ORCHESTRA CALENDAR

August 25 & Sept. 1	Instrument Rental Night (students who still need one)	Conway HS Band Room, 4-7 pm
September 2	"Bach"-to-School Orchestra Family Night	Conway HS Courtyard, 6:30-8 pm
*September 27	7 th Grade "Informance"	at school during class time
*September 29	Beginner "Informance"	at school during class time
October 6	Solo/Ensemble Festival (grade 7 only)	Conway Junior High, 4-8 pm, times TBA
October 29	South Region Orchestra Auditions (grade 7 only)	Mills HS, Little Rock
November 4-5	South Region Orchestra Clinic (by audition)	Conway HS
*November 16	Combined Rehearsals for La Fiesta Orquesta	James H. Clark Auditorium
	7 th Graders: 9-11 am Beginners: 2-4 pm* after-school pickup	
*November 18	La Fiesta Orquesta Taco Supper, Concerts, and Silent Auction	Conway HS Cafeteria & James H. Clark Auditorium
*December TBA	MS Holiday Assemblies	during school TBA
*March/April TBA	Recruiting Concerts for rising 6 th graders	during school TBA
*May 10	Combined Rehearsals for Spring Concert	James H. Clark Auditorium
	7 th Graders: 9-11 am Beginners: 2-4 pm* after-school pickup	
*May 18	Middle School Orchestras Spring Concert and Awards Ceremony	James H. Clark Auditorium
	6:00 pm Beginners 7:30 pm 7 th Graders	

****ALL EVENTS MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK ARE REQUIRED.
ATTENDANCE WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE STUDENT'S GRADE****
Sync our **Google calendar** to your own by adding **conwayorchestras@gmail.com**



STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

All rules and regulations contained in the Conway Public Schools student handbook apply to ALL orchestra students during ALL orchestra activities.

- Respect all people and things in the music rooms. Any adult in the music room is to be treated as in charge.
- Other instruments are off-limits, including percussion and pianos.
- Food and drink are not allowed in the music rooms. Storage areas should be kept neat and free of trash.
- Students are expected to supply their own instruments (except bass players) and to purchase method books, orchestra t-shirts, and instrument accessories as needed.
- Students are strongly encouraged to upgrade the quality of their instruments, strings, and bows if they have not already, to allow them to achieve more nuance in tone quality and technique that only a finer instrument can provide.
- **Fingernails** should be trimmed so that the pad of the fingertip can easily make contact with the string. This is necessary to facilitate playing in tune. Students whose fingernails are not kept at an appropriate length will lose points off their grade and may be prevented from participating in class or performances until the student returns with an appropriate fingernail length.

ORCHESTRA PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE: Absences, tardies, and credit for late and make-up assignments will be handled as stated in the school handbook. Attendance at all concerts and after-school rehearsals is required and will be reflected in the student's grade.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES: Students should be ready at their seat with their instrument, music, and a pencil by the time designated by their teacher. They should tune and warm up in your seats until it is time to begin rehearsal. At the end of the period, students should loosen bows, pack instruments, and put music and instruments in the proper storage spaces. Inappropriate treatment of school instruments will result in forfeiture of use.

INSTRUMENT STORAGE: The orchestra room will be unlocked and supervised before and after school for students to drop off and pick up instruments. Storage rooms are not for keeping personal items. The storage room is not a social meeting place. Students will be assigned a slot on a storage rack.

While every attempt is made to ensure the safety of students' personal belongings, the music complex is a high traffic area. Expensive instruments and personal belongings should always be left in designated spaces. Items left unattended or not stored correctly sadly may be tampered with, with little to no recourse in finding the responsible party.

ORCHESTRA SUPPLIES: Each student should have the following items at their seat daily: BINDER and MUSIC (provided by the orchestra), PENCIL, ROSIN and a SOFT CLOTH, SHOULDER REST (violinists and violists) or ENDPIN STOP (cellists and bassists). At home, students should have a MUSIC STAND, METRONOME/TUNER or app, and a DEVICE for recording (phone, tablet, Chromebook, etc.).

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Music is an integral part of expression and identity in every culture and throughout every age. We believe music serves to enrich, inspire, and connect us all. The Conway Public Schools Orchestra program strives to be a safe and inclusive place for those from all backgrounds by celebrating the visible and invisible qualities that make each person unique: race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, family background, socioeconomic status, national origin, and other identities. Our orchestra is composed of individual instruments, each with their own unique voices and roles in the ensemble, and it is only when those individual voices are blended together in unity that we can experience music. So it is with each member of our orchestra: the more we embrace the diversity of each of our students' backgrounds, the more deeply we can understand those traits that unite us all as human beings.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

While there is no fee to be a member of the orchestra program, there are several required items in order to participate. These include method books; supplies such as rosin, shoulder rests, or endpin stops; orchestra t-shirts; and miscellaneous other expenses. Repairs, including broken strings, are at the expense of the student. A limited number of school-owned instruments are available for students to rent, and priority is given to families that have a legitimate financial need. Supplies, t-shirts, and school-owned instruments will not be distributed until forms have been received and items paid in full. Families with extenuating financial circumstances should contact their child's orchestra director to work out alternative payment arrangements.

GRADING POLICIES

Orchestra will be recorded on your permanent records as academic credit. This is a performance-based class, and performance and progress in class are the primary areas in which students will be assessed. **Students are expected to practice at home to reinforce concepts presented in class.** How much practice is dependent on the student's ability level and focus during their practice time. By the junior high school, students should be good managers of their practice time and know how to plan and problem-solve during a practice session.

Students' grades are made up of the following components:

- **PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR:** Personal responsibility and teamwork are very important in an orchestra, just as it is in a community or society. For this reason, it will also be counted as part of the student's grade. A musician's positive attitude, preparedness for rehearsals, and participation (professional demeanor) is very important in order to have an orchestra that will excel and grow in quality throughout the year. A STUDENT WITHOUT AN INSTRUMENT OR MUSIC IN CLASS WILL LOSE POINTS FROM THEIR GRADE FOR EACH INFRACTION.
- **PLAYING ASSESSMENTS:** Students will be expected to play by themselves periodically during each quarter for assessment and/or seating. Playing exams may contain excerpts from the literature, technique books, scales, or rhythm patterns and may be live or recorded by video or audio. Observed performance during class (correct notes, style, bowing, etc.) will also be considered.
- **OTHER ASSIGNMENTS:** Traditional "pencil and paper" or electronic assignments may be given to supplement instruction, including practice planners. Students should follow the teacher's instructions on completing and turning these in. Credit for late and make-up assignments will be handled as stated in the school handbook.
- **CONCERT PREPARATION AND PERFORMANCE:** Concerts are a **required** part of a student's grade. They are not only an opportunity for the students and teachers to evaluate musical progress, but they also serve as a common performance goal and let the students share the music with their families and friends. Just as a member of the football team is expected to play at every game, members of the orchestra are expected to follow through with this commitment to the ensemble.

The performance calendar is on the front page of this parent guide. ***Please post these dates on your calendar.*** School activity conflicts will be handled on an individual basis and should be worked out prior to the concert. Parents should contact the orchestra director **before the concert** in the event of illness or emergency. **Unexcused absences will result in a zero for the concert grade.** Grades will also be adjusted for the following infractions: tardiness, uniform violations, forgotten music, forgotten instrument, and unprofessional behavior.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Uniform concert dress is very important to the professional appearance of the orchestra. At the current time, the uniform code does not require identical dresses or jackets. To keep this flexibility, students should follow concert dress guidelines closely. Grades will be adjusted for students out of uniform (see grading procedures). If you have any problems purchasing uniforms, please inform an orchestra director immediately.

INFORMAL CONCERT ATTIRE: CONWAY ORCHESTRA T-SHIRT

All Conway middle school and junior high students wear the same orchestra t-shirt design. Wearing these shirts promotes unity within the group and is our informal concert uniform, along with a pair of blue jeans. If your child already has their t-shirt, make sure it still fits and is in good condition at the beginning of the school year.

FORMAL CONCERT ATTIRE: "SUNDAY BEST" (not needed until the Spring Concert in May)

Long dresses, skirts, or long dress slacks with blouses, or long slacks or khakis with tucked-in dress or polo-style shirts. Dressy shoes (no flip-flops or sneakers). No jeans, leggings, or shorts.

FOR ALL STUDENTS: Long hair should be pulled back or up so that students can see their conductor, and their audience can see their faces. No flashy or distracting jewelry. No hats. Midriff must be covered front and back when playing.

OPUS

In musical terms, an opus is a work or composition. For the Conway Public Schools Orchestras, **OPUS** is **Orchestra Parents United in Support**, our parent booster organization. OPUS exists to ensure our students receive the full benefit of their orchestra experience, providing support to the directors as well as financial oversight. Quite simply, this is achieved by the volunteer efforts of parents like you working in concert with the orchestra teachers and other equally dedicated parents. Volunteering at all-region, setting up at concert receptions, and assisting at Taco Supper go a long way to the continued success of the orchestra program. Our OPUS Board will provide several opportunities through the year for you to get

involved. Orchestra is a wonderful and enriching experience for our children not only as musicians, but also as young adults, and they will carry it with them long after they graduate from High School. Through the dedication of their teachers and most importantly, YOU THE PARENTS, the Conway Orchestra Program will continue to be a positive, strong, and successful experience for our children.

FUNDRAISING

"LA FIESTA ORQUESTA" TACO SUPPER: The annual "La Fiesta Orquesta" Taco Supper and Silent Auction is our primary fundraiser for the year. All proceeds from the event are used to provide things beyond music and instruments for the Orchestra such as camp and private lesson scholarships, trips, awards, concert receptions, and other incidentals and incentives. "La Fiesta Orquesta" features all Conway orchestra students in a relaxed, family-friendly setting. We serve a meal to over 1,000 people in a single night, in addition to hosting the concerts and silent auction. The concert itself is free, while tickets for the meal may be purchased in advance or at the door. We will need lots of parental help both prior to the Taco Supper and during the supper itself (it takes over 100 parent volunteers to pull off a night like this!). Please watch for and return the Taco Supper volunteer form as soon as you receive it.

SEATING SYSTEM AND CHAIR ORDER

Every orchestra class is a mix of students with a wide variety of ability and commitment levels. In this program, every student is expected to play to the best of their individual ability and commitment, where each is a valued member of the team and contributes to the overall success of the orchestra.

Competitive ranked seating creates a situation where "many lose in order for a few to win." The Conway Orchestra program has a tradition of replacing hostile competition between peers with a team-oriented mindset. For this purpose, a flexible seating system will typically be used, just as many college and professional orchestras do. This allows the orchestra to sound its best by placing strong players all around the ensemble, not just in stands closest to the conductor. This approach satisfies both the competitive and the non-competitive student. Strong players who are very serious about orchestra are given the opportunity to lead their section and their peers around them by their example. Students are typically seated in non-hierarchical order in complementary pairs, which allows them to learn from each other.

Every student is given the opportunity to give a significant contribution to their group because their importance is not attached to a chair. Because our students understand that the success of each individual contributes to the success of the group, the students themselves foster an environment where they help each other succeed. Section leaders with advanced playing skills should keep in mind that maturity, behavior, and leadership skills are also considered in the selection and seating process. Seniority is not a consideration for seating.

EXTRA PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Conway Orchestra students have the opportunity to perform in the following extracurricular events and ensembles, which will also count toward earning awards at the end of the school year.

SOUTH REGION ORCHESTRA: An ensemble of students who audition from the southern half of Arkansas. Consists of a Saturday audition in the fall, with the clinic occurring on Friday and all day Saturday one to two weeks later (7th graders only).

SOLO AND ENSEMBLE FESTIVAL: In the Spring of each year, individuals and small groups of students perform prepared accompanied solos and chamber music before a judge who rates it from I - V. Award medals are presented for ratings of superior (I) and excellent (II). The judge's comment sheets are given to all participants. (7th graders only).

ARKANSAS SYMPHONY YOUTH ENSEMBLES: Students can audition for and participate in the Arkansas Symphony Prelude and Academy Orchestras in Little Rock, sponsored by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. The Academy Orchestra utilizes winds, brass, and percussion as well. The Youth Ensembles do offer scholarships for tuition. For more information and to set up an audition time, please visit arkansassymphony.org.

SUMMER STRING CAMPS: There are several summer string programs around the state that provide a wonderful experience for all of our students. Intensive work on Region audition music, ensembles, and sectionals with master teachers provide an enriching experience and encourage students to advance their playing. The Conway Orchestra program also awards a limited number of **camp scholarships** to help defray some of the cost. Scholarship applications will be available in late April or early May, along with details about each camp.

AWARDS

Students have the opportunity to earn the following awards each year:

- **BRONZE STAR AWARD** (Beginning Orchestra): All students who participate in class and attend all concerts will receive a Bronze Star certificate and pin.
- **SILVER STAR AWARD** (Intermediate Orchestra): Intermediate students who participate in class, attend all concerts, and earn at least three points in two or more categories will be awarded a Silver Star certificate and pin.
- **OUTSTANDING MUSICIAN AWARD AND CERTIFICATE**: This award is given at the discretion of the directors to a student in each grade level who shows a strong positive and professional influence on the orchestra.

SCHOLASTIC INELIGIBILITY, FAILURE TO ATTEND REQUIRED REHEARSALS OR PERFORMANCES, OR NOT MAINTAINING A HIGH STANDARD OF PROFESSIONAL Demeanor MAY RESULT IN A STUDENT NOT RECEIVING AN AWARD.

POINTS SYSTEM FOR EARNING AWARDS

All-Region Orchestra:

- All-Region Audition - 1
- All-Region member - 2
- All-Region principal – 3

School Ensembles:

- Extra school performances - 1 each

Solo and Ensemble Festival:

- Rating of I - 2 each
- Rating of II - 1 each
(maximum: 3 entries)

Summer Activities:

- String Camp - 1
- Weekly private lessons - 1

Extracurricular Opportunities:

- Solo performance - 1 each (*max. 4 performances*)
- Weekly Private Lesson - 1 point per nine weeks
- Arkansas Symphony Youth Ensembles - 2 points per semester
- Orchestra Community Service - 1 point each

STUDENTS MUST EARN 3 OR MORE POINTS IN AT LEAST 2 CATEGORIES TO QUALIFY FOR AN AWARD

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INSTRUMENT CARE:

- **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIX AN INSTRUMENT YOURSELF!!! Bring it to school to be evaluated by a teacher.**
- Loosen the bow hair and wipe off any rosin dust after playing.
- Avoid extremes of temperature and temperature changes.
- Be extremely careful of banging instruments into things when transporting. Also, do not put weight on the instrument!!
- Extra strings, rosin, and other supplies are available from your orchestra director at cost. Your director will let you know the price of each item.
- An orchestra teacher can usually handle small repairs (broken strings or fallen bridges) at school for the cost of the replacement part. **Please DO NOT take your instrument to a shop for a broken string!!!**

PRIVATE LESSONS: Private lessons are strongly recommended for all Conway Orchestra students because they allow students to progress at their own pace and to work on solo and technical repertoire that will increase their individual skill level. Almost all Conway High School students who have been awarded college music scholarships have studied privately during their public school days. Many highly-qualified teachers live in the area, including many Arkansas Symphony musicians. Please request a list of private teachers any time during the year.

Limited funds are also available for partial **private lesson scholarships**, based on financial need as well as demonstrated work ethic and merit. Scholarship funds are paid directly to the private teacher on the student's behalf. An application is available at any time from your child's teacher.

GO TO CONCERTS! Students need to know you think that they and their membership and success in orchestra are important. One way you can show this is by attending their concerts throughout their school music careers. Even the high school students need to have someone in the audience that is there just for them! Out of respect for the performers, please stay for the entire concert – no one likes playing for an empty house!

It's also important for students to have role models and examples to look to. Attending a symphony concert as an audience member is a great family activity and a way for student musicians to broaden their exposure to music and learn so much from watching and hearing professionals perform. We have two wonderful orchestras in the area!

Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Performances are at the historic Robinson Center Music Hall in Little Rock. Student tickets are free on Sunday afternoons with a paying adult!!! Visit arkansassymphony.org for details.

Conway Symphony Orchestra: The CSO plays several concerts a year here in Conway at the Reynolds Performance Hall on the UCA campus, including a free concert each September. Visit conwaysymphony.org for details.