

6TH GRADE
ORCHESTRA
HANDBOOK

WHAT EVERY 6TH
GRADE PARENT AND
STUDENT SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT
STRINGS

6th grade string parents:

Welcome back to strings! I'm Mr. Martin, your student's new strings teacher. I look forward to a successful year and some great performance opportunities including the elementary school tour second semester. The 6th grade year is a transition year in the string orchestra program. The students have finished the "newness" of the first year, and have many things yet to learn on their respective instruments. Please look over this packet and then sign and return the last page. Inside you will find:

Required Materials for Class	3
Grading Criteria	4
String Instrument Dealers	5
Practice Tips	6
Listening Guide	7
Private Teachers	8
FAQ's	9-10

One of the big goals of this year is preparing the students for jr. high school orchestra. In order to do that, I need your help. Provide a quiet practice environment, and encourage your student to practice on a regular basis. Asking your students to play for you periodically will also help, as well as encouragement to "stick with it" during the times when they feel discouraged.

This is also a good year to start lessons. I encourage all students to take advantage of private lessons. Please seriously consider this opportunity. A list of area private teachers is included. In addition, the local dealers (Meyer, REW, Hume) all offer lessons.

Watch for any notes I might send home with your child including a monthly progress report which will be sent home at the end of each month. This will let you know how your child is progressing in string class. More information can also be found on our classroom blog, which is located at <http://mrmartinstrings.wordpress.com/>. On this blog I will keep additional resources, materials. If you have any questions email me at jmartinmd@olatheschools.com. It is difficult to reach me by phone, but you can leave a note with the office

Thanks,
Mr. Jeremy Martin

Getting started (again)

You will need:

- An instrument with bow (you will need your own this year)
- Rosin
- A cloth or rag to clean the strings
- Shoulder rest (violins and violas)/Rock stop (cellos and basses) I recommend one with a strap or one called “the black hole”. These two types of rock stops will not slip easily
- Essential Elements books 1 and 2
- A folder to keep all music in
- A pencil (always keep in your case)
- Your Olathe strings T-shirt

Things to remember:

- Always know when your strings days are. Don't forget to bring your equipment EACH strings day.
- Treat your instrument with care and respect at all times. Keep it safe at school, at home, and traveling in between.
- Strings is a class for you with homework and a grade. Your homework will be to practice EVERY DAY.
- Strings class is not recess. Come attentive and ready to learn.
- HAVE FUN! Learning a stringed instrument is a lot of work, but it's also fun!



Grading

It is important to know that orchestra is a class and students will receive a grade. There are two grades for orchestra. One is a letter grade and the other is an effort grade. The effort grade will be an E (excellent), S (satisfactory), or U (unsatisfactory).

Letter Grade

Students' letter grades will be based on the following:

- Active Participation in class
- Monthly Progress Reports
- Attendance at concerts
- Playing tests (demonstrating left hand, right hand, and musical skills)
- Compositions or and other assignments

Effort Grade

Student's effort grade will be based upon their practicing. All practicing counts including: practicing for lessons, practicing with friends, listening to the music we are playing in class, and performing at home for guardians or pets.

- Students who practice an average of over 300 minutes per month will receive an E
- Students who practice an average of 200-300 minutes will receive an S
- Students who practice an average of 100-200 minutes will receive a U

Practice calendars will be handed out at the beginning of each month. They will also be on the class blog (mrmartinstrings.wordpress.com). They will be due at the end of the month or the first week of the new month. They can be emailed to me @ jmartinmd@olatheschools.com. I have included several practicing tips on our classroom blog. Please look at those carefully and give me suggestions of other strategies that work for you and you child.

Dealers of Stringed Instruments for Rental and Purchase

These are just a few of the local music dealers, most of whom I have worked with in the past and recommend:

-Meyer Music Co.

10122 W. 119th, Overland Park, Ks
491-6636

New and used instruments. Offers rent-to-own program.

Check www.meyermusic.com to rent instruments and get supplies on-line that will be delivered to the school for you.

-REW Music

1080 W. Santa Fe Rd. at the corner of Parker and Santa Fe in Olathe
780-4426

Offers rent-to-own program

-Hume Music

Located on 151st at 69 Highway.
897-7900

New and used instruments. Offers rent-to-own program.

-K.C. Strings

5826 Merriam Dr., Merriam, Ks
677-0400

A variety of new and reconditioned high quality instruments for a wide price range.

The following brands are suggested student line instruments. With proper care, they can last many years: -Knilling -Glaesel -Scherl & Roth -Lewis

I have had many parents try to get an instrument from Ebay or another internet site. I caution highly against this. Even though you can find what appears to be a great deal, the instruments you can end up getting are often of extremely poor quality, with a bad sound, difficult to care for, and usually causing many problems and repairs that can cost more in the long run. Please be sure you can see and try out an instrument before purchasing it. Feel free to ask me about any instruments you find. I will be glad to look at any instruments for you, and tell you if I think it's worth purchasing or repairing.

-Mr. Martin

Mr. Martin's Top Ten Ways to Practice!!

1. **Practice more days for less time:** It is better to do 10 minutes several times a week rather than 1 hour once a week
2. **Practice makes permanent:** The way you practice is the way you will play. So if you make a mistake go back to an earlier spot and fix your mistake. Don't just patch the mistake and continue playing. Once you have made the correction repeat several times to make sure you have learned the correct habit.
3. **Practice slow:** Start out at a slow tempo using a metronome (<http://www.metronomeonline.com/>). When you can play the music accurately increase the speed.
4. **Practice with background music:** It is normally better and more engaging to practice with a CD, DVD, SmartMusic, or some kind of other accompaniment.
5. **Practice with others:** Sometimes the best way to practice is to get together with someone in your class and play with them
6. **Focus on sections that need the most work:** It is fun to practice easy music, but make sure you focus on those sections that are most difficult
7. **Play through once:** Once you get better at a piece try to play from beginning to end without stopping no matter what!
8. **End on a happy note:** End your practice sessions by playing something you enjoy. Go out to the music stores and find some books at your level that have music that you know and like.
9. **Perform for someone:** You could perform for your cat, dog, mom, dad, grandma, uncle. Schedule your performance in advance and this will give you something to work towards.
10. **Find a quiet place where your siblings and dog aren't going to bother you**

*Parents: Student may sometimes need reminders to practice, just as they need reminders to do homework. It is not bad if student needs to be reminded to practice, in fact that is perfectly normal. Hopefully, these strategies will make practicing more productive and engaging.

Listening is an important part of orchestra. I have included here a list of string artists and orchestra to get you and your child started in listening to orchestra and string music. Not all of these artists perform classical music. String instruments are very diverse and players of string instruments perform a multitude of styles and genres of music. I would encourage you to look for some of these musicians in local music stores or internet music stores (itunes, napster, ect.) or by searching on the web to hear them play. Remember that by going to youtube.com you may be able to see some of these artists perform on the internet for free!

String Listening Guide

Classical Listening:

Violinists: Itzak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, Annie Sophie Mutter, Gil Shaham, Isaac Stern, Jasha Heifetz, Fritz Kreisler

Violists: William Primrose, Pinchas Zukerman (also plays violin),

Cellists: Yo-Yo Ma, Rostropovich, Gary Hoffman, Jacqueline Dupre, Matt Haimovitz, Pablo Casals, Pierre Fournier, Julian Lloyd Weber

Bassists: Edgar Meyer

Orchestras: New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Concertgebouw, Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic

Notable Conductors: Leonard Bernstein, Herbert Von Karajan, Bruno Walter, Sir George Solti, Leonard Slatkin, James Levine, Pierre Boulez

Other Genres:

*Note there are many genres including: Bluegrass, Blues, Old Time Fiddling, Cajun Fiddling, Jazz, Irish Fiddling, Western Swing, Scottish Fiddling, Rock, ect. Some artists play many of these different styles and are hard to classify.

Regina Carter -jazz violin

Turtle Island String Quartet -jazz

Mark O'Connor -bluegrass/jazz violinist

Todd Mark Rubenstein -string quartet tributes to: Coldplay, Weezer, Led Zepplin, Radiohead, ect.

Mark Wood -rock string music using electric instruments, is part of the Trans Siberian Orchestra

Apocalyptica-cello quartet which plays instrumental versions of Metallica's music

Edgar Meyer- bass player who plays all kinds of genres

Rashad Eggleston-cello fiddle player plays in the band Crooked Still and many others

Liz Carroll-Irish Fiddler

Bruce Molsky-old time fiddler

Darol Anger- Jazz violinist

Nuttin But Stringz- Hip hop/rap string artists

Natalie Haas-cello fiddler (often plays with Mark O'Connor)

Let me know of others I should add to the list

Private Lessons

Private lessons are always a great idea for string students and enhance what we do in the classroom. Students who study privately as compared to those who don't:

1. Are more often are interested in playing their instrument in college
2. Enjoy practicing more, practice longer and more frequently setting goals for their practice sessions

In addition to this list of private teachers, Meyer Music, REW (Olathe and Lenexa), and Hume Music all offer private lessons for string players.

Here is a list of local private teachers:

Lisa Jackson	Violin	Olathe	(913)780-5355	lisajbrian@aol.com
Naomi Miller	Violin	Overland Park	(913)423-3009	nomi070@hotmail.com
Sheri Cain	Violin	Olathe	(913)254-7461	violiness@sbcglobal.net
Susan Fuller	Violin	Olathe	(913)894-1203	
Amy Gowan	Violin/Vla	Olathe REW	(913)780-4426	
Don McCoy	Violin/Vla	Olathe REW	(913)780-4426	
Lubi Paskaleva	Violin/Vla	Overland Park	(913)782-7061	paskaleva22@yahoo.com
Monty Carter	Violin/Vla	Plaza Area	(913)967-7117	
Nina Shultz	Cello	Olathe	(913)782-0727	
Josh Kulzer	Cello	Overland Park	(913)782-7061	josh@joshuakulzer.com
Andrea Kelley	Cello	Overland Park	(913)515-3632	
Trilla Ray Carter	Cello	Plaza Area	(816)363-5102	
Brian Lynn	Cello/Bass	Olathe REW	(913)780-4426	
Ken Mitchell	Bass	Overland Park	(913)831-0591	

I can recommend a private teacher for you so please give me a call or email me and I will help you locate someone who is suitable for you child.

FAQ's

Q: Is my child musically gifted?

A: All students are capable of being successful in orchestra. The most important key to their success is how hard they work at it.

Q: Is orchestra a useful class?

A: Orchestra teaches many useful skills that including: Creative thinking, the ability to work in a team, and cultural understanding. For more information about this important issue, check out “Why Study Music” on the classroom blog (mrmartinstrings.wordpress.com).

Q: When are the concerts?

A: I am still working on the scheduling for these concerts, but I will send info home soon. With all important info I try to email it to you, send it home, and post it on our blog.

Q: What should my kid wear to the concert?

A: They should wear their orchestra tee-shirt along with nice jeans (no holes). In addition, please wear closed toe shoes

Q: What happens if we break a string?

A: If you are renting from a music store, take it to that store ASAP and they will get you a new one and put it on right there. Otherwise you can buy one (most brands are okay but I don't recommend supersensitive strings)

Q: What if we need a repair?

A: The music stores listed earlier all do repairs (it should be free if you are renting from them). I can do basic things like put on new strings or move a bridge, but most other things should be handled by a professional. Let me know ahead of time that the instrument is in need of repair. That way I can try to have an instrument available for the student to use in class while their instrument is

being repaired. If you have questions about it please call me and I will make a recommendation.

Q: How do I tune this thing at home?

A: The strings of the violin are E (skinniest string), A, D, and G (Fattest String). The strings of the viola and cello are A, D, G, and C. Lastly the strings of the bass are G, D, A, and E. You can use a tuner or piano to find these notes. Also there are programs online that will give you some notes. <http://www.metronomeonline.com/> is a site that will give you an A. There are two sources to tune the instrument. The fine tuners will do minor adjustments. The pegs are used for larger adjustments. For both the fine tuners and the pegs you will turn it like a screw (when you tighten the pitch goes up, when you loosen the pitch goes down). Be careful when using the pegs because if you get it too tight the string will break. I am also always willing to tune your child's instrument and music stores are also willing to do it. Remember also that the best way to keep in tune is to keep it in an area where the temperature is steady (not too hot or too cold).

Q: Where can my child see good examples of playing?

A: I will encourage students to go to concerts throughout the year. There are many great local groups and I would encourage you to go to high school and Olathe Area Youth Symphony Concerts. Also, I would recommend listening to some of the artists I have on my listening guide. You can do this by getting their cd's or by finding these artists on youtube.com. Listen to a wide variety of styles and different artists and let me know who your favorites are. Youtube is a site that should be explored with an adult.

Please let me know if there are other questions I should add to this list.

Dear students and parents,

Please read the following statement to indicate that you have received the information in these guidelines and return to Mr. Martin. You may also send me an email indicating that you have viewed the handbook. In your email please include the name of your child, what grade they are in, and what school they attend. If you have any questions, please contact me at jmartinmd@olatheschools.com.

Thanks,

Mr. Jeremy G. Martin

MY CHILD AND I HAVE READ THE ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK AND UNDERSTAND THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS CLASS.

GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

DATE

Please include your contact information.

Student name _____

Phone Number _____

Contact email address _____