

CONWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORCHESTRAS

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE



MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA 2019-2020 PARENT GUIDE

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Find copies of this parent guide, important forms, and our calendar online at

ORCHESTRA.CONWAYSCHOOLS.ORG

2019-2020 ORCHESTRA CALENDAR

- Sept 14** **South Region Orchestra Auditions** (7th grade only)
Conway High School
- Sept 20-21** **South Region Orchestra Clinic** (by audition)
Mills HS (Little Rock), Formal Concert Dress
- October 23** **Combined Beginner Rehearsal for La Fiesta Orquesta**
2-4 pm, Conway High School band room
- October 24** **Combined 7th Grade Rehearsal for La Fiesta Orquesta**, 2-4 pm, Conway High School band room
- Nov 1** **"La Fiesta Orquesta" Taco Supper, Concerts, and Silent Auction**
Conway High School Cafeteria & Buzz Bolding Arena
Times TBA, Orchestra T-Shirts and Jeans
- Dec TBA** **Holiday Assemblies** (during school)
Dates/Times TBA; dress: seasonal casual
- Jan/Feb** **Recruiting Concerts**, Orchestra T-Shirts and Jeans
RDMS Friday, Jan. 31, 9:30 am
CSMS Friday, Jan. 31, 2:00 pm
SMS Tuesday, Feb. 4, 9:30 am
CMS Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2:00 pm
- April 7** **Solo and Ensemble Assessment** (7th grade only)
After school, Times TBA, Conway Junior High
- May 5** **City-wide Combined Beginner Rehearsal**
2-4 pm, James H. Clark Auditorium
- May 7** **City-wide Combined 7th Grade Rehearsal**
2-4 pm, James H. Clark Auditorium
- May 11** **Middle School Orchestra Spring Concert and Awards Ceremony**
6:30 pm, James H. Clark Auditorium

****ALL CONCERTS ARE REQUIRED EVENTS. ATTENDANCE WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE STUDENT'S GRADE****

ONLINE REGISTRATION AND PARENT GUIDE CONTRACT

Registering your information with the Conway Orchestra program is as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Visit our website at orchestra.conwayschools.org and click the "Online Registration Form" link
2. Fill out the parent contact information and parent guide contract
3. Click submit – you're done!

Or, Scan the QR code and fill it out on your phone:



ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Conway Orchestras website:** orchestra.conwayschools.org
Find copies of this parent guide, other important forms, and our calendar online
- Sync our **Google calendar** to your own by adding conwayorchestras@gmail.com

Please provide and keep current email addresses on file with your child's orchestra director.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Like and follow us on **Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram** by adding **@conwayorchestra**. We'll post photos, videos, reminders, and other fun and useful items here throughout the year. Don't forget to tag us as well!

MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

PURPOSE

The Conway Public Schools Orchestras offer your student the opportunity to play an orchestral string instrument beginning in the sixth grade and continuing throughout their high school career. With over 300 students enrolled and three full-time teachers, the Conway Orchestra program is a wonderful opportunity for your child to learn

a string instrument, to make music with others their age, and to develop lasting friendships. Students are expected to supply their own instruments (except bass players) and to purchase method books, orchestra T-shirts, and instrument accessories as needed.

BEGINNING ORCHESTRA (sixth grade): A class for any student wishing to begin instruction on violin, viola, cello, or bass, with emphasis on fundamental posture and playing positions, music reading, and tone production.

INTERMEDIATE ORCHESTRA (seventh grade): A continuation of fundamentals with the addition of more advanced bowing styles, keys, and rhythms. More emphasis is placed on part playing within chamber groups and large ensembles.

PHILOSOPHY

The orchestra program emphasizes the importance of **QUALITY WORK, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, and TEAM-MINDEDNESS**. The orchestra program aims to provide an enjoyable learning environment where students can develop skills that are necessary to become competent and independent musicians. Students are also introduced to fundamentals of music theory and music history to further their understanding of the music they perform as facets of becoming a “whole musician.”

CLASS EMPHASIS

Class emphasis is on individual technique as well as ensemble playing. String orchestra literature of many styles will be rehearsed and performed. Various materials will be used to improve technique, including technical exercises and scales. Student advancement will be demonstrated and assessed through individual progress and required performances.

For detailed student learning expectations for orchestra, please visit the orchestra website at orchestra.conwayschools.org.

INSTRUMENT TECHNIQUE	ESSENTIAL MUSICAL SKILLS	MUSIC APPRECIATION AND EXPRESSION	PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
<p>Left and right hand coordination</p> <p>Finger dexterity through the use of scales and etudes</p> <p>“Fingerboard geography” (instrument positions) and shifting</p> <p>Vibrato</p> <p>A wide repertoire of bow strokes and when to use them appropriately</p> <p>Principles of sound production</p>	<p>Musical symbols and their functions</p> <p>Accurate sight-reading of notes and rhythms</p> <p>Visual and aural recognition of pitch, intervals, and tonality</p> <p>Elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture)</p> <p>Playing in tune</p> <p>Playing alone and with others</p> <p>Practice techniques</p>	<p>A wide variety of repertoire</p> <p>Stylistic performance of repertoire</p> <p>Music in relation to historical and cultural context</p> <p>Music in relation to the students’ lives and experiences</p> <p>Performing with phrasing and musical expression</p> <p>Proper audience and stage etiquette</p> <p>Objective evaluation and constructive criticism of performances</p>	<p>Proper social and job etiquette</p> <p>Professional work ethic</p> <p>Problem-solving strategies</p> <p>Musician health and the prevention of performance-related injuries</p> <p>Managing performance anxiety</p> <p>Teamwork, self-discipline, time management, and confidence</p>

ORCHESTRA SUPPLY LIST

Each student should have the following items at their seat daily:

- A MUSIC FOLDER or 3-RING BINDER will be provided by the orchestra. This may be checked to make sure all music is present and appropriately marked. Replacement binders are \$2 each.
- A sharpened PENCIL with an eraser
- Workable ROSIN and a SOFT CLOTH to clean the instrument
- A SHOULDER REST for Violinists and Violists, or an ENDPIN STOP for Cellists and Bassists.

OPTIONAL, but VERY helpful:

- MUSIC STAND for at-home practice
- METRONOME and TUNER, or metronome and tuner apps
- VIDEO CAMERA, phone, tablet, or other device for recording

EXPECTATIONS OF ORCHESTRA STUDENTS

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

- Respect all people and things in the orchestra room. Any teacher in the music room is to be respected as the person in charge.
- Instruments other than yours are off-limits, including percussion instruments and pianos.
- The office is off-limits unless you need to speak to a teacher. Please knock on the door.
- Food, drink, candy, and gum are not allowed in the music wing.
- Storage shelves, cubbies, and storage rooms should be kept neat and free of trash.
- Large ensemble rooms and storage rooms are off-limits before school, during lunch, and after school unless you are getting your instrument or putting it away, or with prior permission. Do not loiter in these rooms.

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. You may tune and warm up in your seats until it is time to tune. Do not do homework or read books during rehearsal. At the end of the period loosen bow, pack instrument, and put music and instruments in the proper storage space. 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 spaces are not for personal items such as backpacks or binders. The storage area is not a social meeting place. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR INSTRUMENT IN THE CAR!** Cellos and basses should be stored on the appropriate racks. Cubbies are subject to search at any time and without warning, and should be kept clean and free of trash.

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

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

All students will be evaluated in an ongoing manner throughout the school year. Most of the time this will be done informally as a large group, but sometimes a small group or even individuals may be asked to play a certain passage to check for mastery. This helps to ensure that each member of the ensemble understands the concepts presented in rehearsal.

Students will also be asked to play individually for assessment and seating purposes (i.e. playing tests for a grade). Evaluations may be audio or video-recorded during class time or at home. Specific instructions for performance evaluations will be given, and all school policies regarding late or make-up work will apply.

FINGERNAIL LENGTH

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.

SEATING SYSTEM

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 important to the overall success of the orchestra.

Competitive ranked seating creates a situation where “many persons must lose in order for a few to win.” The orchestra program aims to continue its tradition of replacing hostile competition between peers with teamwork. For this purpose, a flexible seating system will typically be used, just as many college and professional orchestras do. This system allows the orchestra to sound its best by placing strong players all around the orchestra, 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 who are happy just to be a part of the orchestra are seated in non-hierarchical order in complementary pairs. Seating in complimentary pairs allows students 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.

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. At the junior high level, students are still learning how to be good managers of their practice time and learning how to problem-solve during a practice session.

A student's grade is 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.** Students may earn extra credit by attending recitals and concerts containing orchestral string instruments. Students should bring in programs signed by a parent for verification. These points will not be added if the student habitually forgets their instrument.

PLAYING TESTS

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.

WRITTEN/ELECTRONIC ASSIGNMENTS

Traditional “pencil and paper” or electronic assignments may be given to supplement instruction. Students should follow the teacher’s instructions as to how to complete and turn these in. Credit for late and make-up assignments will be handled as stated in the school handbook.

PRACTICE RECORDS

Middle School Orchestra students may be asked to keep a Practice Record or Journal. The log must be initialed by a parent and handed in each nine weeks according to the teacher’s instructions.

- Beginners: total of at least 640 minutes per nine weeks (80 minutes each week for eight weeks)
- 7th Graders: total of at least 960 minutes per nine weeks (120 minutes each week for eight weeks)

CONCERTS

Concerts are a ***required*** part of the Orchestra program. 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.

A concert and performance calendar is at the front 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.

SCHOLASTIC ELIGIBILITY

STUDENTS MUST MAINTAIN A PASSING GRADE IN ORCHESTRA EACH SEMESTER IN ORDER TO CONTINUE ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM. A STUDENT WHO FAILS A SEMESTER OF ORCHESTRA WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO RETURN.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Uniform concert dress is very important to the professional appearance of the orchestra. Grades will be adjusted for students out of uniform (see grading procedures). If you have any problems purchasing the necessary items, please inform an orchestra director immediately.

CONWAY ORCHESTRA T-SHIRTS

All students will be asked to purchase a Conway Orchestra t-shirt. Wearing these shirts promotes unity within the group and is our informal concert uniform. If your child already has one, make sure it still fits and is in good condition at the beginning of the school year.

FORMAL CONCERT ATTIRE (not required until Spring concert)

Girls: "Sunday" Dress: long dresses, skirts, or long dress slacks with blouses for girls. No sleeveless, backless, or spaghetti straps. Skirts and dresses should go past the knee when seated. Dressy shoes (no flip-flops or sneakers). Casual concerts will be performed in Orchestra t-shirts and blue jeans.

Boys: "Sunday" Dress: long slacks or khakis (no jeans or shorts), tucked-in dress or polo-style shirts. Dressy shoes (no sneakers or flip-flops). Casual concerts will be performed in Orchestra t-shirts and blue jeans.

FOR ALL PERFORMANCES, STUDENTS SHOULD PULL LONG HAIR BACK AND OUT OF THEIR FACE SO THEY CAN SEE THEIR CONDUCTOR AND SO THEIR AUDIENCE CAN SEE THEM.

FUNDRAISING

"LA FIESTA ORQUESTA" TACO SUPPER

The annual "La Fiesta Orquesta" Taco Supper is our primary fundraiser for the year. All proceeds from the Taco Supper are used to provide things beyond music and instruments for the Orchestra such as camp scholarships, trips, awards, concert receptions, and other incidentals. Taco Supper is in late Fall and will feature all Conway orchestra students performing in an informal setting. We serve a meal to over 1,000 people in a single night in addition to hosting the concerts and a silent auction. The concert itself is free, and 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.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

While there is no fee to be a member of the orchestra program, there are several items that students are required to have in order to participate. These include method books, supplies for their instruments (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 an extenuating financial circumstance should contact their child's orchestra director to work out alternative arrangements or payment plans.

AWARDS

The following awards are presented by the Conway Public Schools Orchestra program 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

SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS MUST EARN 3 POINTS IN AT LEAST TWO CATEGORIES TO QUALIFY FOR AN AWARD.

All-Region Orchestra:

Tryout for All-Region	1 point
All-Region member	2 points
All-Region principal	3 points

Solo and Ensemble Contest (maximum 3 entries):

Rating of I	2 points each
Rating of II	1 point each

Other Auditioned Orchestras:

Arkansas Symphony Youth Orch.	2 points each semester
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Private Lessons 1 point each 9 weeks

Extracurricular Performances

Performance of solo or ensemble 1 point per performance at church, recitals, etc. (max. 4 performances)
(Program must be turned in with parent signature)

Summer Activities (prior to current school year):

String Camp 1 point

Weekly private lessons 1 point

Orchestra community service 1 point per service

EXTRA PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Students who are enrolled in the Conway Orchestras have the opportunity to perform in the following extracurricular organizations, which will also count toward their award points.

SOUTH REGION ORCHESTRA CLINIC

An orchestra 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.

SOLO AND ENSEMBLE ASSESSMENT

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.

ARKANSAS SYMPHONY YOUTH ENSEMBLES

Students can audition for and participate in the Arkansas Symphony Youth Ensembles in Little Rock, sponsored by the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. For more information and to set up an audition time, please visit www.arkansassymphony.org.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INSTRUMENT CARE

- Loosen the bow hair and wipe off any rosin dust after playing.
- Instruments are very sensitive to heat and cold. Avoid extremes of temperature.
- Instruments can sometimes open at the seams, especially in winter. Bring it to school to be sent off for repair. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIX IT YOURSELF!!!**
- Since they are made of wood, be 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 as a convenience. Your director will let you know how much each item is.
- An orchestra teacher can usually handle small repairs (broken strings or fallen bridges) at school for the cost of the replacement part. Bring the instrument to school and let the teachers decide what repairs must be made.
- **Please DO NOT take your instrument to a shop for a broken string!!! Directors can fix that very quickly for you!**

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 repertoire that will increase their individual skill level. Almost all Conway Senior High 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.

SUMMER STRING CAMPS

There are several summer string programs that are wonderful experiences for all of our students to enrich experience and encourage students to advance their playing. The Conway Orchestra

program 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.

OPUS: ORCHESTRA PARENTS UNITED IN SUPPORT

In musical terms, an opus is a work or composition. In the context of the Conway Public Schools Orchestras, OPUS is Orchestra Parents United in Support. OPUS exists to ensure our children receive the full benefit of their orchestra experience. 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. Providing transportation for large instruments, helping set up the reception after a concert, and assisting at Taco Supper go a long way to the continued success of the orchestra program. 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.

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. It is the experience of your orchestra directors that in spite of the fact that they will tell you otherwise, 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!

Arkansas Symphony Orchestra: Performances are in Little Rock. Student tickets are free on Sunday afternoons with a paying adult!!!

Conway Symphony Orchestra: The CSO plays several concerts a year here in Conway at the Reynolds Performance Hall on the UCA campus.