

Dear orchestra students and parents,

Welcome to the orchestra program at Wheaton Christian Grammar School!

Parents,

- First, a hearty thank-you for entrusting your son or daughter to the orchestra program this year. It is not an exaggeration to say “We couldn’t do it without you!”
- Your student’s success is a team effort. Consistent personal practice is essential. My work during the school day, your encouragement to them after school, and their diligence in daily practice are all necessary for them to mature as musicians.

Students, you are in for a treat!

Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Students and parents must sign the commitment form and return it by **Tuesday, September 2nd**. Turning in a signed commitment form will count as one of the first orchestra grades this semester. Please do your best to turn it in by the deadline for full credit!

I am so looking forward to spending the year with these musicians, and to partnering together as fellow members of the body of Christ.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns you may have!

Sincerely,

Ms. Val Terdina

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What is orchestra, and why do we do it?

Orchestra is a place to set a standard of excellence.

- Through the discipline of practice and rehearsal, students will build habits of consistency and excellence in life and work.

Orchestra is a place to be encouraged and challenged.

- Through experimentation and improvisation, students will learn both how to succeed and how to fail! They will learn how to be creative, not perfect.

Orchestra is a place to celebrate our diverse heritage.

- Throughout the year, we'll play a variety of repertoire on a variety of instruments. The body of Christ is diverse, different parts with different functions (1 Cor. 12).

Orchestra is a place to be deeply known and deeply loved.

- Music is a craft that demands a balanced awareness of both self and community. We seek to better know ourselves and to better serve our neighbors.

Orchestra is a place to grow in wisdom, kindness, and courage.

- I pray that orchestra students will become wise, courageous, and kind. I pray that 8th grade graduates will exemplify the fruits of the Spirit, and lead others to do likewise.

To be clear, we don't do orchestra primarily because music is great (although it is). We do orchestra to be changed as individuals and in community into truer reflections of Christ.

What does this mean for parents and students?

Students will be expected to practice consistently.

- Students should take home their instruments every day. It's a great visual reminder to open your case and spend a few minutes in the practice room. Consistent personal practice (a minimum of five days / week) is necessary for improvement.

Students will frequently encounter opportunities to grow through challenge.

- The discipline of music allows students to encounter obstacles they can't presently overcome, to work diligently towards mastering them, and to acknowledge their accomplishment through performance.
- This process is a microcosm of the fruitful work God designed us to do, and it requires us to fail. Yes, we want our students to fail! In line with the counsel of James 1, we want to draw near to the Lord through struggle, and to rejoice through it all, knowing that we are made stronger in our weakness.

What is expected in orchestra?

1. *Respect the teacher.*

- When the teacher is talking, you should not be.
- As soon as the director steps onto the podium, there should be no talking.
- Students are encouraged to discuss seating placement or solo selections with the teacher, but will be expected to accept the decision as final.

2. *Respect materials.*

- When class begins, students should be in their seats with their instrument, music binder, method book, and pencil ready.
- Instruments are to be stored in assigned instrument lockers. Students may not leave instruments outside lockers or in the hallway.
- Students should bring their instruments home daily to practice.
- If materials are lost or broken, students will be expected to cover replacement fees.
- Repair of rental instruments is handled by our rental company, Quinlan and Fabish. Their representative will visit the school weekly for any necessary repairs.

3. *Respect your peers.*

- When others are playing or speaking, listen before you respond.
- Take responsibility for yourself and your learning. The orchestra is a team, and we're all responsible for our success or failure.

4. Students who are late to rehearsal must provide a tardy slip.

5. Absolutely no gum, food, or drink in class.

Violation of these policies will result in a warning.

- **4th-5th graders** will receive a 5-point deduction from their grade per violation (missing instrument, missing binder, tardy to sectional or class).
- **6th-8th graders** will receive a detention per every 3 violations.

Throughout the semester, I will strive to communicate proactively and frequently with parents as we partner together for each student's success.

Grading

Grades are based on an average of Attendance/Participation in Sectionals, Classes, and Concerts, as well as Practice Videos and Assignments.

Sectional Attendance.....15%

- Students are required to attend weekly sectionals. This small group time is essential for their success in learning an instrument. Punctuality is important.
- Students will not be allowed to miss sectionals to make up homework, tests, or quizzes.

Class Attendance.....15%

- Students are required to attend rehearsals. Absences or early dismissals for sports or extenuating circumstances must be reported to the front office to be considered excused.

Concert Attendance.....30%

- Concerts are an important part of demonstrating learning as an individual and as an ensemble. This is what students will remember after they graduate! Attendance at concerts is absolutely mandatory.
- If students are unable to attend, they will be able to make up the grade for partial credit – but they will not be able to “make up” what is gained through whole-hearted performance alongside their peers.

Practice Videos.....30%

- Students are required to submit one practice video per quarter. These check-ins are a way for me to evaluate how students are practicing, and to assess progress on an individual basis. The goal is progress, not perfection.

Assignments.....10%

- I may occasionally assign written work to assess students’ comprehension and to provide opportunities for them to flex their compositional muscles.

Seating Auditions

Every returning Junior High student (6th-8th grade) will play an audition at the beginning of the school year. Students will be assigned seats within the section, which will rotate as needed throughout the year. Musicianship, performance, behavior, and attitude are all factors that contribute to the seating process.

The goal is for students to fail often. The more opportunities we have to encounter situations that are daunting, insurmountable, or just plain scary, the more opportunities we have to be shaped into a New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Concert Uniforms

Students are required to provide their own uniforms.

- Boys: Black shirt, black dress slacks, black belt, black socks, black dress shoes.
- Girls: Black dress OR black blouse and skirt (ankle-length or longer) OR black blouse and black dress pants; black socks and shoes.
 - Skirts must be ankle-length or longer! Remember that musicians play with legs shoulder-width apart, so skirts must be modest when seated. This is a cautionary tale. Better to be comfortable than cute.

Concerts and Important Dates

The concerts listed below are mandatory and may not be missed for any reason other than illness or extenuating circumstance. Students who miss a concert will receive a letter-grade deduction in their quarter grade.

Veterans Day School Assembly.....	Tuesday, November 11th, 2024
Christmas Concert.....	Thursday, December 11th, 2025
Music Ministry Performance Day.....	TBD
Spring Concert.....	Monday, May 11th, 2026

In addition to concerts, students may elect to participate in the following optional events:

ILMEA Orchestra Auditions.....	virtual submission, deadline TBD
ILMEA Music Festival.....	Saturday, November 15th, 2025

- The ILMEA Orchestra is an advanced ensemble of selected students from across the state who prepare high-level repertoire and receive recognition for achieving excellence. It's an extra challenge for students who are willing to prepare the selected pieces. I will provide support to any students who demonstrate interest.

IGSMA Solo and Ensemble Contest.....Saturday, February 22nd, 2025

- This event is coming up in February, and information will be sent home when available. Now is a great time to begin thinking about your student's involvement in the contest. It's a great way to get motivated to practice and present a musical selection to feel proud of.

Additional Opportunities

- Extra Concerts and Recitals. Students are encouraged to attend extra concerts and recitals of any instrumental genre (jazz, orchestra or wind band, opera, musical, world music, etc.). Students who report attendance of extra events will be awarded credit to make up any lost points toward their final class grade.
- Private Lessons. The best way to improve as a musician is to meet one-on-one with a private teacher every week for inspiration and accountability. I do not provide private lessons for WCGS students, but please reach out for my list of private instructors if you're interested.
- Chamber Music and Solo Performance. There will be opportunities for students to audition for solos throughout the year, as well as to collaborate with other musicians in a chamber group. Chamber music is the particular province of advanced 7th-8th grade musicians, but students of all levels are encouraged to reach out if interested.

Orchestra Commitment Form

I have read the preceding information. I understand and accept the commitment and expectations of becoming a member of the orchestra program at Wheaton Christian Grammar School. I realize that I am making a one-year commitment for the 2025/2026 school year to the WCGS Orchestra Program.

Student's Name
(please write legibly)

Student's Signature

Parent's Signature

Please detach this form, sign, and return it to Ms. Terdina by **Tuesday, September 2nd.**