Is orchestra a class? What exactly do you do in orchestra?

Orchestra is a wonderful opportunity to learn a musical instrument that can be continued for the rest of your child’s life. Beginning Orchestra is a year-long class. Depending on the instrument your child plays, they will meet in classes for 55 minutes according to that instrument grouping (either High Strings for violin/viola or Low Strings for cello/bass). Skills develop slowly at first, and parents and students must be patient and committed for the year in order to get the full benefit of instruction.

Please click here for more information: https://www.bepartofthemusic.org/bpoto/

Why should my child join orchestra?

KISD orchestra programs are home to kind, hard-working, well-behaved students. Every single member of the program is essential to its overall success. Being a member of an orchestra program is an invaluable experience. Your student will learn many important life lessons about teamwork, accountability, perseverance, responsibility, selflessness, excellent character, focus and self-discipline. They will be provided the opportunity to be creative and learn a craft that can serve them a lifetime.

If you would like your child to participate in orchestra, please choose orchestra as their FIRST CHOICE for an elective during registration. Due to the unique nature of learning to play a musical instrument, we encourage students to begin orchestra in 6th grade.

Do I need to purchase or rent an instrument?

Not necessarily. We are committed to giving every child the opportunity to participate in music. We have school instruments and supplies available at no cost and they are signed out on a first come first serve basis. Since we have a limited inventory of school instruments, if you are financially able to rent or purchase an instrument, we recommend doing that. More information is available in the “What options do I have for obtaining an instrument?” section.
What will be my child’s commitment regarding home practice and after school performances?

Orchestra is a performance-based class. All KISD students will have a minimum of two required performances after school during the year per district curriculum and state standards. These performances are taken for a grade.

Concerning outside practice, it is generally recommended that a minimum of 20 minutes a day outside of class should be spent practicing their instrument. This requirement may vary slightly from school to school. It is important to apply what is taught in class at home to hone their skills.

Please see KISD Board Policy concerning Fine Arts Performing Requirements.

Do students earn a grade for orchestra?

Yes! Students earn a grade on their quarterly report card in Beginning Orchestra like other academic subjects. Students will receive formative and summative grades based on district guidelines. Performances are considered summative grades and are factored into each grading period.

Does my child need to have prior musical experience to be in orchestra?

Not at all! We provide all the information your student will need to be a successful instrumentalist. The beginner method books are designed for the musically untrained student. We teach everything from the foundations of reading music to the necessary mechanics for playing the selected instrument. As your student progresses, you will hear lots of familiar tunes. All of their progress will be heard at performances throughout the school year. You will be amazed at the progress they make from their first concert in the fall to their last concert at the end of the school year!

What instruments are offered in beginning orchestra?

We offer the following instruments in beginning orchestra (please click each link and press the play arrow at the bottom left corner to see a video example):

- Double bass  [https://vimeo.com/136823507](https://vimeo.com/136823507)
How will I know what instrument my child will play?

The director at each MS campus will help guide your child in selecting an instrument that is appropriate for their success and fits the needs of the program. Student and family needs are also taken into consideration when selecting an instrument. Students are encouraged to watch the videos about each instrument using the links provided in the previous question. Students will receive all necessary information after being tested to find out what instrument best suits them. Often, we find students like something better than they expected because they are more successful when trying out different instruments. Keep in mind there are four different instruments and each one is important in an orchestra!

What options do we have for obtaining an instrument for our child to play?

There are several options available that your director will guide you through. (Please do not purchase or rent an instrument without first discussing this with your director or receiving our instrument rental flyer.) These options include school owned instruments, instrument rentals, or purchasing a used instrument. Information will be provided about individual rentals after your child has made an instrument selection. This will also include information regarding accessories and required books.

Students playing Double Bass or Cello will be provided an instrument for home practice from their campus. These instruments stay at home and do not need to be carried back and forth to school each day. At school, students who play Double Bass or Cello will use an instrument from the school set that stays in the classroom. Students playing Viola or Violin may use a school owned instrument based on financial need and instrument availability. Students who play Viola or Violin are highly encouraged to rent when possible.

If you are thinking about buying a used instrument, here is what you need to know. PROCEED WITH CAUTION. Some used instruments are good bargains. However, you could possibly end up spending more money on repairs than the instrument is worth. For this reason, we ask that if you plan to purchase a used
instrument to let a KISD Orchestra Director examine it prior to purchase, where possible. Local music stores would be a great place to start. You might see if the music companies have used instruments available. Again, please do not purchase anything without first contacting your child’s orchestra director.

**Can my child do orchestra and athletics? What about other extra-curricular activities?**

Of course! Beginning Orchestra is an academic course and it is understood that concerts are part of our curriculum following our state standards. We generally have our calendars for orchestra done for the year in May of the previous school year. This will give plenty of time for any needed coordination.

Communication is needed so that our students can be successful in all activities they want to take part in. Students can participate in orchestra and any other sport or activity that interests them. This is true all the way through high school. We encourage our students to be multi-faceted.

If a conflict arises, we do our best to find a way for your child to attend both events but please keep in mind that when you enroll in a music class you are committing to attend ALL of the required performances. Extra-curricular activities (including sports and sports practice) are not excused absences.

**If my child is in STEM, can they still be in orchestra?**

Of course, they can! If you are interested in orchestra, please inform your STEM counselor by email and contact your orchestra director. This will help with scheduling, and we will ensure your child is placed in Beginning Orchestra!