

Sierra Vista Middle School



Instrumental Music

Dear Music Students and Parents:

Welcome to instrumental music! I am very excited about the middle school orchestra program at Sierra Vista Middle School this year and that you have chosen to be a part of it. Being involved in music or other creative arts disciplines is the single most positively impactful decision you can make for your future and one of the most significant indicators of current and future success. It's no wonder that employers and college Deans of Admissions continue to pursue musicians in search of some of their most successful employees and students.

1) Course descriptions

a) Concert Orchestra

The Concert Orchestra class is a one-year course of study that offers instruction on violin, viola, cello, and string bass as well as piano accompaniment and occasionally percussion instruments. This class is open to any student who wishes to better their skills, or begin a new instrument.

b) Symphonic Orchestra

The Symphonic Orchestra is an orchestra where more advanced techniques are explored. Students are expected to have previous orchestral experience and can tune their own instruments, play in tune with others, understand shifting in order to play in position, and use vibrato. Participation by teacher recommendation only.

c) Chamber Orchestra

The Chamber Orchestra is a performing group for string students who are of the highest caliber at Sierra Vista Middle School. It is open to students who are interested in performing the most challenging music available to middle school students as well as high school level literature. Participation by teacher recommendation only.

2) Class Goals

a) Perform for friends and family

b) Improve individual skills and the ability to work as a group. We will be furthering the techniques learned in elementary school as well as:

i) Tuning and intonation

ii) Vibrato

iii) Shifting

iv) Ensemble playing

c) Develop skills and knowledge that will allow students to become life-long appreciators of the fine arts.

d) Prepare for Honor Orchestra auditions. Materials should be available in December.

e) Beginners primarily work independently until they are caught up with the rest of the group. They are welcome to use class time to practice outside until they are comfortable enough to join the ensemble.

3) Performance Expectations

The success of each performing ensemble will not be based on what grades students get in class, what ratings we get at festival, or how many students make the honor orchestra. It will be my goal for each student to achieve their personal best. If we are able to do that, we will attain these accolades; these "by-products" of success. To quote John Wooden:

"Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming."

4) Behavioral Expectations

Following the PBIS model:

- a) Act with Integrity – Be someone others can count on; be a person of your word.
- b) Show Respect – Be respectful of people, property, and time.
- c) Be Responsible – Be at the right place, at the right time, with the right stuff.

5) Class materials:

The school will provide all of the necessary supplies for your child to have a quality educational experience.

- a) Folder to hold music. As all sheet music and handouts will be hole punched, a 3-ring binder works best.
- b) Method Book - I will be supplying students with their method books this year. However, if you would like to obtain your own copy, they are:
 - i) *Essential Technique for Strings* by Allen – Concert Orchestra
 - ii) *High Tech for Strings* by Gazda – Symphonic Orchestra
 - iii) *Strictly Strings book III* by Dillon – Chamber Orchestra
- c) I will provide written exercises and sheet music for class performances. Obtaining replacement copies of lost materials is the student's responsibility and can be done through the website.

6) Other optional items for successful home practice

- a) Music Stand
- b) Tuner
- c) Metronome
- d) Mute
- e) Cello Stop (for cellists only)

7) Grades

- a) Grades are posted on Parent Portal and updated every Friday.
- b) Grading for this class will be based on...
 - i) Tests on music and other playing assignments
 - ii) Classroom participation including coming to class with all materials (instrument and prepared music)
 - iii) Practice assessment.
 - (1) Assignments are due weekly.
 - (2) Done through the website.
 - (3) If a student does not have access to a computer, a written sheet will be provided only with a note from a parent.
 - iv) Mentor reflections
- c) Concert attendance. Attendance at all evening performances is mandatory.

8) Mentors

Each student in the entire music program will be paired up with another student (in some limited cases, more than one) and will be required to periodically meet up with their buddy with the more advanced student mentoring the other. Both students will be required to write a reflection on what they accomplished each month.

9) Chair positions

Chair positions are determined by a one-time audition and assigned based on the needs of the ensemble, not the ego of the individual. There are no formal challenges in any of the performing groups.

10) Website

I have a website that I use for announcements and distribution of materials as well as information on local music stores, private teachers, interesting websites and past recordings. Occasionally I may want to feature a picture of students and perhaps their first names on the website. If you would prefer that your child not be featured on the website, please indicate on the return slip. The Instrumental Music Website can be found as a link from the school website under the "departments" menu or directly at: music.sierravistams.org

11) Performances

- a) Winter Concert – Tuesday, November 29, 7:00 p.m.
- b) Jazz Winter Concert – Friday, December 9, 6:30 p.m. (Jazz Band only) – to be confirmed
- c) Area Concert – Thursday, January 5, 7:00 p.m. (Chamber Orchestra only)
- d) Spring Concert – Monday, February 27, 7:00 p.m.

- e) Orchestra Festival – Wednesday and Thursday, March 8 and 9, daytime field trip
- f) Honors Concert – Thursday, March 16, 7:00 p.m.
- g) Jazz Festival – Saturday, March 18 (Jazz Band only)
- h) Sixth Grade Orientation – Friday, April 14, 8:00 a.m. (Chamber Orchestra only)
- i) Disneyland Recording Session – Friday, April 21 (eighth graders only) – to be confirmed
- j) Jazz at the Oak – Friday, May 12 (Jazz Band only)
- k) Summer Pops Concert – Wednesday, May 31, 6:00 p.m.

12) Giving Bach

Three years ago, the Sierra Vista Instrumental Music Department launched a service-oriented program called “Giving Bach”. The purpose of this program is two-fold:

- a) Provide live performances for community members (young children, special-needs students, those in a retirement home, etc.) who do not get an opportunity to hear live concerts.
- b) Help our students realize how their musical talents can be used to enrich the lives of others.

Giving Bach performances will be scheduled throughout the year and will vary by ensemble. You can find out more about this program by visiting: www.givingbach.org or by visiting their Facebook page which you can find by searching “Giving Bach”

13) Contact

Feel free to contact me at anytime if you have any questions, especially if you are interested in purchasing an instrument or having your child take private lessons. I will be happy to provide recommendations on both

- a) voice mail: 949/936-6642
- b) e-mail: HenryMiller@iusd.org
- c) I will also setup an e-mail group for all my parents so that I can send out e-mail announcements, concert reminders, etc. I will be using the e-mail address(es) that you provided to the school at registration.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to a very successful year with your student.

Musically Yours,



Henry J. Miller, Director of Instrumental Music
Sierra Vista Middle School



Please sign below indicating that you have read and understand the above information and return it to Mr. Miller within one week.

Student Name _____ Class Period _____

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Check here if you do not want a picture or first name of your child to ever appear on our music website.

Please note: if these forms are lost, copies may be obtained on the website.