N.E.S. STRINGS

DR. DARKA NEBESH, DIRECTOR

This packet contains all you need to know about strings at Northfield. If you don’t find the answer, please feel free to ask me in person, call me at school (410-313-2806), leave me a note with the front office, or, ***best*** way is to email me (olexandra\_nebesh@hcpss.org).

--Olexandra Daria (“Darka”) Nebesh, PhD

NES Strings Director

**COURSE** : Elementary Orchestra Grades 3, 4, 5

**Course Description**

The Northfield Elementary School Strings Program provides a performance-based curriculum for advanced level learners, focusing on the development of expressive and artistic musical experiences through student driven work. It is important to note that we will not merely be playing instruments in this course, but rather learning the language of music *through* performance. As such, a significant portion of your work in this course will be devoted to refining your performance skills, increasing your ability to read new music at sight, and exploring what it means to be an all-encompassing musician.

Welcome to NES Strings!

You have made an exceptionally wise decision to join NES Strings. If you are a returning student, welcome back! By being a strings student you will gain skills that will help you throughout your life in many aspects. Additionally, you get to take skills you’ve gained in other classes and apply them to strings class and make a joyous sound. I am thrilled to have you on board and look forward to getting to know you.

*There’s nothing remarkable about it. All one has to do is hit the right keys at the right time and the instrument plays itself.* –J. S. Bach

Of course, easy for Bach to say, he was a musical genius. However, I assure you, by following some simple and obvious guidelines, before you know it you will be making music to everyone’s ears, especially yours!

**GETTING STARTED**

Step 1. Get an instrument.

You have two options: rent or buy. If you are just starting, it is a good idea to rent the instrument, sort of a test drive. Make sure the instrument you chose is a fit, after all you are going to be spending a lot of time with it so you better make sure you like it! ☺

 Where?

 There are several options. I have provided a few local businesses and on-line sources where you can start your search. Also, do a bit of investigating and find the best fit for you and your family. **Do consider quality in your decision, a lesser quality instrument ends up costing more in maintenance.**

**PLEASE do not purchase an instrument without consulting with me first.**

STEP 2. Get required materials.

A musician relies on his/her body just like an athlete and we need to have the right equipment to protect ourselves from injury. All students will need a music stand for in- home use so that each student practices with the correct posture. Incorrect posture may result in poor tone quality, poor intonation, and even injury. **REQUIRED** equipment for each instrument is found in the following chart.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **VIOLIN**  | Music stand for home | Shoulder rest (No kitchen sponges) | Rosin (preferably dark rosin) | **All beginners**: String Basics book I for violin by T. Shade & J. Woolstenhulme **AND** Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I violin**ReturningStudents**:Elementary Scales & Bowings AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I violin |
| **VIOLA** | Music stand for home | Shoulder rest (No kitchen sponges) | Rosin (preferably dark rosin) | **All beginners**: String Basics book I for viola by T. Shade & J. Woolstenhulme AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I viola**ReturningStudents**:Elementary Scales & Bowings AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I viola |
| **CELLO** | Music stand for home | Rock stop or end pin anchor (preferred) | Rosin (preferably dark rosin) | **All beginners**: String Basics book I for cello by T. Shade & J. Woolstenhulme AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I cello**ReturningStudents**:Elementary Scales & Bowings AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I cello |
| **BASS** | Music stand for home | Rock stop | Rosin Pop's (red container), Carlsson (purple or black container), or Kolstein's (black rubber case) | **All beginners**: String Basics book I for bass by T. Shade & J. Woolstenhulme AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I string bass**ReturningStudents**:Elementary Scales & Bowings AND Basic Music Theory and History for Strings Workbook I string bass |

**STEP 3. Label all of your stuff**

A luggage tag on instrument case with full name and homeroom teacher; first and last name printed on front cover of books (music folders will be provided by me); name on shoulder rests; name on rosin; name on anything you want to make sure is returned if you misplace it. (Please note the large bold font I used for this step, it means I consider this *very* important to do.)

STEP 4. Follow the schedule.

You will get two copies of a sectionals (lesson) schedule; one copy for your music folder, one to keep in a visible spot at home (the fridge, perhaps), and come to class on time, on the right day! ☺

The schedule will be posted also on my website on Canvas.

The schedule is on a four-week rotation: A, B, C, D. (4th & 5th grade: we have the exact same week rotation as the N.E.S. band.)

It is your responsibility to remember when to come to strings, not a classroom teacher’s. If you need to leave halfway through class to come to strings, remind the teacher before class begins. When it is time to leave, raise your hand to ask to be excused. Please try to leave about 2 minutes (**but not sooner**) before your lesson time. If you have strings at the beginning of related arts, leave the classroom WITH your class and instead of going to related arts, come to the strings room.

STEP 5. PRACTICE.

Make sure you have your instrument at home with you everyday and practice, practice, practice.

The amount you practice is dependent on your skill level; this will be made clear to you from me during sectionals/lessons. The most important thing is to remember to play something almost everyday, it is key in retaining musical knowledge and improving skills.

**A few other important points:**

1. On the day you have strings, bring your instrument (includes shoulder rest for violins/violas and rock stops for cellos), & music folder (book, any loose music given to you by me, schedule) to the strings room. There will be designated areas for you to store them. At the end of your lesson you will take your instrument with you back to class to have ready to go home with you at the end of the day.
2. Do not leave your instrument in the strings room or any other place in school over night. If you leave your instrument at school how can you practice?
3. Lessons will consist mostly of playing our instruments, but we will be learning music theory and history in our workbooks. Some pages will be assigned to complete at home. Completion of workbook and practicing at home are part of the overall grade.
4. Please note, if you miss coming to strings three times, I will need to contact your parents because your membership in NES strings may be in jeopardy.
5. IF you forget your instrument on lesson days, come to strings class anyway. You will not be able to call home to get your instrument. You will be given work to do in class or if a school instrument is available, you will be able to use it for the lesson. DO NOT MAKE THIS A HABIT. Forgetting your instruments over three times will result in a call home and consideration will be given if you wish to continue with the program.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **HCPSS Music Grading Standards** | **Grade Weight** |
| ***Mus s1: Creativity & Composition***Develops and applies strategies to generate and express a variety of musical ideas. Students will complete composition assignments to further their understanding of music theory and creative processes.This will include exercises in improvisation & composition exercises in the instructional books. | 20% |
| ***Mus s2: Musicianship***Uses best practices and experiences to inform and develop an authentic voice. Students will complete assignments that explore musical works performed in the class to further their understanding of performance practice. Assignments will include listening to personal, ensemble, and professional recordings and researching musical works to understand cultural and historical context. This includes practice journals and reflection activities. | 20% |
| ***Mus s3: Applied Skills & Technical Development***Demonstrates skills and strategies appropriate to music-making. Every student will receive graded performance assessments and skills tests throughout the year. This will include playing tests, usually given every D week. Students will be given the exact passage of the playing test during their week C lessons.***Mus s5: Reflection***Communicates an understanding of concepts and strategies through the evaluation of music. Students will evaluate their performances and performances by other groups in the following categories: tone, technique, intonation, musicality, balance, interpretation, musical effect, and other factors. This will include both oral and written participation in such activities as informal classroom discussions, reflections in practice journal, and exit tickets. | 50%10% |
| ***Mus s4: Procedures & Practices***Demonstrates appropriate musical practices in the classroom or rehearsal environment. Represented in Learning Behaviors. Students are learning to perform on their instruments, as well as learning to conduct themselves in a large ensemble rehearsal. Students are observed and assessed on their instrumental performance and rehearsal conduct on a daily basis.This is not counted towards the overall grade, but shown in the learning behavior section of the report card. |  |
|  |  |

**FAQ’s**

*How much, what, and how do I practice?*

 To keep up in class, plan to spend an average of 15-20 minutes practicing your instrument every day of the week that you eat. ☺ The BEST way to practice is to break it up into two sessions/day. Practice 10 minutes right after school, take a break, go play, eat, do other homework, then practice again for 10 minutes. OR if you are an early bird, practice 10 minutes before school and again some time after school, afternoon or evening. As you get better and more advanced, you increase the time from 10 minutes to 15-20 minutes for each session. Studies have shown that two shorter sessions/day of practice result in a faster progress than a one long session/day.

At each lesson I will give assignments on what to practice. **After** you work on assigned music (from me and from a private instructor if that applies), you may try other music in our books or try playing a favorite tune by ear. Remember to enjoy and explore your instrument.

*Should I take private lessons?*

 If you have the opportunity and financial ability to take private lessons DO SO! The more students take private lessons, the more a school organization can concentrate on ensemble music. That is not to say that you have to take private lessons and it is fully understood that it may not be a viable option for each individual. I am more than happy to be the sole provider of strings instruction and there will be equal treatment for all. Nevertheless, private lessons and school instruction are not mutually exclusive, in fact, they enhance each other. I am more than happy to provide names of instructors in the area or places to call for further investigation of instructors. Howard County is most fortunate to have numerous private instructors. I am more than happy to discuss what to look for in a teacher and the best way to find one. Please note, I am ethically obligated to not endorse any one specific person.

*Concerts?*

 OF COURSE! YES! There is much to be said about just playing for one self, but we don’t want to be selfish musicians and we absolutely want to share this gift with others. Performing music gives the art a whole other dimension and that experience simply cannot be recreated in any other way.

*But, Dr. Nebesh, I am afraid of performing in front of others.*

 Don’t worry. By the time we get to our concert, I will guarantee you that I will teach you not only to be comfortable performing on stage, but you will want to do it!

Below I have listed the concert dates. Please put them on your calendars as attendance at our two main concerts (Winter & Spring) is **mandatory**. Suitable excuses for missing the concert are illness or family emergency. If you have a conflict, please let Dr. Nebesh know ***immediately***.

**CONCERT DATES & PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES**

**4th & 5th grade strings:**

1. Winter Concert, Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 7:00pm at Centennial High School (with band) **mandatory**
2. Spring Concert, Tuesday, June 9, 2020, 7:00pm at Centennial High School (with band) **mandatory**
3. HCPSS Solo & Ensemble Festival (*VOLUNTARY*) Saturday, April 18, 2020
4. Small Ensemble & NSO Showcase (*VOLUNTARY*), Thursday, June 11, 2020, NES Cafetorium (NSO=Northfield Symphony Orchestra, an after school full orchestra program, by invitation, starts in January, rehearsals are Wednesday’s after school to 4:30pm)

**5th grade strings:**

* String Fling at Wilde Lake High School. This is an afterschool (*VOLUNTARY*) event with a fee (approximately $10/student, includes t-shirt and food). Thursday, January 30, 2020.

**3rd grade strings:**

* In-class solo recitals: parents and family members are invited to come during regularly scheduled lessons for an in-class performance. Each student will perform a solo for the audience; a unique performance opportunity made available only to third grade string students. DATE: week of 2/24/20 (tentative date depending on weather; more information to come home by January)
* Spring Concert Wednesday, June 3, 2020, 7:00pm, NES cafeteria **mandatory**

**CONCERT ATTIRE**

**Ladies**: Black bottoms (knee length skirts or long pants) and white tops (short or long sleeved NOT sleeveless), dress shoes (no tennis shoes or flip flops). Please take into consideration that a performer on a stage sits higher than the audience, therefore the length of a lady’s skirt needs to be appropriate. Cello players need to consider wide skirts if they do not wear pants so that they may sit with the correct posture.

**Gentlemen:** Black bottoms (no jeans), white collared shirts (polos are fine, long or short sleeved), dress shoes (no white tennis shoes), dark socks

**Some of the Local Rental and Sales Establishments**

I have fliers from some of these businesses, let me know if you need some.

Some have offers, but I’m sure they will make all offers known without fliers.

I suggest calling around first to determine which shop serves your needs best as to finances and convenience of rental.

**Music and Arts**

9210 Baltimore National Pike, Suite W-7

Chatham Station

Ellicott City, MD
(410) 461-1844

**Mike’s Music**

4872 Montgomery Rd

Ellicott City, MD 21043
(410) 465-0700

www.mikesmusicmd.com

**Perrin & Associates Fine Violins** (call for an appointment)

517 N Charles St, 2nd floor

Baltimore, MD 21201

410-539-0043

http://perrinviolins.com/

**Gailes’ Violin Shop**

10013 Rhode Island Ave, College Park, MD 20740
(301) 474-4300

http://www.gailesviolin.com/

**Potter Violins**

7711 Eastern Ave

Takoma Park, MD 20912

(301) 652-7070

<http://www.pottersviolins.com/location.html>

**Maryland Music**

9143-B Red Branch Rd

Columbia, MD 21045

[www.rentfromhome.com](http://www.rentfromhome.com)

**Wood Bridge Music Shop**

9455 Baltimore National Pike #A

Ellicott City, MD 21042

410-203-9663

**Some On-line Sources**

 [www.kennedyviolins.com](http://www.kennedyviolins.com) Good competitive pricing on known brands (Bunnel, Giuliani). Their own brand of violins are fine entry level instruments, priced very competitively, but be aware if there is a repair needed it may be priced more than the violin is worth. The Kennedy brand only goes up to ¾ size.

**Shar music** [www.sharmusic.com](http://www.sharmusic.com)

**Southwest strings** [www.swstrings.com](http://www.swstrings.com)

**Shoulder Rests**

Currently\* ALL violin and viola students are required to have a shoulder rest.

Where and what to purchase?

Most music stores carry a variety of shoulder rests. The foam shaped, like Zaret, are the least expensive (start at around $4) and do a fine job to provide support. There are more-costly hard shaped shoulder rests that run from $20-40. Everest and Kun are among those and both are fine quality. Usually, Everest runs a little cheaper.

A neat new product is the Acousta-Grip shoulder rest. You can visit their website or find them on amazon.com or Music and Arts website. These shoulder rests do not require rubber bands or attach with rubber feet like the Everest or Kun, which have a tendency to slip-off while playing. Starting price is around $15 for youth sized (up to ½ size violins) and $25 for older youth/adult (¾ to full size). Do note, they do require that a student be mindful to keep the shoulder rest clean and the “sticky part” (it is not glue, but microscopic suction cups) away from fingers and dirt. So, these rests require a bit of care and maintenance, which is not difficult, but is necessary.

If purchasing on-line, please make sure to know your viola or violin size and order accordingly. Too small can be uncomfortable and useless and too big can encourage incorrect posture and form.

If you are overwhelmed and confused about which shoulder rest to purchase, please send a note with your student to me and I will write down specific recommendations.

\*Why do I write “currently?” There are players who are against shoulder rests. It is a controversial split among violin and viola players on all levels, including professional. There are experts who claim young players should be without them. However, I have found they help support a good posture and avoid learning incorrect holds. I am willing to consider no shoulder rest players who are beyond the beginning stages. My main concern is the physical well-being of the student and to ensure that playing the violin or viola will not lead to any poor technique which may result in physical issues. Note, I am always researching the best practice for our students; as I learn and read and inquire if anything should change from what I heard or I see that your particular student would benefit physically from a different approach, I will make the effort to make it known. So far, the handful of medical experts I have consulted in this matter, have all agreed that shoulder rests are part of best practices when taking physical health into consideration, especially for young not fully grown bodies.