

# 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. Through music, students develop analytical and critical thinking skills, improve concentration, and develop cooperative interaction, respect, and responsibility. Academically, student musicians grow in mathematical thinking and reading skills. Socially, music fulfills the need for identity, building character and self-esteem. 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) 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

My expectations for student behavior in this class can be boiled down to two requirements: be responsible and be respectful.

- a) Be respectful...
  - i) to people: students, teachers (including substitutes), yourself.
  - ii) of property: your stuff, other students' stuff, school stuff, my stuff, musical compositions.
  - iii) of time: your time, other students' time, my time.
- b) Be responsible
  - i) Be at the right place, at the right time and with the right stuff.
  - ii) When you are asked to be somewhere, be there both physically and mentally.
  - iii) Be someone that others can count on – a person of your word.
  - iv) Take responsibility for your own actions.

#### 5) Class materials:

The school will provide all of the necessary supplies for your child to have a quality educational experience. However, you may choose to assist the school by donating the following supplies for your student's personal use. Any donations are greatly appreciated!

- a) Folder to hold music. As all sheet music and handouts will be 3-hole punched, a binder works best.
- b) Pencil
- c) 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
- d) I will provide written exercises and sheet music for class performances. Obtaining replacement copies of lost materials is the student's responsibility.

#### 6) Other optional items for successful home practice

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

#### 7) Grading for this class will be based on...

- a) Tests on music and other playing assignments
- b) Classroom participation including coming to class with all materials (instrument and complete binder)
- c) Practice charts.
  - i) Charts are turned in at the end of each month and are to be signed by a parent.
  - ii) Charts can be downloaded from the website.
- d) Listening assignments.
- e) Concert attendance. Attendance at all evening performances is mandatory.

#### 8) 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 will be no formal challenges in any of the performing groups.

#### 9) Website

I do not use Blackboard but instead I have a website that I use for announcements, distribution of materials, and the posting of grades. You can also use this site for 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: [sierravistams.org/miller](http://sierravistams.org/miller)

10) Performances

- a) Winter Concert – Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.
- b) Spring Concert – Monday, March 12, 7:00 p.m.
- c) Festival – Thursday, March 22, daytime field trip (Symphonic and Chamber Orchestras only)
- d) Honors Concert – Monday, April 23, 7:00 p.m.
- e) Disneyland Recording Session – TBA (eighth graders only)
- f) Sixth Grade Orientation – Friday, May 4, 8:00 a.m. (Chamber Orchestra only)
- g) Jazz at the Oak – Friday, May 18 (Jazz Band only)
- h) Summer Pops Concert – Tuesday, June 5, 6:00 p.m.

11) 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: hmiller@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



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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.*