



Welcome to the Chestatee String Orchestra!



This is our 3rd year of Orchestra at Chestatee and we are excited to get started with another year! Chestatee has added an orchestra program along with Chattahoochee Elementary, Little Mill Middle, and East High, as well as a community orchestra with the East Forsyth Youth & Community Orchestra. The future goal is to create an orchestra class at both Little Mill MS and East Forsyth HS in the next couple of years. Thank you for all of your support as parents because we could not have come this far without you! If you or anybody you know might be interested in participating in any of our East Cluster orchestras, then please share this email address with them so we can be in touch: eastforsythorchestra@gmail.com

Participating in an orchestra program is a fun and enriching experience for your child with benefits that can carry on into their future as adults. Click here to read more about the benefits of joining an orchestra:

<https://hub.yamaha.com/strings/s-how-to/five-benefits-of-joining-school-orchestra/>

Orchestra is an opportunity for students in 4th and 5th grade at Chestatee who would like to learn more about playing a bowed string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass). There will be performances near the end of the Fall and Spring semesters and sometimes we are invited on field trips to play for special events and/or music workshops. *There may be extra rehearsals other than usual morning rehearsals leading up to performances as well as a few afternoon "boot camps/sectionals" throughout the year – look for an email with dates/times TBA.

Chamber & Eagle Orchestras:

The "Chamber Orchestra" is for students who already have some experience playing their instrument. **Chamber Orchestra will regularly meet on Tuesday afternoons starting August 29.**

*Chamber Orchestra members are invited to volunteer as student leaders/mentors during the first "boot camp" week of Eagle Orchestra (see dates below and email if you want to be a student leader/mentor).

The "Eagle Orchestra" is for brand new students who have no experience at all - we will start from the beginning! **Eagle Orchestra will regularly meet on Thu afternoons starting Aug. 31.**

***Eagle Orchestra members will also participate in a week-long after school "boot camp" Aug. 21-25 from 2:20-3:15pm with an interactive "parent showcase" from 3:15 - 4:00pm on Friday, Aug. 25. There will be 2 more parent showcases on Nov 2 & Jan 25 (Thursdays).**

Calendar:

Dates will be updated based on the calendar links below:

Concerts TBA.

[Click here for Chamber Calendar](#)

[Click here for Eagle Calendar](#)

Commitment:

By submitting this registration form, I, as the **orchestra student**, commit to the following below:

- I commit to being a member of the Orchestra for the entire 2023-2024 school year..
- I commit to being on time with my instrument, book, *music binder, *music - organized neatly in folder pockets and NOT folded - and pencil for each class. (*Music binder and music will be provided.)
- I commit to having a positive attitude and being on my best behavior during class.
- I commit to working hard and trying my best to learn during class and also practicing at home on a regular basis.

As the **parent**, I commit to the following below:

- I commit to bringing my child and their materials on time each week for the entire 2023-2024 school year.
- I commit to helping my child at home achieve their goals by setting aside a specific time each day for practicing as well as giving reminders, actively participating in, and encouraging students regarding everyday practice.

****Please encourage your child to take their commitments seriously. Orchestra is a teamwork activity, just like a sports team. Students who “quit” midway through the year let down their teammates and causes other students to be discouraged. If students keep their commitments by showing up for class and by practicing at home, they will have fun, feel proud of their accomplishments and want to continue to learn!***

Instrument Rental: You will need to acquire an instrument before the first day of class. Students will need to be measured for the correct size instrument (they will do this at the instrument shop). Instruments that are not the right size or of poor quality will not be possible or fun to learn on. If you already have an instrument but are unsure if it is an appropriate size and/or quality, try to set up a meeting before the first class and Ms. G can let you know if it will work.

Here is a list of local instrument shops to provide the correct size and quality at a reasonable price. Local shops: Huthmaker Violins, Ponce de Leon Music, Atlanta Violins, Music Authority, Music & Arts. Try to call ahead to let them know you are coming and for their store hours. The instrument shops are wonderful and allow us to support local businesses. Many places will rent or rent-to-own instruments. I recommend renting rather than buying because most students will go through several smaller sized instruments before reaching a full-sized instrument.

*Please avoid buying cheap instruments online. In my experience, most are not actually a good deal in terms of quality and may not work well even if they look pretty. The instrument shops should also set you up with rosin, bow, case, cleaning cloth, rock stop for cello/bass, and shoulder rest for violin/viola. Please ask about these items before leaving the instrument shop.

*For new players, though it may be tempting, please do not start playing the instrument yet

because we want to teach you the correct way to handle and hold it from the beginning so not to damage the instrument or to create bad positioning habits.

Materials:

- Book (please order if you don't have one already):
 - **Encore Orchestra** will use "Essential Elements for Strings Book 1 with EEi (Violin, Viola, Cello, or Double Bass)" - You can order via www.amazon.com
 - **Prelude Orchestra** will use "Adventures in Violinland/Cello Country Book 1B" - You can order via www.sharmusic.com (viola/bass players: ask Ms. G for copies)
- Music stand for practicing at home is a must (wire stands are great and inexpensive)
- Extra set of strings is a good idea

Orchestra afternoon schedule:

At the end of the school day, students will go to the AV room to unpack and tune instruments. Parents will be ready to pick up students at 3:15 in the car rider line. *If you must be late, students will be waiting up in the front lobby.

*If you must be absent from class, please email Ms. G as soon as you know of an unavoidable absence.

At-home practicing: "Only practice on the days that you eat!" ~ S. Suzuki

***Practicing at home every day is the key to being successful with learning these challenging instruments. Students will be required to practice what they learn on their instrument in class for a short amount of time at home every day to continue to make progress. Short practices every day are the most beneficial as opposed to a long practice every few days (similar to working out at the gym). Set a short amount of time like 5 - 10 minutes to practice each day and sometimes they will play more once they get started. Parents should take the initiative to fit daily practice into their child's schedule and also be involved in the practice at least at the beginning. Have your child show you what they learned each week and maybe even try to teach it to you as they will learn by teaching you as well. Children are not used to this kind of discipline (meaning practicing a new skill on their own each day) and will need help for a while until it becomes part of their routine. Encourage good practicing habits from the beginning! If possible, have the students put the book/music right on the music stand when they get home from school on orchestra day and find a safe spot to leave the instrument out (or leave the case open) so that everything is convenient to pick up and play for practice. Music to practice will either be sent home and/or also posted via email and/or ItsLearning and some instructional videos may be there as well. If there are ever any questions about what or how to practice at home, just shoot me an email and/or a video and I will do my best to help clear up any confusion. I am also happy to set up mini virtual or in-person practice sessions with students and their parents when they need extra help with playing (or sometimes tuning). Students will learn to enjoy playing more and more only by becoming familiar with holding the instrument and reading music on a regular basis. Class time is used for learning new skills and for learning to play together in a group and should not be considered a practice time. Students who do not practice will fall behind in class and will not progress and most likely lose interest. ***Parents are certainly welcome to tag along in class and be a student as well for the sake of supporting

your child's learning (and also for fun!). Parent involvement depends on the current COVID protocols in the school.

Private lessons: Students may also take private lessons outside of school. There are other fees associated with taking private lessons. I can refer private teachers for those interested.

Fees: The costs associated with the class (other than the instrument, materials and book fees) is a \$50 fee for the year. This includes a shirt if you don't have one already (same as last year) and also helps fund the program so that we can buy new music, binders, contribute to celebrations and awards at the end of semesters, etc.

Dress: We will perform in our shirts and black pants at the concerts.

Financial Aid/Donations: If you need additional help acquiring an instrument or with any other fees due to financial difficulty or if you cannot find the right size instrument, please contact Ms. G and we will see what kind of scholarship the school can provide. We have been able to accommodate students in any financial situation and want to make it a point to include everybody. Along those same lines, if you would like to donate money toward somebody who needs a scholarship then please contact Ms. G and thank you in advance!

Registration: Fill out the registration form below by Monday, August 14, 2023 to participate in the Chestatee String Orchestra! *Note: This is the only opportunity to sign up for this year. Students who want to start later in the year will have to seek private lessons or wait until the next school year.

Registration Form: <https://forms.office.com/r/XdV11JcgHx>

I look forward to sharing this unique and enriching experience with your children. Excited for another great year and thank you for supporting this program!!!

~Ms. G

rgerstenlauer@forsyth.k12.ga.us (Email with any questions!)

***Would you or your business like to support the United Forsyth Orchestra Fund established in 2022 to help support the development of string orchestra programs in Forsyth County Schools and the community? Read more about what we are doing and consider making a tax-deductible donation: www.unitedforsythorchestra.org

