

Starting an Orchestra



Starting a program from scratch is an intimidating feat, especially when orchestra isn't your area of specialization! Only you and your music supervisor/principal/team can decide what exactly you're going to do with your new program, but here are some guiding questions and sample resources to help get you going.

Instruments

- Do you have instruments? Do you need to purchase/otherwise acquire instruments?
- If so, will you rent them to students? How will you use them?
- If you're renting, what paperwork is needed? Is there a fee? What is the procedure?
- For students who bring their own instruments, where will they put them?
- What is the procedure for dropping off, storing, and picking up instruments during the school day? Weekends? Breaks?

Equipment

- Do you have music stands? Stand racks?
- Chairs? Chair Racks?
- Instrument racks? How will you store your instruments?

Music

- What level of music do you need to order?
- Where will you keep the music?
- What technique book will you use?
- Will you have a class set or will every student have their own? If a class set, what is the procedure for using the set/putting it away?

Organization

- How will your space be organized?
- Where will students keep their personal belongings?

Class Policies & Procedures

- Create or adapt a handbook and syllabus.
- What will your daily class routine consist of? What are your daily procedures?
- How will students know what you expect?
- What are your consequences for rule violations?
- How do you classroom manage?
- Can students pluck or practice while you're talking to other sections?
- How will students keep their instruments when they're not playing?

Uniform

- What is your uniform?
- How will students acquire the uniform?

Budget

- What expenses will your program incur? Registration fees, transportation fees, audition fees, t-shirts, etc?
- Do you have a school or county budget, or both?
- Will you fundraise? When, how?
- Can you/will you assess a "fair share fee"? How much? Why (parents will ask, be prepared to answer)?

Sample Bid Packages for Instruments:

Bid Packages

Demographic

- What is the area like? What do your students experience on a daily basis?
- How is the support of the community for the orchestra?
- Are there any pre-existing expectations to consider?
- Can your students afford instruments, uniforms, method books, accessories, fair share, etc?
- Understanding your students & families is key for building a successful program, just as much as solid teaching and curriculum. When school & community work together, students are more successful.

Related Reading

NAfME - Creating a Thriving Middle School Orchestra Program

NAfME Article

Page Contributors:

Dr. Clara Knotts, master teacher & steamroller
David Olsen, OCPS Music Supervisor

Published Summer 2017
Updated as life allows



Questions? [Email me](#) & I'll try to help!