

Parents,

Welcome to Orchestra. My name is David Schurger, orchestra director here at the high school.

The performing arts are difficult in this weird situation, but I believe we have an incredible set up here in the orchestra room that makes learning remotely and in person very unique and also kind of awesome.

I don't believe in "natural" talent. I believe in behaviors, hard work, and the dedication to learning no matter the opportunity. Your child's audition started the first day they walked into class. It's not the starting point or a pupil's perceived innate ability, it is the way that they manage their failures with their successes in order to improve their skills. Everyone has the ability to be a great player. The time on task coupled with consistent quality feedback will produce amazing results. Check out Talent is overrated by Geoff Colvin, Mindset by Carol Dweck, and Peak Anders Ericsson.

Deliberate practice is something coined by Anders Ericsson. I had the pleasure of conversing with the late Dr. Ericsson and he was interested in how to track the individual progress of an entire music program. Our current situation presents a unique opportunity for tracking this progress. The model that we use in class is PLAN, PLAY, REFLECT.

Deliberate Practice is:

- An activity designed to improve performance, with teachers help (I am an ensemble specialist. A private instructor is suited for individual improvement and guidance)
- pushes practitioner just past their current limits
- repeatable with continuous feedback (metronome, tuner, video, instructor)
- mentally demanding (no more than 40 minutes/session)
- not much fun. (no one likes working on weaknesses, but this promotes progress and confidence as skills improve.)

The falling in love with the process of learning is the enjoyment brought on by deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is not just for the music classroom. This mental model is applicable to all learning. Check out Make it Stick.

Your son/daughter will be completing a weekly Deliberate practice log that will help them track their progress and identify deficiencies. The log will start at 10min/day for 5 days a week. We will add minutes every 1-2 weeks maxing out at 30 min/day for 5 days a week. Most kids spend more time on tik tok, the gram and snap chat. This will have the PLAN, PLAY REFLECT model built in so they can learn how to practice efficiently.

Private lessons are always suggested, but I truly believe that this COVID situation is an opportunity for all of us to improve as individuals and address some of our weaknesses with the gift of "down-time."

- If you are 100% virtual, it is highly suggested that you take private lessons. I am not able to give these students clear individual instruction as I am with those in class or on rotation.
- Supporting our local musical community – The ISO, as with many orchestras across the world, is shut down and most are accessible and able to give lessons more frequently than during their normal performance season
- Lessons can be done on Mondays, 8th period, or during your "at-home" time during orchestra class. Please let me know when there will be a conflict.

Private lessons are highly recommended for ALL students if the opportunity is feasible for your family. Not mandatory

Parents. I need your help.

1. Please help keep your son/daughter on track with their deliberate practicing. We have a Smart Music Subscription that has their method book as a practice tool as well as all their pieces will be posted there.
2. Please remind them to bring their instrument home every single day. It is not a habit of many at this time, but with the current situation, we don't know if we will be back to 100% virtual.
3. Please help them with setting up a good place at home for orchestra rehearsal. A practice mute may be needed if you are working from home and the sound travels.
4. Please make sure their instrument is in good working condition: Fresh strings, good rosin, fresh hair on bow, AND a straight bridge.

Like you, I'm rather overwhelmed and, thus far, sleep is my best strategy for managing the stress. Thank you for supporting your child in orchestra. Music is the only art form that excites all the senses at once. Music is our escape to reality where we have control of our success. Have a great week. Stay safe and stay sane.