

Frequently Asked Questions

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How do I obtain a registration form? Registration is available online through Itasca Community Education. Just follow the link from our website: www.itascaorchestra.org. If you do not have access to a computer, please call the IOSP office at 218.327.5781 and leave a message so we can arrange a time to call you to register over the phone.

Where and when are lessons?

During the School Year, Youth Lessons will take place in your student's school, during your student's school day. Student lessons may be scheduled in the afterschool time, if that is what works best for your student. Adult lessons will be scheduled based on the adult student's and our IOSP instructor's availability. Adult lessons will take place in the IOSP lesson room located in the Reif Center.

In the Summer, lessons will take place at the Reif Center. Students who are enrolled in Camp Wannago, at the Itasca County Family YMCA may sign up for lessons. An IOSP instructor will travel to the YMCA to give the lessons during the student free time. Lessons are scheduled on a first-come first served basis. If you have a specific time you need to have a lesson during the summer or dates you need to avoid lessons, please write down the lesson time and we will do our best to try to accommodate you.

When will I learn my student's exact lesson time?

During the School Year, Lessons will be scheduled after the registration deadline has closed. In the few days prior to the first day of lessons, the IOSP will send you an email indicating the time of your student's lesson, the day in which your student will have orchestra, and the name of your student's teacher.

During the Summer, lessons are scheduled on a first come, first served basis. Once your lesson is scheduled, you will be notified.

During the School Year, may I choose when my lesson is? Student lesson times are based on a number of factors: 1) the student's availability according to the schedule set by the student's classroom teacher; 2) the availability of places in your student's school to have a lesson; and 3) instructor availability. With students at 4 elementary schools, the middle school and the high school, scheduling is complicated. We really appreciate your patience with the process!

May I choose my teacher? We will do the best we can to accommodate requests, but that is not always possible. Our instructors are very committed to our students' learning and recognize that some students personality/learning style are a better fit for a different teacher; and therefore our teachers may even sometimes recognize the benefits of making a change.

How much do lessons cost? For the 2017-2018 school year, lessons paid in full are \$545 for the year. This includes lessons, orchestra rehearsals, and concerts. Our tuition fees are heavily subsidized by individual donors, the Blandin Foundation, and a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support Grant.

What other expenses are there? In the first year, all students will purchase a lesson book, Essential Elements for \$10. Your student will use this book for 2 years. Older Students will also have to purchase an Essential Elements lesson book, and additionally 1 or 2 books for solos or technical work. Typically these books are in the \$10 to \$15 range. The average student will only buy 1 to 2 books per year. If your student is renting an instrument, the instrument will be provided with good strings, but if a string breaks during the year, then the string will be charged to your account. String prices for beginners range from \$2 to \$13 on violin and viola, up to \$15 for cello. All students are encouraged to purchase a collapsible music stand to encourage practicing with proper posture. You can find collapsible stands on-line beginning at \$11 and up.

Busing After school, all buses leave the elementary schools and go to the Middle School. Your student may board the school bus which normally takes the student

home, but simply exit the bus at the Middle School. The IOSP will provide the ISD Transportation Department with a list of our String Program Students to let them know which day your student has orchestra. The IOSP rehearsal staff will be in the RJEMS commons to greet students and gather together before going into the bandroom.

Where are orchestra rehearsals? Orchestra rehearsals take place at the Robert J. Elkington Middle School bandroom.

When does my student have orchestra rehearsal? Please see the calendar on our website: www.itascaorchestra.org.

Who do I contact if my student is going to miss a lesson or rehearsal? Please contact your student's lesson instructor if they are missing a rehearsal or Mrs. Kowitz if the student is missing a rehearsal. Our instructors teach at 4 different elementary schools, the middle school, the high school and drive up to Bigfork. Letting them know your student will miss a lesson ahead of time is a huge help and greatly appreciated!

Do you offer make up lessons if my student misses a lessons? Make up lessons will only be given if a teacher misses a lesson. This is because there simply are not enough 1) spaces available in our schools to offer make-up lessons, and 2) there are not enough days in the school year for students to make up lessons. Our program offers 27 lessons in the course of the school year, but our yearly tuition rate is subsidized, thanks to donors and grants, and therefore, only requires parents to cover the costs for 21 lessons.

Do you have instruments available to rent?

During the School Year, Yes, the IOSP has instruments available to rent at affordable prices. Our IOSP instructors will determine what size your student needs at either our open house, or at your student's first lesson. Rental instruments do not include shoulder rests for violin and viola players. A shoulder rest is necessary for proper playing posture. You can purchase a shoulder rest for as little as \$15. For beginner's a sponge or piece of foam can also work.

During the Summer, Yes, the IOSP has instruments available for rental. If your student is just beginning lessons, a rental instrument will be made available to your student, during your student's lesson time at no extra cost. Rental instruments are available for at home practice as well.

I am renting and instrument, do I need to go to the IOSP office to pick it up before the first lesson? No, our IOSP instructors will bring the rental instrument to your student at their first lesson.

What should I keep in mind if I decide to buy an instrument? When it comes to buying a string instrument, the saying about "you get what you pay for" is true. The IOSP highly recommends investing in a quality hard shell case, especially for cellos and basses.

My instrument is broke what do I do? If you have a rental instrument, let an IOSP instructor or call/email the IOSP office to let us know so we can set your student up with a different rental instrument. Return the damaged instrument to the IOSP office. If you own your own instrument, the IOSP office can give you the name of the individuals to whom the IOSP sends instruments for repair.

My instrument is out of tune! What do I do? (To be answered by our Instructors)

What happens if I leave my instrument in the car in extreme cold and heat? Your instrument will crack. A quick run into the grocery store can become very expensive.

My student forgot their instrument at home! Is there any point in going to the lesson or rehearsal? YES! At a rehearsal, your student can learn by listening and following along in their own music (or stand partner's music). In a lesson, our instructors will have no problem teaching your student something valuable in the lesson time even without the instrument.

What can I do to help my student?

1) ***Encourage Practice.*** Even if you are not musically inclined you can help your student by encouraging regular practice—this could mean setting up a consistent time for the student to practice each week.

2) ***Listen to great performances.*** Part of learning to play an instrument well, means you need to *listen* to great performances. There is no shortage of great music available on youtube.com: Joshua Bell, Yo-Yo Ma, Artaria String Quartet, Tim Kliphuis (our lead Instructor for the Jazz Camp), April Verch, Jelloslave, Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO). The Grand Rapids Public Library also has a great selection of CDs to check out. Listen with your student!

3) ***Attend live performances.*** The Itasca Symphony Orchestra, made up of local musicians, performs 3 times each year. Tickets for String Program students are free! Each year the Reif brings in fabulous chamber groups, and often includes a workshop for our Strings Program Students in their performance fees with no extra costs to our students. When these opportunities are available, take advantage of them!

4) ***Home Music Stand for Practice.*** Make sure your student has a collapsible music stand. Why? Putting your music at the proper height encourages proper posture and playing technique, which is vital to learning how to play well. Stands are available on amazon for as little as \$11.99. Practicing in front of a mirror is also a helpful technique because then your student can check his/her own posture and look into the mirror to check their hand placement rather than down at his/her hands. Being able to look up and play is an important skill to develop for playing in an ensemble.

5) ***Encourage your student to be prepared for lessons and rehearsal.*** 1) All students should bring their music in a Folder, 2) their instrument and bow, 3) a pencil, 4) a rock-stop for cello players, and 5) a should-rest for violin and viola players.