



FWYO Chamber Music Program

Student Handbook

2025–2026

Thank you for joining the Fort Worth Youth Orchestras Chamber Music Program! Chamber music is one of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of being a musician. Students develop independence, responsibility, and collaborative skills while making music in small ensembles. Whether this is your first chamber group or one of many, we're excited to support your musical journey.

This handbook outlines important information about the program—what to expect, what's required, and how we work together to make this a successful and enriching experience for everyone.

Program Goals

By the end of the season, students will:

- Perform in at least one formal recital
- Perform in at least one community outreach performance (i.e. Cook's Children, Ronald McDonald House, local nursing homes and medical centers, etc.)
- Experience high level musicianship through various workshops and educational outreach opportunities (i.e. master classes, coachings with esteemed professionals, seminars/workshops about chamber music and performing, etc.)
- Witness beautiful chamber music concerts as an audience member via partnerships with world-renowned musicians and chamber music groups
- Develop a stronger understanding of ensemble collaboration
- Participate in social engagement and activities designed to showcase the power of collaboration in music-making.
- Learn how to rehearse and work together without a conductor
Strengthen personal responsibility and preparation habits
- Discover and explore high-quality chamber music repertoire

Eligibility & Placement

Who Can Participate?

The Chamber Music Program is open to all current members of:

- Youth Orchestra
- Philharmonic Orchestra
- String Orchestra
- Wind Ensemble

Placement Process

Students are grouped by age, skill level, and instrumentation based on their annual FWYO audition. Additional placement criteria may include availability and ensemble needs. We aim to ensure all students are placed in groups where they will thrive musically and personally.

If a student is not a member of a FWYO large ensemble, they will be auditioned (or referred by their school's music director) for placement.

If a student in an ensemble would like to request who they are placed with, every effort will be made to honor those requests.

Rehearsals & Schedule

Weekly Commitments

Chamber groups participate every week that FWYO is in session. Each group will receive:

- Professional coachings and rehearsals from esteemed performers and educators (usually 9 coachings per semester)
- 2 to 3 community outreach performances per semester
- 2 to 3 performances, workshops or other educational experiences per semester (featuring renowned groups performing for students, presenting information to further students' education, or experiences designed to enhance and improve the students' musical performance)
- 1 formal recital per semester

Coaching/Rehearsal Time

When students are scheduled to rehearse with their highly qualified coach, they will always meet at the same time and location (at orchestra hall). Rehearsal times vary based on when students in each group are available to rehearse. Ideally, we follow the rehearsal schedule outlined below to avoid conflict with the regularly scheduled large group ensembles.

Sundays:

- Philharmonic Ensembles: 2:00–2:45 PM or 5:00–5:45
- Wind Ensembles: 3:00–3:45 PM
- Youth Orchestra Ensembles: 4:30–5:15 PM
- Mixed Ensembles: 3:00–3:45 PM; 5:00–5:45 or 5:30–6:15 PM

Tuesdays:

- String Orchestra Ensembles: 5:00–5:45 PM

Calendar

Weekly activities and updates will be sent via email regularly throughout the semester. Students are expected to attend all weekly events (every effort will be made to avoid conflict with any regularly scheduled FWYO events). Chamber events/rehearsals will not happen during school holidays or weeks when the FWYO large ensemble concerts are scheduled.

Fall Semester		Spring Semester	
Program Start:	Week of August 24th	Program Start:	Week of January 11th
Formal Recital (program end):	Friday, December 12th	Formal Recital (program end):	Saturday, April 25th

Attendance Policy

The absence of a single member is a serious detriment to the education and progress of the ensemble. Weekly attendance is of incredible importance. Each member is allowed one excused absence per semester or one unexcused absence. Excused absences must be communicated 24 hours in advance of rehearsal or else they will be counted as unexcused absences (unless it is a family and medical emergency).

To report an absence, please contact the FWYO Chamber coordinator via email at Chamber@fwyo.org

Excused absences:

- illness/injury, family/personal emergencies, religious observances, school-sponsored activities/requirements (rehearsals, performances, trips, exams), college auditions/visits, inclement weather preventing attendance

Unexcused absences:

- vacation travel, homework/study time, college applications, social events (prom, banquets, dances), lacking instrument (forgotten, inaccessible, disrepair)

Reasons for absences not listed above will be evaluated by the chamber coordinator and administration on a case-by-case basis.

Note that we require excuses to come directly from a parent and not a student.

*****Students who fail to meet attendance expectations will be subject to removal from the program without a refund. Due to the critical nature of attendance for chamber programs, there will be few if any exceptions to this policy.***

Dress Code

Outreach Events:

FWYO chamber ensembles participate in a variety of performances. Members are typically permitted to follow a more casual dress code because of this nature. Event-specific requirements for these performances (such as matching t-shirts) will be communicated in advance by the ensemble instructor, but the following guidelines can be expected:

- Tops – must not be sleeveless or strapless, and must extend to the waist of bottoms;
- Bottoms – tan khaki shorts, capris, or pants;
- Footwear – closed toes/heels with socks/hosiery (flats preferred; heels not advised);
- Specifics will be communicated in advance, including style/color-coordination, sleeve length, tucked/untucked, pants/shorts, etc.;
- Neatly styled hair; jewelry/accessories should be modest and should not interfere with playing your instrument; avoid perfumes, colognes, etc.

Formal Recitals:

- Option #1 – Black dress pants with black long-sleeved dress shirt. All-black leather/faux leather dress shoes (no sneakers, Keds, Converse, etc) with black, tall, knee-length socks (no skin showing when seated).
- Option #2 – Ankle-length black dress (or ankle-length black skirt/dress pants with black blouse). Dress/blouse must be a modest cut without ornate designs, must not be strapless, sleeves must be 3/4 length or longer, and must extend to the skirt/pant waist. All-black closed-toe dress shoes (flats preferred; heels not advised). Black socks/hosiery recommended.
- ALL – neatly styled hair and appropriate nails for playing; no studded belts; modest jewelry and accessories should not interfere with playing your instrument; no perfumes, colognes, strong scents.

For any performance, ensembles are allowed to collaborate with individual instructors to alter their uniform so that it may aid in the performance of the piece (i.e. santa hats, color coordinated attire, etc.) as long as a professional appearance is maintained.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

The success of each student—and the chamber music program as a whole—relies on strong support from families. While students are expected to take ownership of their preparation and participation, parents and guardians play a vital role in helping them succeed.

By enrolling your student in the FWYO Chamber Music Program, you agree to:

- Stay Informed: Read all program communications thoroughly and ensure you are aware of important dates, deadlines, and expectations.
- Check Email Regularly: A working email address must be on file, and families are expected to check that email consistently. Please add chamber@fwyo.org to your address book or safe sender list to avoid missing important updates.
- Provide Reliable Transportation: Chamber ensembles operate on a strict attendance policy. It is your responsibility to ensure your student has dependable transportation to and from rehearsals, coachings, and performances.
- Support Your Student's Practice and Commitment: Encouragement at home makes a significant difference. We ask that you help nurture your student's investment in the music and rehearsal process. Strong preparation outside of rehearsal is the single most important factor in achieving a rewarding and high-quality musical experience.
- Mark Recital Dates Immediately: Please record recital dates (listed in this handbook) on your calendar as soon as they are received. These performances are major culminating events, and your student's attendance is essential.
- Promote Reliable Attendance: Help your student plan ahead and prioritize their chamber music commitments. Your partnership is key to minimizing absences and ensuring your student's full participation throughout the semester.

We appreciate your support in helping us provide a meaningful, educational, and collaborative environment for every participant in the FWYO Chamber Music Program.

Payment

Enrollment in the chamber program is for the full calendar year. Tuition for the year is: \$485.

Payment is due at the beginning of the fall semester. This may be paid through Knack (under Invoices or Misc Invoices), check, or cash.

Payment plans to help accommodate your personal financial situation may be arranged by contacting Alice Liu at accounting@fwyo.org or by calling 817-923-3121 x17.

Financial Aid

Limited financial aid is available to qualified students for all FWYO programs.

Students seeking financial aid must submit an application that includes information about their household and income situation. Applications can be found at fwyo.org/financialaid. Email a scanned copy of the completed application to chamber@fwyo.org

Reminders (remind?)

Contact

Your main point of contact for this program will be your child's coach/instructor who will provide you with contact information when rehearsals begin.

You will also regularly receive emails from chamber@fwyo.org providing updates, information, calendar reminders, etc. Please add this to your address book to avoid any delay in communication.

For questions about the chamber program, billing information, or to report disputes or other concerns, please contact:

Sarah Willson

FWYO Chamber Music Coordinator

chamber@fwyo.org