

## About Strings Class

**What grade is it offered in?** Strings class is offered in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade. We strongly encourage students to continue on the same instrument from year to year so that their skills continue to grow and improve. We also urge students who are interested in band to take strings in 4th grade to start working on similar skills necessary for the band in 5th grade.

**When is the class?** Strings class is during the school day! It is built into the master schedule and does not require time outside of school hours to participate. There are only two concerts each year that happen outside of the school day. Please be aware that this is a year-long class, and the contract states that students attend class until the last day of school.

**What instruments can I learn?** In 4th grade, we start on the violin or viola to learn basic literacy and performance skills, and in 5th and 6th grade students have the opportunity to switch to one of the larger instruments, like cello or bass. These large instruments require more work and responsibility as they need to be safely stored and transported to and from school each week.

**How do I get an instrument?** FCPS offers a reduced price for the rental of a violin or viola if you are unable to afford or obtain your instrument from a local music store. The larger instruments cost more to rent from the school than the violin and viola and are also limited by how many of them are available each year. However, money should never be an issue so please reach out to the teacher to discuss other options!

**What do we do in class?** As a beginner, we learn how to hold our instruments, which strings are which, how to use the bow, how to read notes and play familiar folk songs such as *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* or *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, and so much more. The first year sets up our basics so that when we return in 5th grade we can build on those concepts. In 5th and 6th grade, we take those skills and elaborate on them by exploring new rhythm patterns, new finger patterns, new notes on different strings, dynamics, some popular songs, and even some well-known classic pieces. We further explore expression and the use of articulation to perform the piece as the composer intended.

**What happens after elementary school?** After elementary school, we hope our musicians continue to play their instruments and join the middle school orchestra. The students there attend orchestra as many times in one month as the elementary school has them all year— this means their skills will exponentially increase with that amount of time in the classroom! Harder music and more concerts await as they continue in their musical career.