

The mission of the music program at Monsignor Clarke is to, across all grade levels, help students do the following:

- Sing with proper vocal technique
- Become musically literate at an age-appropriate level
- Understand the role of music at Mass
- Identify the different instrument families and their characteristics
- Learn about several prominent composers from music history
- Prepare two pieces for performance at the annual Christmas concert

Using a spiral curriculum, key concepts are re-introduced each year and expanded upon for deeper understanding, leading to mastery of skills and an easier ability to tackle more complex ideas.

Early Childhood:

-Students learn to explore the use of their “singing voice” through echo singing during attendance taking and other routine songs. They learn repeated sections of Mass songs by rote to encourage participation in Liturgy. As reading skills develop, they are given lyrics to follow, and eventually songbooks with music notation. We learn to feel the “high” and “low” ranges of our voice.

-They engage in several childhood folk songs that encourage understanding of letters, numbers, and following directions. Most songs direct children to move in specific ways and to follow a steady beat. Eventually, we begin to grasp the concept of left and right using selected songs.

-Children learn to create a steady beat through chanting, clapping, walking, and playing basic percussion instruments. We discuss, at a developmentally appropriate level, the relationship between size and pitch.

-Students are introduced to the percussion family, learning to identify the instruments provided in the classroom and how to properly play them. Through these activities, fine motor skills and sharing are enforced.

-The solfege scale is introduced through the song *Do-Re-Mi* from *The Sound of Music* and practiced regularly with choreography.

-Whenever earned, students engage in fun dancing at the end of class. When the music does not give explicit directions, children are encouraged to move in their own creative ways and enjoy the music.

Elementary:

-Building upon prior knowledge, students continue learning to sing properly. More emphasis is placed on notation, whether on the board or in songbooks during Mass preparation.

-Students are expected to know and participate in the Mass parts and begin comprehension of what takes place during the celebration of Mass. They engage in discussion regarding why certain songs are chosen for different Liturgies.

-The building blocks of musical literacy are introduced with concepts such as the staff, the treble clef, "pitch," and "rhythm." Students recognize whether notes are high or low, long or short.

-The solfege scale is put into practice through increasingly complex exercises which become songs with lyrics.

-All four families of the orchestra are studied in detail. Children are expected to identify all families and the traditional instruments used in each by sight and sound. Those who study an instrument outside of class are encouraged to share their knowledge and demonstrate their skills for others.

Middle:

-Students are expected to be fluent in reading notes in the treble staff and begin composing their own melodies with accurate rhythmic values and neat writing.

-We explore time signatures, more complex rhythmic values, key signatures, the structure of a major scale, tempo, dynamics, and how all these elements come together to create the music of Western culture.

-Students should be able to play melodies on pitched percussion instruments.

-Seventh and eighth graders complete and present one project per year:

1. Favorite Artist: Students work individually to reflect on why they particularly enjoy the work of a selected artist, singer, group, or composer. They are required to give detailed explanations of their subject's characteristics, genre, and instrumentation.
2. Music History: Students work in groups and are assigned one of the six periods of music history to research. They are to look into what else was going on during the time that may have influenced the music, what instruments and motivations came into play, and who prominent composers and musicians were at the time. This project gives the entire class a summary of how music has evolved since the 1200s.