



ORCHESTRA PROJECT SEATING PHILOSOPHY

Dear Parents and Students,

Thank you for joining us here at the Orchestra Project! We wanted to let you know our philosophy on seating placements in the various orchestras. A common misconception is that 1st chair means 1st best, 2nd chair means 2nd best, and straight down the line. In certain schools or programs this might be how things are done, but here at the Orchestra Project we are operating by professional standards under the guidance of highly-trained professional orchestra players. It is true that usually some of the strongest players are put in principal or leadership positions. But a section comprised of all of the strongest players in the front and all of the weakest players in the back is honestly a terrible section. Strong players are needed throughout a section for balance, and seating placements are made accordingly. They are also needed in all of the orchestras (Brio & Cantabile), so a strong player might be placed in the Cantabile orchestra in order to be a leader for that orchestra. If a player has been seated in the back of a section, this does not mean that faculty views that player to be the worst or that he or she played a terrible audition. The Orchestra Project is comprised of talented students from all over the region. You or your child might be one of the strongest players in your school orchestra, but now you are joining an orchestra with the best players from many schools and youth orchestras. Audition preparation/performance, sight-reading ability, and having balanced sections are all part of the seating process in order to create strong sections. Every professional musician will tell you that it is harder to sit in the back of a section than in the front – you are further away from the conductor, making it harder to see and hear everything that is going on. A back seat might just mean that the faculty trusts your ability to handle this difficult job. So before questioning a seat assignment, trust that the faculty has placed you in an appropriate place for the strength of the section... and take it upon yourself to lead from wherever you have been placed, helping those around you. Attentive, strong players in the back of sections are always appreciated and always get noticed by the conductors.

Written by Dr. Stephen Schmidt