

# FAYM Handbook 2023-2024

Please read all of the following information carefully. Registration in any FAYM class implies that you have read, understand, and agree to abide by all policies and procedures outlined below.

Welcome to FAYM! 2023 begins the 16th year of FAYM. This Handbook has been written in order to better serve the students and their families, to help keep the administration of FAYM working smoothly, and to protect the safety and well-being of all FAYM students.

## Illnesses

If your child is ill (sniffles, fever, cough, etc.), you shouldn't bring the child to class and risk infecting the teacher and other students. If you bring a child to class with a contagious illness, whether a common cold or the flu, infecting the teacher and other students could potentially disrupt several weeks of classes. Something as "easy" and common as a cold affects different people differently. You may only have a sniffle and otherwise feel fine, but the next person could react much more seriously, with a fever, difficulty breathing, and other uncomfortable symptoms. So we stay away from others when we are sick. Let's be considerate enough to follow this policy, even post-COVID.

We need to think of every person - the teachers, the students, the parents or guardians and siblings that accompany that student, as well as the staff and members of New Life Church who are in the building while FAYM classes are in session and may come in contact with any of us. If you or your child has ANY symptom of ANY illness, the child SHOULD NOT come to class.

**FAYM teachers will be monitoring all students throughout the semester. If it is found that a student who is visibly ill has been sent to class, that student will be removed from the classroom immediately and sent home.**

## Registration

Families will register for FAYM classes online, from the FAYM website. Registration will open a few weeks before the start of the semester. Check the website for registration deadlines.

Families who register after the regular registration deadline will pay an additional late registration fee of \$15 per student.

## Calendar

The academic year is broken into two semesters: Fall and Spring. FAYM does not offer a Summer semester. Each of the two semesters will be between 14 and 16 weeks long. Each FAYM class meets once per week, with the exception of AP Music Theory, which meets twice per week. Final concerts will be scheduled near the end of the semester, on or around the final week.

The complete FAYM calendar is available online from the FAYM website. Families are encouraged to check all dates and events for the entire semester and mark those dates on their personal calendars.

## **Inclement Weather**

In the case of inclement weather, FAYM classes may be canceled for that day. The decision to cancel classes will be made early in the morning, usually by 8AM. Families will be notified by email, and a notice will be posted on the FAYM website. Because FAYM rents the church building and several other groups use that building throughout the week, a makeup class cannot be offered. FAYM will not give refunds if inclement weather causes us to cancel classes.

## **Payment**

All payments should be submitted online, at the FAYM MyMusicStaff website. There is no charge for paying online. FAYM strongly encourages families to pay through the website. In the case that a family cannot or does not want to pay online, checks are accepted, payable to FAYM. The mailing address for payments is 7931 Lake Anna Parkway, Spotsylvania, VA 22551.

Whether families choose to pay by check or online, all families must register on the FAYM MyMusicStaff website for an account. You will choose your own password for your account. The account allows you to check your own records of payments and charges (even when you pay by check).

There will be no refunds given if you pay for the entire semester up front and then drop a class before the semester is over.

All payments are due by the first of the month. This means the payment needs to be in our hands by the first! Thank you for planning ahead and getting payments in on time.

## **Late Payments**

All payments are due on the first of each month. If a payment is not received within one week of the due date, a \$15 late fee will be added to your account. Families with delinquent accounts will be suspended from all FAYM classes until payments are up to date.

## **Returned Check Policy**

All checks returned for insufficient funds are subject to a \$50 fee. When a check is returned for insufficient funds, the amount of the check plus the \$50 fee must be paid by the 30th of the month or the family will not be allowed to participate in any FAYM classes until all payments are up to date.

## **Refunds**

Refunds are not given for any reason once the semester starts. If you've committed to a class, then it is expected that the student will attend regularly and come prepared. No refunds will be given if a family pays for the entire semester in advance but does not finish out the entire semester. There will be no refunds given if you pay for the entire semester up front and then drop a class before the semester is over.

\* The ONLY exception to this policy is during the registration period. If a family signs up and pays for a class, and then has to change the class because of scheduling, or drop the class because the student did not test in to the expected level; and IF the semester has not started yet, THEN payment for the class will be refunded. Registration fees are never refunded because of the many, many hours of work and planning that the FAYM teachers put in to registering and auditioning and lesson planning for students.

If you are making monthly payments and drop a class, once you notify FAYM that you are dropping, you will be removed from the roster and won't be charged for any remaining months of the semester.

## **Attendance**

It is expected that FAYM students will keep absences to a minimum. If a student has to miss a class, the family should contact their FAYM teacher to notify him/her of the absence. Excessive absences can cause a student to be dropped from the roster. If a student misses too many classes right before a performance, the student may be dropped from the performance.

Please understand that our classes require steady attendance and consistent practice in order to make progress and keep up with the rest of the class.

## **Dropping A Class**

If a student drops a class, the parent should notify FAYM as soon as possible. Failure to notify FAYM will result in the family being charged for the class that is being dropped, even if the student does not attend. Refunds will not be given for the remainder of a month if a family drops out before the end of the month. There will be no refunds given if you pay for the entire semester up front and then drop a class before the semester is over.

## **Books, Instruments, and other Required Materials**

The class descriptions (available from the FAYM website) will list any books, instruments, equipment, or other materials required for a class. In almost all cases, students need to provide their own instruments. The student should try to have all required books by the first class of the semester. FAYM will not provide books required for a class, except where noted. It will be the responsibility of the student to obtain his/her own book in most classes.

## **SmartMusic**

SmartMusic is required for students in any band or strings class. Other classes may require SmartMusic as well.

Students who do the practice and assignments have an advantage with their practicing and progress. The SmartMusic subscription will give students extra tools, such as recordings, sightreading, tuning help, exercises, and class assessments and grades. The teacher will use SmartMusic each week to make assignments and assess each student's progress. Grades are automatically given by the program upon the completion of each assignment.

More information can be found on the SmartMusic website: [www.SmartMusic.com](http://www.SmartMusic.com).

## **Class Descriptions**

The large number of classes offered by FAYM prevents us from listing the complete descriptions here. Complete class descriptions, including materials needed, age limits, and other prerequisites, are listed on the FAYM website. Classes may vary each semester. Parents should not sign up a student for a class without checking the age requirement or any other prerequisite first. It is the parent's responsibility to find out what is required for each class before registering.

## **Testing Up (Band and Orchestra)**

The students in percussion, band, and orchestra classes are grouped by level, not by age or grade.

Beginning students will start in the Intro class. Students may not move up to the next level without testing up (showing competency in specific skill areas). Students will have an opportunity to testup before the semester starts. Students wanting to test up must sign up for a testup from the FAYM website.

### **VBODA and VCDA Sponsored Events**

Band, percussion, chorus, and strings students, by participation in a FAYM band, chorus, or strings class, are eligible to participate in any VBODA- or VCDA-sponsored event, including District Band, Regional Orchestra, District Chorus, All-Virginia Chorus, All-VA Jazz Ensemble, All-VA Band or Orchestra, and Solo/Ensemble Festival. The teacher will have information about auditioning for these events as it becomes available during the year.

Students wanting to audition for JRO or Middle School District Band must be a member of a level 3 band or strings class or higher. Students wanting to audition for SRO or High School District Band must be a member of a level 4 band or strings class.

### **Private Lessons**

Taking private lessons is a very important part of a student's musical education. While FAYM does not require any student to take private lessons (except for Band 4 and Strings 4), the students who do study privately usually progress much more quickly and advance to higher levels sooner than the students who do not take private lessons.

FAYM ensembles are not meant to replace private lessons. Students learn different things from the two different experiences (ensemble playing and private lessons). A well-rounded musical education will include both of these experiences and not rely on only one to provide a total musical education.

FAYM does not offer private lessons as part of the FAYM program. The FAYM teachers may teach privately off-site, or could recommend a private instructor for your instrument.

### **Concerts and Performances**

Opportunities for performing are an important part of most music classes. During the semester, students will prepare for performance opportunities, which may include the Final Concert, the Class Showcase, and the Solo/Ensemble Recital. Every effort will be made to schedule these events before the start of the semester and list them on the FAYM Calendar for your information.

The Class Showcase is an opportunity for the non-ensemble classes to show the public what was learned during the semester. The Class Showcase is a performance, but also a demonstration. The Group Keyboard classes, Group Guitar classes, Recorder class, and Elementary Music classes will perform music learned in class and/or display written forms of their work. The teachers may explain to the audience the scope and sequence of the class. The Class Showcase is a required performance for students in those classes!

The Final Concert (Winter Concert or Spring Concert) is a major performance for the large ensemble classes - Bands, Orchestras, and Choirs. Students participating in this performance will contribute to the rental fee of the concert venue (usually about \$12 per family). The Final Concert is a required performance for students in those ensembles!

The Solo and Ensemble Recital is a fun, voluntary (not required) music and fellowship opportunity for students and FAYM families. Students can choose to perform solos or small group ensembles that they have prepared on their own. FAYM families will enjoy refreshments and fellowship with each other in between the performances. This recital is not offered every semester, but only when time and performance space makes it possible.

Other performance opportunities may be available during the semester if time and logistics allow.

## **Concert Requirement**

The Class Showcase and Final Concert are required for students in those participating classes. Parents should make note of the dates of these performances and mark them on their calendars at the start of the semester in order to adequately assure attendance at these performances. Students must also attend the dress rehearsals in order to participate in the concerts.

The Solo/Ensemble Recital is not a required performance for any class. Students are encouraged to participate by preparing a musical selection on their own. Refreshments will be served at this recital, and all FAYM families are invited to attend, even if not performing. All other performance opportunities for ensemble classes are NOT required. Sometimes FAYM ensembles are invited to perform at other community events. Obviously, in order to represent our organization well and to have a good performance, we want to encourage as much participation as possible, but no other performance during the semester is a required performance, other than the Final Concert and the Class Showcase.

## **Concert Dress**

Concert dress for the Class Showcase is nice picture clothes, or "Sunday best" kind of dress. Please, no jeans or sneakers. Discuss concert dress with your class teacher in case the class decides on a more specific kind of concert dress.

Concert dress for the Final Concert is white shirt, black pants, and black shoes.

- White shirt - the shirt can be long sleeve, short sleeve, button down, or golf shirt, as long as it is all white with no printing.
- Black pants - girls can opt to wear a black skirt instead, but the skirt must be calf-length or longer. This is not just below the knees, but 5-6 inches below the knees. Girls that do not have a long black skirt should plan on wearing black pants instead. Younger girls (under age 10) can have a difficult time finding longer skirts. A MINIMUM knee length skirt is allowed for younger girls, as long as black leggings are worn underneath.
- Black Shoes with black or dark colored socks.

The Concert Clothes Exchange Box contains concert clothing that students have outgrown. Any FAYM family is welcome to look through the box and take what is needed, free of charge. It is understood that when your concert clothes no longer fit, you will contribute to the box for other families to use.

## **Dress Rehearsals**

The last 2 class days before the final concert will be dress rehearsal days. This does not mean the students need to be in concert dress, but the major ensembles (choirs, bands, orchestras) will practice their music in concert order. Practicing in concert order allows the students to learn how to enter and exit the stage, and how to judge how much time they have to get ready in between the different performing ensembles. Because we don't know the concert order until a few weeks before the concert, the schedule for those 2 dress rehearsal days will not be determined until a few weeks before the concert.

Dress rehearsals for the major ensembles are required for participation in the Final Concert. Families should check the calendar near the beginning of the semester for the dress rehearsal dates and mark those dates in their own datebooks. Because the exact times of day will not be known until week 10, families should block those entire two days on their calendars.

**Food in Class**

Food is not allowed in any classroom at any time. If students spend many hours at FAYM and need a snack or a meal, all food must be consumed in the designated area.

Because of several severe allergies, no nuts, tree nuts, peanuts, or peanut butter is allowed at FAYM at any time.

NO GUM is ever allowed anywhere in the building at any time!

Water bottles are the only liquid allowed in classrooms, but students must keep the lids/caps/tops secure.

**Waiting Area - Lounge**

Unfortunately, because of the ongoing construction projects at New Life, there will not be an empty classroom or "waiting room" this semester for families to use.

**Unused Classrooms**

The daily schedule for each classroom will be posted on the classroom doors. When a classroom is not in use, parents may be able to make use of the empty classrooms as waiting rooms or quiet study rooms. However, use of these empty rooms must be approved by the director. Please email [FAYMdirector@gmail.com](mailto:FAYMdirector@gmail.com) to inquire about empty rooms.

**Outside Policy**

The following outside policy will be strictly enforced for student safety and liability.

Students are not allowed outside to play or sit without an adult present (an adult is a guardian at least 21 years old). When the weather is pleasant, students can take advantage of the picnic tables to eat, read, or play games, but only with adult supervision (an adult is a guardian at least 21 years old). An adult guardian (at least 21 years of age) has to agree to accompany all students outside, or no students will be allowed outside.

Please do not play in the baseball areas without permission from New Life Church.

Children may go to the playground ONLY if an adult is with them. Unattended children may not go to the playground.

**Parking**

Parking is available in front of the church ONLY. Please do NOT park or drive on either side of the building, or behind the building. This policy must be strictly enforced to ensure the safety of the children who are walking between cars and the building. Church staff have designated parking spots on the sides of the building. We are to leave those spots open for them.

If it is raining, please give your child an umbrella to walk to the building. Do NOT drive on the side of the building, because there is not enough room to turn around safely.

### **Drop Off and Pick Up**

Students can not be left at FAYM beyond their regular class times. Early drop off and late pick up are not allowed. Families who regularly abuse this policy will be dropped from the FAYM student roster.

Students should be dropped off with enough time to get their instruments and music stands assembled before the start of class (about 10-15 minutes).

### **Classroom Responsibilities - Set Up and Tear Down**

Please assist your teacher by helping to set up or tear down/clean up your own classroom each day. Make note of the room schedule on the door. If you are the last class of the day, every student is responsible for cleaning the room and resetting chairs and desks before leaving.

### **Parent Volunteers and Hall Monitors**

In order to fulfill our agreement with New Life Church, FAYM must provide hall monitors any time a FAYM class is in session. The hall monitors also help check, clean, and reset classrooms at the end of the day. FAYM will ask parents to volunteer to work hall monitor positions in exchange for tuition. This is a voluntary position, and nobody is required to work in order to participate in FAYM.

### **Student Expectations - Classroom behavior**

It is expected that each student will come to weekly classes regularly with as few absences as possible. Each student is equally important in a musical ensemble. When a flute player is missing, the trumpet player cannot just move over to the flute section to play the flute's notes. When many students are missing from a class, it makes the other musicians' jobs much more difficult!

It is also expected that students will come to class prepared. This means:

- \* being on time
- \* having your instrument in good working order
- \* remembering to bring your book and/or other music
- \* having your parts learned (practice!)
- \* having all necessary supplies (extra reeds, pencils, music stand, etc.)

Not following these expectations is unprofessional and unfair to the students who are coming to classes prepared and ready to learn. Of course, there may be an exception or circumstance that is beyond your control. Even so, students should not be unprepared on a regular basis.

Students who miss more than 2 classes in a row, consistently come unprepared, do not respect the directions of the instructor, or consistently come to class late may be dropped from the class roster without refund.

### **Respect by parents and students for the Directors/Teachers**

Because this may be the first classroom experience for some students, parents should teach their children what constitutes proper classroom behavior and respect for the teacher. It is expected that parents will respect the choices and efforts made by the teachers/directors/hall monitors/helpers. This includes curriculum or music choices, instructions or directions, and lesson plans. Parents should also encourage their children to respect the instructions given by the classroom teachers.

Parents and students are also expected to show respect to all other students in the class. Students should act encouragingly to all other students in the class, regardless of their level of ability. We can all help and learn from each other!

Parents who wish to talk to teachers are encouraged to contact the teacher by email. If a face to face meeting is desired, parents should email the teacher to set up a date/time to talk. Teachers are not always available in between classes to address concerns with parents.

### **Communication**

It is important that parents feel comfortable addressing any concerns to the teachers or director. FAYM welcomes your questions, comments, and concerns in order to continue developing a great program for all families. If parents have comments or concerns about any part of FAYM, they should email their concerns, or contact a teacher or the director to set up a time to discuss. The teachers and director aren't always available to talk in between classes. Parents should not assume that they can have an important conversation with a teacher as they pick up their child after a class. Some teachers have break times in between their classes, but parents should still contact the teacher ahead of time to make sure the teacher is available for a meeting.

### **Practicing**

The number one way you can get the most out of your tuition payments is to PRACTICE your instrument or class assignment regularly. When students practice, classes progress at a faster rate, rehearsals run more smoothly, and the director can spend more time on ensemble playing and less time on helping individual players. Think about what would happen if you practiced your math or spelling skills only once a week! Your musical skills need frequent attention also. Try to make practice a part of your daily schedule. The amount of time that you practice each day is not nearly as important as the frequency - which means you'll learn the most by practicing often (every day).

It's a circle: if you practice, you'll get better. When you get better, your music will be easier. When it is easier, it is more fun to play! When it is more fun, you'll want to play/practice more. When you practice more, you'll get even better. See?