

DeWitt Middle School Orchestra Trip Contributes to Team Building

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The DeWitt Middle School Orchestra seventh and eighth graders travelled to the Heritage National Orchestra Competition and Festival in Boston, MA in April and learned about musicianship and team building. As part of the trip that included performance for judges and master classes, DeWitt students learned the benefit of long term planning and practice.

DeWitt Orchestra Director and music teacher Aaron Buck stated, "Going to festivals and competitions is a great way for seventh and eighth grade students to see what other orchestras are doing and helps them as a team to achieve something great. It gave our students a goal."

Orchestra students learned the necessity of working together and the importance of each member. The DeWitt Orchestra repertoire for the trip was St. Paul's Suite, Jig by Gustav Holst and October by Eric Whitacre. They worked on the pieces for seven months in class and in ensemble lessons at school.

Team building was also a curricular goal which was realized in both the performance and in the trip planning and actual travel for the trip. Students and families were involved in the brainstorming about how to fundraise, to coordinate trip details and to manage the equipment necessary to perform. In addition, the specialness of the trip was a great confidence booster and team motivator, according to Buck. Students also had the chance to observe other ensembles from around the country and meet fellow music enthusiasts.

The trip included a performance competition, mini-clinic and touring the Boston area. The performance competition was judged by outside evaluators and in comparison to high school student performers, earning the DeWitt Orchestra a Silver Level Award, with a score one point away from the Gold Level.

Fundraising was necessary to make this trip possible. Noted Buck, "The community rallied to support every student's participation." The orchestra students and their families undertook fundraisers, a publicity campaign, and an online giving option. "We are so grateful for the community support," he said.

Community donors stepped forward to help support music education. Trip Scholarships were supported by grants and sponsorships from the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI), the Carol J. Buckley Scholarship for Students in the Arts, the Josh Endo Memorial for Continuing Support of Music Education, and two anonymous donors, with administrative assistance from the Fine Arts Booster Group (FABG).

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