

## **WJCC Schools and The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra Collaborate For “Music In Our Schools Month”**

### **Daily Video Projects Connect Social and Emotional Health With Music Education**

Williamsburg, VA – (March 3, 2020) The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra and Williamsburg-James City County (WJCC) Schools have aligned in a strategic partnership to strengthen the connections between music education and the social and emotional health of our local student population. The WSO has produced over 20 short videos, under the guidance of WJCC Schools counselors and music teachers, that will air during the school’s morning meeting each day of March to promote the national Music in Our Schools Month. All elementary students in grades K-5th will receive a "Morning Music and Mindfulness Minute” brain break and discussion topic.

For example, the mindfulness topics might be *What Is Intrinsic Motivation*, *What Is Your Face Saying to Others*, *What Happens When We Do Not Win*, *It’s OK to Disagree*, and many more!

Teachers will use the topics, brought to life by WSO Musicians, to engage students in goal setting and promote self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making skills.

“Music is an excellent way to bring students together to start the day. It energizes their minds and gets them thinking in new ways,” said John Rasky, WJCC Schools fine arts coordinator. “We are incredibly grateful to our partners from the Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra and the talented musicians who are sharing their time and talent to make this happen.”

“By partnering with WJCC Schools, we are able to reach every elementary learner, beginning their day with fun and engaging topics that introduce them to their feelings and behavior choices in new ways. By connecting music and mindfulness, encouraging them to pay attention to their emotions on purpose- in the present moment, we are helping the children learn life skills that will serve them for years to come. Most importantly, we are reinforcing the power of connecting music to social and emotional health,” said JB Crowley, The WSO’s Marketing and Community Engagement Manager.

This project with the WJCC Schools is a part of The WSO’s ongoing educational outreach initiatives. This latest endeavor creates a pipeline to provide lifelong musical opportunities in their local community. By introducing students to WSO Musicians every morning and familiarizing them with the many instruments that they can learn to play in their school’s band or

orchestra, the student becomes invested in music education naturally, so they are able to make appropriate choices in their future curriculum decisions.

In addition to the Music and Mindfulness videos, the WSO was asked to create a second set of videos for WJCC Band and Orchestra teachers. This series of educational videos will introduce the various band and orchestra instrument options and inform families of the many reasons a particular instrument is the right choice for their student and situation. By appropriately partnering students with their instruments early, the hope is that less frustration will occur and a more natural fit with their instrument will blossom into a long relationship and lifetime love of the arts. “The superb teachers and administrative staff of the WJCC Schools are to be commended for their tireless work and dedication to this project. Their excitement, excellence, and expertise are truly what made this partnership a success,” adds JB Crowley.

The collaboration between The WSO and local student musicians extends beyond video and materials creation and continues to serve the Peninsula with fully developed, innovative virtual and socially distanced curriculum. The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra has completed three 6-week sessions of online Instrumental Coaching taught by WSO musicians and attended by local and regional student musicians. These coaching sessions provide local families with supplemental lesson plans and virtual field trip opportunities at no cost to the student. With schools out of session and orchestra and band ensemble rehearsals impossible due to COVID-19, the Williamsburg Symphony has stepped in to encourage and inspire student musicians from across the region to participate in unique, virtual learning opportunities. The WSO’s music education initiatives are providing local students with a necessary avenue to continue to connect with their instruments and their social/emotional coping skills during this challenging pandemic and hybrid/virtual model.

With excitement, The WSO announces that this grand effort will continue into the Spring of 2021 and is made possible with funding from The Huston Foundation, Williamsburg Area Arts Commission, Virginia Commission for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, York County Arts Commission, Newport News Arts Commission, and the Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra League.

---

#### **About The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra**

The Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra is a professional orchestra based in Williamsburg, VA. It was founded in 1984 and each season offers a five-concert Masterworks series, Pops concerts and an array of educational offerings for area students. These educational offerings include Masterclasses with acclaimed guest artists, Instrumental Coaching sessions, Side-by-Side concerts, Instruments for Kids (instrument loan program), and school performances. In 2020, the orchestra gave 15 performances of “Peter and the Wolf” in all local elementary schools. More information about the orchestra can be found at [www.williamsburgsymphony.org](http://www.williamsburgsymphony.org).

To learn more about The WSO’s Virtual Masterclasses and Instrumental Coaching Sessions, email JB Crowley [jb@williamsburgsymphony.org](mailto:jb@williamsburgsymphony.org).

Photos and video are available upon request.

###