



# Walla Walla Public Schools Classroom Close-Up



TEACHER NAME: Nichole Riggs

SCHOOL: Garrison Middle School

Position: Music Teacher

YEARS IN DISTRICT: 6 years

Q. What music classes do you teach at Garrison?

A. I teach 5th through 8th grade orchestra and 6th, 7th and 8th grade choir. We span from the beginning stages of orchestra and progress to prepare students for high school orchestra. In choir, we build on what students learned from their elementary teachers and continue developing their skills.

Q. What are some of the different skills you teach in choir?

A. One of our main goals is to develop a joy for singing and expand their natural abilities to the next level. We also help students deal with voice changes so they can keep their beautiful sound.

Q. Why is it important for students to read music?

A. To be an independent musician, one needs to read music. Reading music also makes students less dependent on others and makes them a more complete musician. Take math for example. If you have two apples plus another two apples you know you have four apples. It's important to know the answer but it's even more important to know how you came up with the answer. It is the same concept for music and why reading music is so important.

Q. What skill growth do you see in the time you have the students?

A. Most of my 5th grade orchestra students come into class not even knowing how to hold the instrument. Some have some basic knowledge of how to read music, but their skills are very basic. Through my program students advance to a Level 3 and peak out at Level 5 as they finish high school. By the time they leave my program they can sight read music, play an instrument or sing confidently and have a joy for music.

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**MOMENTS & MEMORIES**  
Music students tend to do well in all their classes. Music challenges them to work hard and develop their skills. These skills transfer to their other classes.



**COMMENTS FROM NICHOLE:**  
I've always loved music and started taking piano lessons when I was four. I feel so fortunate to be working in music education. It is incredible to be able to make a living teaching and doing something I love.

I went to Berney, Pioneer and graduated from Wa-Hi in 2002. I graduated college from Eastern Washington University.



I also coach softball and cross country at Wa-Hi. I love running and playing softball. I also like to read and play card and board games. I love anything to do with competition.