

Dr. Rachel Dirks

2025 All-State Junior High School Concert Orchestra

Rachel Dirks, Director of Orchestral Studies, is an active conductor, clinician, and educator. In addition to her work with the KSU Symphony Orchestra, she teaches applied cello and string education at K-State. Dr. Dirks holds cello performance degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and Bethel College, and a Ph.D. in music education, with an emphasis in orchestral conducting, from the University of Kansas. As a guest conductor Dr. Dirks has been invited to conduct orchestras throughout the United States, including recent appearances in Kentucky, Oregon, New York, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, and throughout Kansas. As a featured clinician, she has presented at the National Convention of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, and the state music education conferences of Texas, Oregon, Colorado, and Kansas. Her most recent research has been accepted for presentations at the International Society of Music Education (ISME) and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME).

Along with her work at Kansas State, Dr. Dirks serves on the national ASTA committee on health and wellness with a focus on mental health. Her writing has been published in the American String Teacher, the Kansas Music Review, and several volumes of the instructional publication, Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra. She has led performance tours to Italy, Austria, Ireland, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, and as a cellist, she has enjoyed performing in a wide array of ensembles and venues, including Carnegie Hall. And, as an educator, she has been honored with awards from the Kansas Music Educators Association, the American String Teachers Association Kansas Chapter, the Lawrence Schools Foundation, and the Newton Public Schools. Throughout her work, her fundamental goal is to encourage musicians to seek and create community through music.