

High School String Orchestra

2018 - 2019

Mrs. Kristina Graham, Orchestra Director

Course Overview

This course is open to all students in grades 9-12 with previous experience in playing a string instrument. Students will increase proficiency on their respective instruments, as well as study and perform important orchestral literature. Instruction will include full orchestra, optional chamber ensembles, and small group instruction and will span a variety of musical genres, historical and theoretical aspects. Students are required to participate in all orchestra activities, including performances outside of the school day and are expected to be prepared and on time for all rehearsals and events.

Pennsylvania State Academic Standards for Music Education (Arts and Humanities)

- 9.1 Music Performance
- 9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts
- 9.3 Critical Response
- 9.4 Aesthetic Response

The classroom activities will encompass the above standards and will be delivered in a variety of formats for students utilizing different learning styles.

Curriculum Benchmarks and Objectives

It is expected that every member of the orchestra will demonstrate real growth in musicianship during the course of the year and over the span of the high school years. It is not expected that every member of the orchestra will pursue a professional career, but every member needs to be committed to personal preparation and improvement. Rehearsal occurs daily and will be structured to allow participants to meet the following objectives:

Body Format and Personal Practice:

- balanced playing position and established fluid bowing
- established practice habits of 40 minutes 4 times per week
- develop ability to monitor practice strategies and make adjustments and plan for repetition

Left Hand Skill:

- identify and use correct finger patterns in key signatures: E flat, A flat, D flat, g, c, f
- increase familiarity and accuracy in upper positions, using smoother shifting technique
- execute ornaments - grace notes, trills, turns; complex double stops, advanced fingerings
- demonstrate ability to choose fingers that are appropriate to musical demands
- ability to vary vibrato speed and width for expression

Right Hand Skill:

- lengthening and smoothing the detaché bow stroke; adding louré, portato, rapid string crossings
- develop off-the-string strokes: spiccato, ricochet,
- develop special effects bowing: flautando, sul ponticello, sul tasto, col legno, chords, chops

Aural Skill & Ear Training:

- successfully tune using open 5ths with fine tuners and pegs with given "A" 440;
- perform by ear melodic tonal patterns in major/minor tonalities with chromatic alterations
- perform primary and secondary (ii, vi and vii) harmonic patterns

Rhythmic Skill:

- perform asymmetrical/unusual rhythms, hemiola (2 against 3)
- increased rhythmic sight-reading accuracy
- perform in mixed and poly meters
- demonstrated more rhythmic creativity when improvising

Creative Musicianship:

- melodies and patterns, using chromatic alteration or simple modulations
- improvise primary or secondary harmonic tonal patterns (ii, vi, vii)
- alter melodies and harmonies major to minor and vice versa
- identify intervals in a pre-identified key and scale
- transpose simple melodies into other keys

Ensemble Skills:

- be able to follow section leader
- perform with style, articulation, dynamics and pitch according to the musical function of their part (i.e. melody, harmony, countermelody, etc.)
- follow conductor's more complex beat patterns, cues, expressive gestures, transitions
- display cooperative behavior independently during section rehearsals
- demonstrate preparation, balance, blend, interpretation and musical sensitivity
- display appropriate demeanor in all performance venues.

Expressive Elements:

- evaluate and demonstrate multiple ways of performing a single melody
- apply knowledge of performance practice to selected repertoire
- baby bow strokes and articulation according to conductor's indication and musical requirements
- shape a phrase with dynamics and vibrato and correct fingerings

Historical & Cultural Elements:

- listen to selected music from diverse cultures
- analyze and classify music according to style, composer, genre
- perform music from an expanding repertoire of diverse styles and eras

Evaluation of Music and Performance:

- evaluate individual and group performance using established criteria (rubrics)
- describe personal preference using musical vocabulary in listening and group performance
- using appropriate terminology, be able to compare and contrast performances of various interpretation of the same piece.

Grading

High School Orchestra is a performance-based course and grades are **weighted** according to the following formula for each category:

40% daily participation and preparation (tardiness to class and failure to practice assigned material affects this grade as it affects time spent in rehearsal)

25% concert and performance participation

25% auditions (individual playing tests and full ensemble music performance assessments)

10% written homework assignments

Participation is the largest portion of the course grade. It is assessed through graded rehearsals, and is earned when the student is prepared with his/her instrument/shoulder rest (1 pt), iPad (charged) & music binder (1 pt), is on time for rehearsal (1 pt), trimmed fingernails (1 pt), has prepared the assigned parts (1 pt) and participates fully (1 pt). A total of 6 points may be earned each graded day. Points are deducted when students do not participate fully or arrive unprepared by not having materials or by not having practiced the assigned music.

Playing tests are typically given each quarter and allow students to be assessed individually and therefore reward self-motivation and steady progress. The **only way** to achieve this progress is to practice at home regularly! Class rehearsal time does not provide students with enough repetition to make progress.

In a year when the orchestra participates in an adjudication (Music Performance Assessment), then the final score of the ensemble will be given to every individual in the ensemble as a playing test score. The adjudication process is one of the best ways to evaluate our progress and achievement and is a very specific way of measuring our success as an orchestra.

Final (year end) grades will be an average of the quarter grades.

Required Materials

- 1/2 black binder (in good shape!)
- iPad (charged)
- Pencil
- instrument
- shoulder rest for violinists and violists, rock stop for cellists
- rosin, cleaning cloth (any soft, lint-free cloth)
- all music and articles handed out in class - organized in the binder

The school district has a limited number of instruments that may be borrowed for use at home. Students playing the cello or the bass will have use **at school** of an assigned instrument owned by the district and must agree to help maintain these instruments in top playing condition. Any damage to school instruments through carelessness or willful misuse will result in repair charges to the student and loss of the privilege of using a school instrument for daily rehearsal and students will have to transport their own instrument to school. *Please note: **long fingernails will damage the strings of the instrument** an/or the varnish and will result in the loss of the use of a school instrument and in a lower participation grade for every day until nails are trimmed.*

Attendance and Tardy policy

The tardy policy of the Middle/High School is clearly explained on p. 13 of the Student Handbook. High School Orchestra meets period 3, which begins at 9:17 am on normally scheduled days. Orchestra students are given until 9:19 am to be unpacked and seated for the start of the daily rehearsal. This gives students a total of 6 minutes to travel from period 2 and to unpack their instrument. Students who are not ready to start rehearsal at 9:19 am will lose a daily participation point. Students will be dismissed at 9:48 am, in order to allow time to pack up. Best case scenario: our class instructional time is only 37 minutes long!

Since orchestra is a participatory class, regular attendance is a key ingredient to the success of the individual and the ensemble! Any student who has more than 4 excused absences may be asked to schedule a make up coaching session before or after school.

Orchestra Seating and Playing Tests

Playing tests (auditions) will be held 3-4 times throughout the school year. Students will receive written evaluations. Students are tested on excerpts from the concert repertoire and on assigned etudes and scales. Grading and scale assignments may be differentiated according to grade level. The role of a section leader is very important and will be awarded based on playing ability and demonstrated leadership skills. All sections will utilize rotating seating for rehearsals posted on a weekly basis, with the exception of the section leaders. Rotating seating maximizes learning opportunities for all members of the section and fosters a greater individual contribution to the achievements of the section. Concert seating will be assigned on the basis of playing test performances.

Homework and Practicing

Written homework may be assigned and graded, and is necessary to meet the course objectives. Orchestra students are unable to progress and meet the course objectives without a **daily** practice routine. **Students are expected to practice for a minimum of 30 minutes 4 times per week.** Technical skills are physical and demand repetition for progress to occur.

Concert attendance, attire and etiquette and MPA events

Participation in all scheduled concerts and MPA (Music Performance Assessments) are mandatory and graded. These events are the only way we can appropriately complete the requirements for a class that is focused on *ensemble performance skills*. Exceptions to this will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be submitted in writing to Mrs. Graham at least **2 weeks prior to the concert**. All students must remain for the entire concert in which they are participating in order to receive credit for their attendance. If a student has an *excused* absence on the day of a performance or dress rehearsal and is unable to participate, the points must be made up by completing an appropriate alternative assignment to be determined by Mrs. Graham. Unexcused absences may not be made up.

Conflicts will undoubtedly arise between music commitments and other events. In these instances, it is important that open communication exists between students, parents, teachers, coaches, etc. With advance communication it is typically possible to make arrangements that are fair and respectful to all those involved. However, please keep in mind that concert performances are unique and that this is a course taken for academic credit; no make-up assignment can truly replicate these experiences. As such, although they occur outside of the

school day, these performances weigh heavily into a student's grade, and should be given **priority** when conflicts arise with non-graded activities.

Concert dress and etiquette are necessary for a professional presentation and are part of the concert grade. We have a closet of donated concert clothing and can help any student in need.

Ladies: Black dress blouses or tops (absolutely no sleeveless tops and tops must have a modest neckline and cover the midriff completely), black dress pants, black dress shoes (no sandals or extremely high heels), dark or black tights/socks.

Gentlemen: Tuxedo or suit (black) with white dress shirt. Black socks, black bow-tie, and black belt and dress shoes.

Concert etiquette requires that students sit with the Orchestra **before and after the entire** performance in order to support the other ensembles in the department. Concert grades reflect a student's professionalism and decorum during every orchestra performance. Points will be deducted for tardiness, talking during performances or other disruptive behavior. Cell phones, iPads and gum are NOT allowed during concerts at any time and use of such items will result in a lowered concert grade.

Graduation

The High School Commencement ceremony includes performances by the Band, Orchestra and Chorus. The Orchestra (including 8th grade orchestra students, but not seniors) performs for 30 min. before the ceremony. This is a MANDATORY and graded performance. Absences are only considered with a written parental explanation 2 weeks prior to the event and generally are only excused in the case of illness, funeral, family wedding or graduation to attend -- those "once in a lifetime" events that obviously couldn't be missed or re-scheduled. Typically family plans such as dinner, vacations, outings, etc are not excused absences. Any unexcused absence will result in the student's final grade being lowered ONE full letter grade using the grade change form.

PMEA Festivals and Honors Orchestra participation

Advanced students have opportunities to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular festivals. Sophomores, juniors and seniors may be recommended by the Director for participation in PMEA District Orchestra and then have the opportunity to compete for the right to participate in Western Region and State Orchestra festivals. These recommendations are made on the basis of demonstrated skills. Advanced freshmen and advanced upperclassmen not participating in PMEA festivals may be recommended for WVU High School Honors Orchestra.

These events require students to prepare additional concert music at home and to attend after school rehearsals in order to be competitive and usually require work with a private lesson instructor. Students who do not demonstrate adequate preparation may be withdrawn from the festival at the discretion of the Director. Commitments to these festivals must be taken seriously by the student and the parents, and require careful monitoring of schedules and prior commitments. A student who withdraws from any PMEA or outside festival for any reason other than sudden illness or death in the family will be required to reimburse the Music Department (BASD) for the full cost of his or her registration and attendance.

Orchestra Trips, special events and extra-curricular performances

The Orchestra functions as a class and also offers many extra-curricular activities that enrich the lives of students and contribute to the unique bonds among our members. Typically, we

travel to Disney in Florida once every 4 years, and to another large city for the other biennial music department trip. During the years without a department trip the Orchestra travels for adjudication and special performing opportunities to regional locations. Every effort is made to offer students fundraising opportunities in order to deposit funds into individual accounts toward participating in these trips. Trips are planned carefully to maximize safety and fun and are always organized according to the school districts policies. Throughout the year there are many opportunities for students to participate in chamber ensembles and to perform in the community. We strongly recommend that parents and students take advantage of these events as they greatly increase the learning and satisfaction experienced by our students and also serve to foster the support we need and deserve from the community!

Orchestra Guild

The parents of orchestra students are expected to participate in the booster organization designed to support the activities of the orchestra. The Orchestra Guild is regularly involved in fund-raising and service activities thereby adding valuable opportunities to the orchestra experience. Chaperones for our trips are typically recruited from our Guild members. Meetings are held once per month during the school year on a weeknight and are open to any parent of a middle school or high school string student. Meetings and events are announced by email.

Final thoughts for parents and students

Participating in an orchestra is a very unique and special experience. It requires an investment of self and significant support from family members. It is an opportunity to experience personal challenge and to live creatively as well as to foster close friendships with fellow musicians. Each member of the orchestra has a valuable part to play and much may be gained from being a part of this wonderful team! Making music is a source of great joy for me and I consider it a privilege to share it with my students and to see them become musicians in their own right.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns throughout the year:

grahamk@basd.k12.pa.us

724.774.0250 x 1511 (orchestra office)

412.480.5770 (cell)

CONCERT AND DRESS REHEARSAL DATES: Dates in **BOLD** font are graded and required.

Thursday, Oct. 18	Dress rehearsal @ Westminster College, leave @4:00 - 7:30 pm
Friday, Oct. 19	Concert @ Westminster College, @ 7:30 pm (report @ 6:30 pm)
Sunday, Oct. 21	Elmcroft Home, Chippewa, 3:30 pm, HS & MS orchestra
Sat.-Sun. Nov. 10,11	Jaycee Craft Fair - small ensemble performances
Thursday, Nov. 15	High School Music Department Recital, 7:00 pm HS Auditorium
Tuesday, Dec. 11	High School Winter Concert, 7:30 pm at HS Auditorium
Thurs. - Sat., Jan. 10-12	PMEA District 2,3,5 Orchestra Festival @ Erie McDowell HS
Thurs. - Sat. Feb. 21-23	PMEA Region Orchestra Festival @ Hollidaysburg HS
Thursday, Feb. 28	Band & Orchestra Concert, grades 7 - 12 @ 7:30 pm
Wednesday, Mar. 20	Music Perf. Assessment @ Westminster College, during school
Thursday, Mar. 21	Dutch Ridge Art & Music Show, 6 - 8 pm at DR Gymnasium
Wed. - Sat. April 3 - 6	PMEA All-state festival and conference @ Pittsburgh, PA
Thurs.- Sun. April 25-28	Beaver HS Music Dept. trip to NYC
Monday, May 20	District-wide Orchestra dress rehearsal, 3:00 - 6:00 pm
Tuesday, May 21	District-wide Orchestra Concert, 7:00 pm @ HS Auditorium
Friday, June 7	Graduation — required for grade 8 - 11 students @5:00 pm

Beaver High School Orchestra 2018-19

****Please sign and return this Student Accountability Contract.**

By signing this statement, I confirm that I have thoroughly read and understand the above course of study detailing the policies for success in instrumental music education for the 2018-19 school year. I understand that I will be held accountable to the terms outlined in the above document, and I agree to the best of my ability to these policies.

I confirm that the concert dates are entered on our family calendar!

Student signature

Date

Parent signature

Date

The best way to contact us:

Student email: _____ & cell phone: _____

Student's home address: _____

Mom's email: _____ & cell phone: _____

Dad's email: _____ & cell phone: _____

This 2nd contract is a graded assignment and is DUE on Thursday, Sept. 13