

Middle School String Orchestra
2018-2019
Mrs. Kristina Graham, Orchestra Director

Course Overview

This course is open to all students in grades 7-8 with previous experience in playing a string instrument. Students will increase proficiency on their respective instruments through participation in full orchestra. Students will study and perform musical literature from a variety of genres and will learn about different historical and cultural expression through performances and other activities. Every student is expected to attend all rehearsals, performances and be prepared and on time for all scheduled events.

Curriculum Benchmarks and Objectives

Rehearsal occurs daily and will be structured to allow participants to meet the following objectives by the time they complete 8th grade:

Body Format and Personal Practice:

- develop more support of the instrument in playing position and more fluid bowing motion
- be able to adjust posture in sitting and standing position
- develop practice habits of 30 minutes, 4 x per week
- choose practice strategies for skill development

Left Hand Skill:

- identify and use correct fingerings in key signatures - C, G, D, A, F, B flat, d, a and e
- learn shifting technique and use positions 1/2 - 4th
- Play 2 partial harmonics , finger substitutions and simple double stops, chromatic alterations
- be able to play with a simple vibrato

Right Hand Skill:

- improving détaché by increasing flexibility in bow hold
- develop martelé bow stroke
- develop off the string bow stroke
- play using faster hooked bows and dotted 8th/16th patterns
- increase ability to adapt bowing variables of contact point, weight, speed, and angle.

Aural Skill & Ear training:

- successfully use electronic tuners to tune, begin using open 5ths to tune and use pegs
- perform by ear melodic tonal patterns within one octave in major and minor tonalities
- adjust pitches to correct intonation when playing
- begin learning scale degrees and role in harmonic and melodic context

Rhythmic Skill:

- accurately perform subdivisions in duple and triple meters
- read and perform syncopations and dotted rhythms and corresponding rests
- continue to refine use of bow to communicate rhythms with clarity and proper emphasis

Creative Musicianship:

- improvise melodic tonal patterns within an octave
- improvise harmonic tonal patterns (using I, IV, and V)
- alter melodies from major to minor and vice versa
- identify intervals in a pre-identified key and scale
- perform rhythms and accompaniments for given melodies using I, IV, V7 in simple keys

Ensemble Skills:

- perform various tempi with a steady pulse
- adjust pitch within ensemble
- demonstrate correct balance of melody and accompaniment lines
- display appropriate demeanor at concert performances

Expressive Elements:

- apply knowledge of performance practice to selected repertoire
- begin to vary bow strokes and articulation according to conductor's indication and musical requirements
- shape a phrase with appropriate dynamics
- identify and correctly interpret additional terms of music

Historical & Cultural Elements:

- listen and respond to selected music from diverse cultures
- describe and compare distinguishing characteristic of composers and styles from repertoire
- perform music from an expanding repertoire of styles and eras.

Evaluation of Music and Performance:

- evaluate individual and group performance using established criteria (rubrics)
- use musical terms and describe criteria and preferences for music listening

Grading

Middle School Orchestra is a performance-based course, and students will be assessed on the following elements with a **weighted grading** system. Grades each quarter will be based on:

40% daily participation and preparation

25% concert and performance participation

25% auditions (playing tests)

10% written assignments

Participation is the largest portion of the course grade. It is assessed through a daily grade, which is earned when the student is prepared with his/her instrument/shoulder rest (1 pt), music & iPad (1pt), has trimmed fingernails (1), is on time for rehearsal (1 pt), has prepared the parts by practicing at home (1 pt), and participates fully in class (1 pt). **A total of 6 points may be earned each graded day.**

Playing tests will allow students to be assessed individually and will therefore reward self-motivation and steady progress and typically occur once per quarter. 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.

Required Materials

Students are expected to arrive at rehearsal each day with their **instrument, iPad (with battery charged), music binder (1/2 inch black ring binder), a pencil (on the stand), a shoulder rest (for violinists and violists), and rock stop for cellists**. Students are expected to have an **instrument** and a **music stand** to use at home. All students should have an **extra set of strings** in the instrument case! Any questions about obtaining instruments or equipment may be directed to Mrs. Graham. 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 of an instrument owned by the district for use at school and must agree to help maintain these instruments in excellent 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. In particular, students must keep **fingernails trimmed** to prevent damage to the strings of the school instruments. If a student using a school instrument does not keep his/her fingernails trimmed, then the daily participation grade will be affected and the student will not be allowed to use the instrument.

Orchestra Seating

Playing tests (auditions) will be held 3-4 times throughout the school year. Students will receive written evaluations. Seating for performances is decided by the Director and is determined by the needs of the ensemble and is not assigned strictly according to test scores.

Homework a.k.a PRACTICING

Occasionally written homework will be assigned, however students are unable to progress and meet the course objectives without a **daily** practice routine. This means that orchestra students often have more homework than other students – however, it is very rewarding work! Students are expected to practice for a minimum of 30 minutes per day, 4 times per week. Parents are strongly encouraged to enforce the practice expectations just as for homework in any other class. Most students do not have the self-discipline to practice without parental support.

Concert Attendance, Attire and Etiquette

Concert and dress rehearsal participation is MANDATORY and GRADED. 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**. Any student who must miss for illness or any other reason will be expected to complete an appropriate alternative assignment to be determined by Mrs. Graham. *All students must remain for the entire concert in which they are participating in order to receive credit for their attendance.*

Conflicts will undoubtedly arise between music commitments and other events. In these instances, it is important that an open line of communication exists between all parties concerned (students, parents, teachers, coaches, etc.). It is possible to make arrangements that are fair and respectful to all those involved, so that each student may benefit from a rich and well-rounded school experience. Priority should be given to events that are graded above those that are non-graded.

Concert dress and etiquette is necessary for a professional presentation.

Ladies: Black dress pants, a plain white blouse with sleeves (no sleeveless tops), black dress shoes (no tennis shoes), dark or black tights or socks.

Gentlemen: Black dress pants, white dress shirt tucked in, black (or dark) socks and black dress shoes (no tennis shoes) and black belt, a dark tie is optional but preferred.

Our music department requires that students sit with the Orchestra before and after the performance in order to support the other ensembles in the department. It is appropriate to remain quiet during performances and to arrive promptly for all concerts and dress rehearsals. Concert grades reflect a student's professionalism and decorum during every orchestra performance. Points will be deducted for tardiness, talking during performances, use of cell phones, chewing gum or other inappropriate behavior.

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. Please mark your family calendar in advance!

Orchestra Guild

The parents of orchestra students are cordially invited 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. 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 newsletter and email. Please consider getting involved – it is a wonderful way to be involved in your student's middle school experience!

Final thoughts

Special Events: This year we are planning several enrichment activities that will be supported by our parent group and the district. 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 a never-ending 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 I welcome the opportunity to work with my students and trust that they will gain much 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 DATES: All dates listed in BOLD are graded and mandatory.

Sunday, Oct. 21

Sat. - Sun., Nov. 10-11

Thursday, Dec. 13

Wed. Dec. 20

Thursday, Feb. 28

Friday, Mar. 15

Wednesday, Mar. 20

Thursday, Mar. 21

Sat. May 11

Monday, May 20

Tuesday, May 21

Friday, June 7

Elmcroft Home, Chippewa, PA, 3:30 pm, HS & MS Orchestras

Jaycees Craft Fair - small group performances in cafeteria

Middle School Winter Concert, 7:30 pm at HS Auditorium

Perform at PGH Airport, 11:00 am - 1:30 pm.

Band & Orchestra Concert for grades 7 - 12 @ 7:30 pm

Tentative: trip to Harrisburg Capitol Perf. w/ Chorus & Orch

Music Perf. Assessment @ Westminster College (school day)

Dutch Ridge Art & Music Show, 6 - 8 pm at DR Gymnasium

High Note Festival/Kennywood School Picnic day

District-wide Orchestra dress rehearsal, 3:00 - 6:00 pm

District-wide Orchestra Concert, 7:00 pm @ HS Auditorium

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 contract is a graded assignment and is DUE on Tuesday, Sept. 4.