

Independence High School
Orchestra Handbook



2019-2020

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INDEPENDENCE HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK

Independence High School takes pride in being able to offer many orchestral opportunities including a full symphony orchestra (when possible), string orchestra, beginning orchestra, chamber orchestra, and small string ensembles. Although I consider participation in instrumental music programs a right of all students, I do expect certain standards of each student enrolled in the class.

1. Responsibility
2. Dependability
3. Musical excellence
4. Dedication

It is my goal as the director to produce an outstanding orchestra. It is also my belief that students learn more and develop better self-discipline, responsibility, and knowledge, and take more pride in superior orchestras than in poor ones. To produce an outstanding orchestra program requires that each student accept certain responsibilities.

The following pages will outline the basic requirements for the Independence High School Orchestra. All members must fill out and return all forms in this handbook to me with all requested information completed and signed by August 29. This will indicate your notification and acceptance of the policies of the orchestra. Please retain the remainder of the handbook at home so you may refer to it when necessary.

PURPOSE

The Independence High School Beginning, Concert, and Symphonic Orchestras are legitimate classes that meet on a regular schedule during the school day. The nature of this class requires the development of skills, concepts, and attitudes to be learned in class and mastered through individual practice. These must, however, often be demonstrated outside of class via varied forms of rehearsals and performances. We also have opportunities throughout the year for smaller ensemble performances as they appear (i.e. string quartets, duets, chamber groups, etc.)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The curriculum for all orchestra classes at Independence will be based off of the North Carolina Essential Standards and will include performance based skills, practical music history, and music theory. The instruction will be designed to present challenges for every student, to encourage musical growth and development, as well as to be fully prepared to accomplish superior performances and be successful on any formal assessments as presented by the district or state.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Independence High School is proud to be able to offer three orchestra classes this year with the plan to add more over the next few years. The three classes offered are the Beginning Orchestra, Concert Orchestra, and Symphonic Orchestra. All classes will have multiple performances here at the school as well as opportunities to perform in the community and at local, state, and national events.

Symphonic Orchestra

The Symphonic Orchestra class is an honors level course comprised of the most advanced returning members of the Independence Orchestra program. They must have a desire to be more challenged, a desire to play more advanced literature, be dedicated to daily practice and preparation, be willing to participate in multiple performances both at the school as well as in the community as they are presented, exhibit high levels of maturity, be leaders in their sections and the program as a whole, and have strong character traits. The Symphonic Orchestra will perform four concerts at the school, participate in Patriots on Parade and Senior Honors and Awards night, perform for the NCMPA, participate in the Carowinds Music Festival, possibly participate in a national music festival, and take part in any additional performance opportunities that might be presented. The music performed in this class will consist of grade 3-6 string orchestra literature and grade 4-5 symphony orchestra literature. Incoming freshmen and new students to the Independence Orchestra program may be scheduled for the Symphonic Orchestra class only after passing an audition with the orchestra director.

Concert Orchestra

The Concert Orchestra class is comprised of incoming freshmen, new members to the Independence Orchestra program, and returning members of the orchestra program. The Concert Orchestra will perform two concerts during the year at school, participate in the Carowinds Music Festival, possibly participate in the NCMPA, and potentially participate in a national music festival. The music performed in this class will consist of grade 2-4 string orchestra literature covering a wide variety of genres. There will be opportunities during the winter and spring concerts to be combined with the Symphonic Orchestra class and select winds and percussion to form the Symphony Orchestra.

Beginning Orchestra (when option is available)

The Beginning Orchestra is comprised of students that have never played a string instrument, took orchestra as a class in the past but missed some years or need to strengthen skills and abilities, or upper classmen that are wanting to learn a second instrument but continue to participate in one of the other ensembles on their primary instrument. They will participate in two formal concerts during the school year and could have the opportunity to perform at other events as well. Instruction for this class should cover approximately two years of instruction with students being able to move into the Concert Orchestra the following year. Music performed in this class will consist of beginning through level 2 literature.

CLASS RULES AND GUIDELINES

Normally, members of the Independence Orchestra program are respectful and attentive to class and school procedures. YOU are a member of the Independence Orchestra – here are your expected normal behaviors and classroom procedures:

Rules:

1. **No cell phone usage after the first 3 minutes of class!**
2. **Absolutely NO food, gum, or candy is allowed in the music suite! NO sodas or other colored liquids are allowed!!** Only water is allowed.
3. Come into the room quickly and quietly. You will have 3 minutes after the tardy bell to have your instrument and all materials and be in your seat ready to tune.
4. Tuning time is a silent time other than tuning your instrument. This is not a time to socialize and find out what's going on in your friend's life. This is probably the most important thing you do in class...nobody likes to hear an out-of-tune instrument!!!
5. No talking during rehearsal. If you have a question, ask the director.

Guidelines for the class and life:

1. **RESPECT!** Do it, demonstrate it, expect it, live it! Use the "Golden Rule."
2. Be considerate. Treat others as more important than yourself.
3. Be responsible. Take ownership for your actions and do what you are expected and need to do.
4. Think before you act or speak.
5. Always do your best and never settle for less.

Additional things for consideration:

1. The primary use of the instrumental music room is for rehearsals. NEVER do anything that would interrupt a rehearsal. If no rehearsal is taking place, please consider the music suite a very quiet place.
2. Follow the "BE-attitudes:" BE Present, BE Prompt, BE Polite, BE Prepared, BE Positive, BE Persistent.
3. The back rooms are for practicing only. (You must have a director's permission to be in the back room for any reason.)
4. NEVER leave your instrument unattended. Students may drop off their instruments after 6:45 in the morning, and must pick them up no later than 2:30 in the afternoon. If the room is locked in the morning when you arrive, take your instrument with you and check back later to see if it has been unlocked. **Do NOT drop instruments in the hallway outside the music suite!!**
5. All instruments will be stored in a cubby. Cubbies are for instruments and other orchestra related items ONLY. Cubbies ARE NOT substitutes for school lockers!
6. **School owned instruments are to be checked out by the orchestra director ONLY.** You must inform the director when your instrument becomes damaged. Please remember that you will be held responsible for any damage to that instrument and the costs involved in repairing it.
7. It is suggested that all personal instruments have proper insurance coverage. Independence High School and CMS Schools are not responsible for any instrument left on CMS property. To properly identify your instrument, keep your instrument's serial number and brand name on file at home and on your music folder. **All personal instruments must go home with you DAILY.**
8. No one shall play, hold, or otherwise operate or handle another person's instrument. This includes all percussion equipment around the room. If it is not yours, do not touch it!!

9. It is everyone's job to assist in keeping the music suite neat, clean, and in an orderly manner. Please do your part by picking up after yourself, and occasionally after other careless people.
10. All students must have their required materials in class each day. (See page 5)
11. Non-orchestra or band students are not allowed in any area of the instrumental music suite.
12. All instruments will go home every day. Instruments should be picked up before 2:30pm each day. If you must leave school early, be sure to come by and pick up your instrument before you leave. School owned instruments must be put up, but do not have to be taken home everyday unless it is needed for individual practice!
13. Chairs are for sitting only – sit properly with all six feet on the floor.
14. Music stands are for holding music only. Please do not use them as a footrest or surfboard.
15. All school rules and policies will be strictly enforced.

GRADING POLICY

Grade is based on attendance, proper rehearsal behaviors, performance on quizzes and playing tests, concert performances, homework, written assignments, and technical advancement on their instrument.

Participation points are awarded every day based on the following 10 point scale:

- 5 Points = Rehearsal performance
- 2 Points = Having instrument
- 1 Point = Instrument accessories (rosin, shoulder rests, rock stops, mutes, etc.)
- 1 Point = Pencil
- 1 Point = Sheet music

Unacceptable participation will lead to losing all participation points for that day. Some possible ways to lose participation credit include:

1. Not being prepared to perform required music.
2. Inappropriate talking.
3. Being disrespectful.
4. Excessive playing after the Director's cut-off.
5. Not playing when you are supposed to. Playing when not supposed to.
6. Not listening to all instructions and announcements.

While this list is a set of examples that will result in the loss of participation points, other situations may also arise that are not included in this list.

NOTE: Minor assignments will be deducted one letter grade for each day late. Assignments will not be accepted after 5 days late and will be given a zero.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

The following will be expected of all orchestra members:

1. All instruments are to be in excellent playing condition. If strings have not been replaced within the last year then they need to be changed. Please plan repairs and maintenance so that instruments are not in the shop at inopportune times, i.e. concerts or performances. Instruments must be natural wood finish.
2. A black 3-ring binder with plastic sheet protectors (glare free kind)

3. Students are expected to have **rosin, shoulder rests, rock stops, music, pencils,** and a **full set of extra strings** at all rehearsals (class periods). **Shoulder rests are required!!!**
4. **EVERY** student must have his/her own music with them at **EVERY** class period, rehearsal, and performance. (Random checks will be done for grade).
5. All instruments kept in the school storage room during the day must have the student's name clearly printed on the outside of the case.
6. Fingernails must be cut short enough at all times as not to effect playing quality. Think long and hard before getting nice, expensive, long nails done...it will effect your grade!

ATTENDANCE

An orchestra performs at it's highest with all members present. Sectionals or full ensemble rehearsals will be scheduled both during and after the school day; these are required of all members involved. **Students are required to participate in all rehearsals and performances. (Please read the following absence policy carefully)**

ABSENCE POLICY

All rehearsals, concerts, and performances are considered a part of the class requirement for the high school orchestra. Good communication between teacher, student, and/or parents can prevent misunderstandings. Please read the following rules and contact the director if you have any questions:

1. **Written notices from parents are required for all absences. Verbal or written excuses from students are not accepted.**
2. Advanced notices are required for all prior commitments. A prior commitment is defined as a date already committed to another event when the schedule is announced. A notice of such commitment should be sent to the director the next school day after a scheduled rehearsal or concert date is announced. In case of work schedules, which may still be pending, the student should communicate individually with the director about any anticipated problems. Students are expected to request that their work schedules be arranged to accommodate all rehearsals and concerts. These requests should take priority over social events.
3. In case of illness and/or family emergency, the parents should send a written notice to the orchestra director as soon as they are aware that such a situation exists. If it is an emergency situation, it may be impossible to get in touch with anyone. Please follow this up with a written note soon as possible after the fact. **This is the only category where absences will be excused the same day, or after, the event.**
4. Religious holidays or conflicts with individual religious beliefs are considered excused if the director is notified in writing by a parent.

Unexcused absences affect the moral of the entire orchestra. Although it would be impossible to include a complete list, the following items are examples of unexcused absences:

1. Commitments accepted after a rehearsal or concert date is announced.
2. **Athletic events and practices!!!**
3. Transportation problems
4. Homework
5. Falling asleep
6. Failure to request time off from a job
7. Babysitting

CONCERT POLICIES AND GRADING

Attendance at concerts and performance activities is required for ALL students and will count as a major test grade! If an emergency situation arises that prevents you from attending a concert, please notify us **PRIOR** to the start time of the event if at all possible. You may call and leave a voice message at (980) 343-6900 or send an email to Thomas.arbutnot@cms.k12.nc.us.

Students with an excused absence from a concert (emergency situation) will be asked to present a written note to the director upon returning to school, and will need to complete the assignment, which is usually to play the concert on your own, usually in front of the class.

Grades will be determined based on preparation of music, being on time, having all materials for the concert, and complying with dress expectations. (see concert attire requirements)

* If a student is more than 20 minutes late to a concert activity, their privilege to perform with the ensemble will be left to the discretion of the director. Orchestra concerts will begin at 6:30 PM, unless otherwise noted at least two weeks prior to said concert. Report time will usually be 6:00 PM.

UNIFORMS

An ensemble looks it's best when members are dressed in a uniform outfit, therefore all members must be dressed alike. You will need the following required items:

Symphonic Orchestra:

LADIES:

Black pants outfit (all black) or Long Black Dress (dresses/skirts must be floor length) – your choice
Black dress shoes (must be closed-toe)

GENTLEMEN:

White Wing Collar Tuxedo Shirt
Black Tuxedo Trousers
Black Socks and dress shoes
Black Bow Tie (Cummerbund and black studs optional, no vests)
Black Tuxedo Coat

* There will be some performance opportunities where the concert dress will consist of all solid black attire for both guys and girls.

Concert & Beginning Orchestras:

All black (long sleeves, dresses and skirts must be floor length, black stockings or hose, black socks, black dress shoes).

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

The quality of work that a performing ensemble accomplishes in its rehearsal is the single most important factor in the overall success of the group. Efficient rehearsals produce SUPERIOR orchestras. There are certain factors that will contribute to good rehearsals on a daily basis.

ALWAYS BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, AT THE RIGHT TIME, WITH THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT, AND THE RIGHT ATTITUDE!!!

Additionally....

EQUIPMENT: HAVE A PENCIL on your music stand at ALL TIMES! A professional pencil is more reliable than your amateur memory!

TIME: All times are VERY real! If it is stated to be at a concert by a certain time, please comply.

DISCIPLINE: We are firm believers that the only type of discipline that is truly effective is SELF-DISCIPLINE. If you need to be told how to act in class or in public, you are probably in the wrong organization. You need to know how to act correctly in society before walking through this door!

Some extra considerations for working with a musical performing ensemble are:

1. No talking during instruction (this includes discussions about the music...if there is a question, the director is best able to answer it)
2. Eyes on conductor (teacher) throughout the rehearsal (class). Your eyes tell me your listening and on task.
3. Raise your hand if you have a question.
4. Be ready to play unless told otherwise.
5. Be patient with others and listen to progress taking place. (Everything that is discussed with a section other than your own DOES apply to you!)
6. Concentrate: Be ready to move quickly and quietly between tasks.
7. Do not get up out of your chair unless you have permission.
8. **Cell phones...**there is a time and place for them and it's **NOT** during rehearsal!!!!

RESPECT: When a large group of people work closely together on an every other day basis, it is important to bolster respect for each other and the director both in AND OUT of rehearsal. Please be sensitive to the feelings of others in the group. Laughing out loud, name-calling, mimicking, etc. are all examples of immature and unrefined behavior. Be polite and treat others as you would want to be treated.

SPRING TRIPS

Each year the orchestras, as well as other ensembles within the music department, will have the opportunity to travel, perform, and compete at local and national contest festivals. These trips give the ensembles a chance to be judged and rated by nationally accredited judges. It also allows students the opportunity to compete against groups from across the country and will be an experience they will remember and be able to reflect back on. This is an important part of the student's musical education experience. We try to arrange trips that keep the costs between \$400 and \$600 depending on destination, number of days, and traveling costs. We will have fundraisers set up throughout the year to help cover the cost of this trip. In order for the students to get the most out of this trip and for the ensembles to perform at their best, I encourage all students to participate in this activity.

FUNDRAISING & "FAIR SHARE"

Throughout the year students will have the opportunity to participate in various fundraising activities. Fundraising helps to cover multiple expenses incurred by the orchestra during the school year, including activity

fees (festivals, special performances, and events), cost of clinicians (masterclasses, sectionals, workshops, etc.), program expenses (sheet music, recordings, equipment, etc), maintenance expenses (rosin, strings, bows, repairs, etc.), and miscellaneous expenses (transportation, etc). **Students are required to participate in the first fundraiser and raise their “fair share” of \$25.00. If students opt out of participating in the fundraiser then they must pay the \$25.00 directly to the orchestra program.** Orchestra students will also have the opportunity to earn additional money through fundraising events. Their earnings go into their individual student accounts. Individual student account funds may be used by orchestra students to meet future participation fee obligations, trip costs, or other educational activities fees as designated by the orchestra director. CMS only provides a limited amount of money for repairs and new equipment. Your participation in fundraisers has a direct impact on the quality of the Independence High School Orchestra Program and on the quality of music education students will receive.

INSTRUMENT DISCLAIMER AND LOAN FORMS

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools requires ALL students in instrumental music classes to have Instrument Disclaimer forms completely filled out, signed, and on file at the school. The school system also requires that all students using school owned instruments fill out an Instrumental Loan form before using a school owned instrument. A parent or guardian must sign both of these forms. Failure to follow these directions will affect the student’s participation in this class. According to CMS policy, any student who fails to have forms signed and returned to the director will not be allowed to participate in instrumental music.

TRI-M MUSIC HONOR SOCIETY

Tri-M is a national music honor society through the National Association for Music Education. Students will be selected by the Independence Music Faculty based on participation in a music program at Independence, academic achievement, leadership, service, and character. Members will take part in monthly meetings, participate in service projects and fundraising activities, and attend social projects. Being a member benefits students by looking good on transcripts for college applications and receiving the coveted graduation cords.

NOTIFYING THE DIRECTOR

Mr. Arbuthnot can be reached at Independence High School at (980) 343-6900, on B-days. Messages can be left when I am not available on my voicemail. You can also reach me via e-mail, which is usually the quickest way to reach me: Thomas.arbuthnot@cms.k12.nc.us

Remind...this is a way of sharing information. Please refer to the website for information to sign up.