

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK
COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

2020-2021



4 September 2020



Greetings Middle School Orchestra Families!

Whether this is your first year or you are returning to the program, welcome! We are very eager to get to music making!

Many of you have probably been wondering, "How does virtual orchestra work?" That is a question we have spent countless hours trying to answer. In the spring, all secondary fine arts courses utilized a "choice board" (which is not the most ideal way to do orchestra to say the least.) Our virtual teaching plan for this school year looks vastly different than it did in the spring.

Our CPS orchestra faculty has been coming together to design unconventional teaching methods and has been working hard over the summer to create an engaging curriculum plan that works for all 3 systems of instruction: 5-day in-person, hybrid learning, and fully virtual. Whether a student is sitting in a classroom or in front of a computer screen, they will be following the same pacing guide and learning the same content. Our orchestra teachers have also made pre-recorded instructional videos that students will be able to use as references throughout the semester. We have created a unified handbook for this year with policies, expectations, and procedures for students at all 7 middle schools and CPS Virtual.

We would like to invite *all* parents/guardians to a Middle School Orchestra Parent Webinar Meeting this coming **Thursday September 10th at 7:00PM**. The Zoom link and ID is below. All the orchestra directors will be present at this meeting. We will present information about changes to how orchestra will be operating this year, give some tips of how you can support your child in their instrumental education this year, and finish with a Q&A. The Zoom will be recorded for any who cannot attend at the above time.

Zoom Link: <https://cpsk12.zoom.us/j/92192204809>

Zoom ID: 921 9220 4809

Directors are currently coordinating with the administration at each middle school to create times for picking up school instruments and method books. This is likely going to happen during the first week of school. Please be looking out for this information from your school's director in the coming days. (Students enrolled in CPS Virtual will pick up materials from their home school.) If your family has not acquired an instrument or will be needing a loaned school instrument, please contact the orchestra director at your school about securing an instrument ASAP.

We understand this is not a smooth ride ahead of us. We will all be challenged and will need to be flexible and adjust as things go along. This is a new adventure for all of us: students, teachers, and families. We are all in this together!

If you have any questions, please reach out to your director.

Sincerely,

The CPS Orchestra Faculty

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I. ATTENDANCE

Rehearsals and Performances

Concerts and RTI/After-school rehearsals are considered part of the class requirement for orchestra. Good communication between teachers, students, and parents can prevent misunderstandings*. So please communicate immediately with the director when there are problems and schedule conflicts.

Attendance at orchestra performances/rehearsals is not a matter of personal convenience. Participants of the CPS Orchestra program are collectively viewed as a single unit. If someone is absent from a scheduled performance or rehearsal, such an absence diminishes the result of the entire group. Student attendance at performances and rehearsals is crucial if the orchestra is going to be successful. Students are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entire rehearsal or performance. Attendance is required at all scheduled orchestra performances/rehearsals. Under the Standard Reference Grading Critical Concept: *Musician Habits*, Critical Objective 1 states “Attend and participate in required rehearsals and concerts.”

*The CPS Orchestra understands and believes that attendance policies need to be flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Absences due to concerns about contracting COVID-19 or transportation issues impacted by COVID-19 will be excused. These concerns need to be communicated directly to your school’s orchestra director. Often in past years, directors have required that they need to be given advanced notice about an absence for the absence to be excused. We understand the local, state, and national COVID-19 situation can rapidly change. Thus, no student will be penalized for not giving notice about any COVID-19-related absence prior to a rehearsal/performance.

Daily Class Absences

Whether in-seat or virtual, there will be no impact on grade or penalization for absences from classes during the school day. However, it should be noted that poor attendance in orchestra classes will most likely cause a student to fall behind and their grade to fall since they cannot demonstrate skills outlined in the SRG proficiency scales that have been covered in class.

Excused & Unexcused Performance Absences

Please see Section VII. *District Policies* regarding the policy for absences from performances.

II. REHEARSAL FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

Classroom Spaces

The orchestra classroom space will become a home away from home for many music students. To keep these facilities an asset for students in the years to come, food (including chewing gum) and drink (except bottled water) will be strictly prohibited. Any personal items left out in the orchestra room will be placed in the lost and found.

Music Facility Offices

It is imperative students do not enter any of the music director offices without permission or supervision of a CPS music teacher. Confidential student information like Individual Education Plans (IEP), 504 Plans,

teacher grade books, and purchase orders are all sensitive material that students should not access. We ask that students respect the privacy of the Facility Music Offices, so teachers can honor student confidentiality.

Personal Instrument Storage & Identification

Students will be assigned an instrument storage space in the orchestra room. All instruments must have a name tag on them, clearly stating the student's name and preferably their address as well. No instrument may be stored without proper identification. A record will be made of each student's instrument serial number for identification and security purposes.

III. ORCHESTRA EXPECTATIONS & PROCEDURES

- Students should be in their assigned seat with all materials ready (pencil, sheet music, instrument/bow, rosin, rockstop, etc.) within a reasonable amount of time after entering the classroom and be ready to begin tuning procedures.
- After instrument and materials have been put away at the end of class, wait quietly in your seat to be dismissed.
- Distractions must be kept to a minimum. Cell phones/iPads must be turned off and kept away during rehearsals. Please see the school's policy regarding use of personal devices.
- Only produce sounds on instrument when instructed. Keep all extraneous noise to a minimum.
- Be aware of personal space and surroundings to avoid accidents or damage to instruments.
- Treat instruments with respect. Proper care and maintenance keeps instruments in good quality condition.
- YOU should be the only one to play YOUR instrument.
- Keep fingernails to an appropriate length. Short nails are required for proper string technique. Longer nails will get in the way, and quality of performance and ease of playing will suffer.
- Raise your hand to ask a question.
- Listen attentively while others are speaking or playing.
- Be encouraging and respectful to all performers.
- Follow directions the first time they are given.
- Keep the learning space clean and clear of trash.
- Come to class prepared. Prepared means that you have effectively practiced your part outside of class and are present with all necessary materials.
- **Give your best effort!**

Additional COVID-19 Safety Guidelines

- Students will social distance and wear face coverings during entry and exit to the classroom.
- It is typical for students to congregate or gather in fine art classrooms. Students should NOT congregate in or outside of fine art classrooms or practice rooms outside of designated class times.
- Student seating areas, stands, and chairs will be configured prior to the start of class. Teachers will use designated seating charts to assign seating to students.
- Music folders, music, and other student supplies should be maintained by the student after provided by the teacher. Teachers should minimize shared equipment and materials. Teachers should not use folder storage or other cabinets to minimize student congregating, accidental transfer of materials, and the need for extra sanitation. Only when necessary due to limited availability should students share materials. Classroom teachers will develop procedures and expectations for how supplies will be cleaned and shared. Any additional district guidelines/expectations will be provided when available.

- At the conclusion of each class, students will clean their own chairs and stands and follow all teacher directions regarding the completion of this process. Piano and percussion equipment (if present) will also be cleaned by students at the conclusion of each class.
- No playing of instruments should take place until the teacher has given approval.
- 6' social distancing between students. Staggered seating and no curved lines. These are atypical of the orchestra music classroom but must be maintained at this time.
- All students are required to wear face coverings for the duration of the class/rehearsal. Students will need to provide their own mask.

IV. VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPECTATIONS & PROCEDURES

- Check Schoology and school email *every day*.
- Have your device charged.
- Students should find an area in your home where distractions will be minimized during Zoom lessons and where distractions the student may cause to others in their household will be minimized. Students will be expected to play their instruments during Zoom lessons, and this could distract other virtual learners in the same household.
- Tune your instrument before the start of each Zoom meeting.
- Have all materials ready at the beginning of class (instrument, bow, music, stand, pencil, iPad etc.)
- Enter Zoom meetings on time.
- Zoom display name should be the student's first and last name.
- During Zoom meetings, have the camera turned on or have the Zoom icon be a photo of yourself.
 - We strongly encourage students to have their camera turned on when playing their instruments. It is critical that teachers are able to see students perform so they can give students feedback on posture & hand position as well as troubleshoot issues related to performance technique. We understand that some students may be uncomfortable turning their cameras on, and we ask that communication be made between the student/family and the teacher so a solution can be reached.
- Be respectful when listening to the speaker and keep your microphone muted to minimize distractions
- When someone is speaking, you should NOT be playing your instrument regardless if your microphone is muted or not.
- If you would like to speak, either raise your hand or use the raised hand icon
- All messages put into the chat should be respectful
- The private chat feature will not be used during Zoom meetings
- Have other screens away or turned off to minimize distractions.
- Active participation is expected. This includes actively listening to the speaker, using the chat, taking polls, and playing your instrument when instructed.

V. Practice Journal

All middle school orchestra students will be expected to keep a digital practice journal. This is a continuous document that encompasses the entire school year. Students will access this through Google Drive. Only the teacher and the student will have access to the document. Each week in the journal will be expected to be completed before the Monday of the next week.

Each week students will create a practicing goal and reflect on their practicing. This journal is to act as a tool for students to not only track their practicing but to improve the effectiveness and quality of your practicing.

VI. GRADING POLICY

A grade earned in orchestra reflects in part an orchestra member’s ability to demonstrate objectives outlined in the CPS Orchestra Curriculum. Orchestra students will be graded using Standards Referenced Grading. The breakdown of Proficiency Scales is weighted as follows:

Body Format (BF)	10%	Ensemble Skills (ES)	10%
Left Arm (LH)	10%	Instrument Knowledge and Care (IC)	5%
Right Arm (RH)	10%	Evaluating Music & Performances (EV)	5%
Music Literacy (ML)	10%	Comprehensive Musicianship (CM)	5%
Expressive Elements (EE)	10%	Musician Habits % Preparation (MH)	25%

At the end of each unit, *assessed proficiency scales* will be weighted to create a comprehensive grade (0.0-4.0). Proficiency scales not yet assessed will be weighted as 0%. The weighted average will be calculated for each grading period and Letter Grades will be assigned as follows:

	UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4 (MID)	UNIT 5	UNIT 6	UNIT 7	UNIT 8 (FINAL)
A +	2.5	2.6	2.7	<u>2.8</u>	2.9	3.0	3.1	<u>3.2</u>
A	2.3	2.4	2.5	<u>2.6</u>	2.7	2.8	2.9	<u>3.0</u>
A -	2.2	2.3	2.4	<u>2.5</u>	2.6	2.7	2.8	<u>2.9</u>
B +	2.1	2.2	2.3	<u>2.4</u>	2.5	2.6	2.7	<u>2.8</u>
B	2.0	2.1	2.2	<u>2.3</u>	2.4	2.5	2.6	<u>2.7</u>
B -	1.9	2.0	2.1	<u>2.2</u>	2.3	2.4	2.5	<u>2.6</u>
C +	1.8	1.9	2.0	<u>2.1</u>	2.2	2.3	2.4	<u>2.5</u>
C	1.7	1.8	1.9	<u>2.0</u>	2.1	2.2	2.3	<u>2.4</u>
C -	1.6	1.7	1.8	<u>1.9</u>	2.0	2.1	2.2	<u>2.3</u>
D +	1.5	1.6	1.7	<u>1.8</u>	1.9	2.0	2.1	<u>2.2</u>
D	1.4	1.5	1.6	<u>1.7</u>	1.8	1.9	2.0	<u>2.1</u>
D -	1.3	1.4	1.5	<u>1.6</u>	1.7	1.8	1.9	<u>2.0</u>
F	0.0	0.0	0.0	<u>0.0</u>	0.0	0.0	0.0	<u>0.0</u>

All assignments, grade, and proficiency scales will be posted on Schoology.

VII. DISTRICT POLICIES*

Value and Purpose of Performance: District Policy

Participation in all performances (ensemble and solo) is an important part of the overall [choral, instrumental or theatrical] experience and curriculum. Any performance is considered an extension of class work and individual practice. Although similar to traditional tests, a performance cannot be easily recreated. EVERY student makes a valuable contribution to the [band's, cast's, choir's, or orchestra's] performance and all other students in the [band, cast, choir or orchestra] are counting on you. A list of events is included in this handbook/syllabus. Take these dates home and place them on your family calendar, so that you can avoid conflict and miscommunication. Remember, performance attendance is a component of your grade. Missing a performance will affect your grade.

Grading Practice and Procedure: District Policy

The CPS [choral, instrumental and theatrical] programs have a performance-based curriculum. Performances are the culmination of the education that precedes a performance. Performances take priority over practices, extracurricular activities, and other outside of school events. This includes non-school related sport games and fine art events (examples include club sports, TRYPS plays, PACE performances, etc.). In the event of medical or family emergencies students will be "excused" from a performance (please provide a written note or phone call from a parent or guardian prior to the performance, if prior notification is difficult please provide documentation within one school week of performance). In the event of a conflict with a school related activity (scheduled or unscheduled games, competitions, invitationals etc.) prior communication is critical to seeking a resolution. Student, parent/guardian, teacher of performance class and teacher/sponsor of conflicting activity must reach a compromise regarding the conflict and determine if an absence is "excused." If a resolution is not reached the building principal and district fine arts coordinator may be contacted to help determine the status of the absence. All other absences will be considered "unexcused" without prior approval by the teacher. Students missing a performance for any reason will be given an alternate performance assessment/assignment. This alternate performance assessment/assignment will have the potential for 100% credit for "excused" absences, and 85% credit for "unexcused" absences. If the alternate performance assessment/assignment is not completed within 30 days of the original performance a zero for that event may be given for the semester.

No single performance may comprise more than 15% of the total semester grade for any [choral, instrumental or theatrical] class.

In all cases communication regarding all performances is critical between student, parent/guardian and teacher.

Alternative Performance Assessments/Assignments: District Policy

While an authentic performance can never be fully recreated for the purpose of grading individual student learning, growth and progress it is necessary occasionally to have alternate methods.

When missing a performance whether "excused" or "unexcused" students will be expected to submit a writing concerning the musical or theatrical selections to be performed. Areas that can be written about can include the composer, the poet, the playwright, the time period, the form, musical/theatrical ideas present in the selection, the text, phrasing, articulation, the way piece makes you feel and or performances of the piece being performed by others or your ensemble/cast. Each student will also be expected to

submit one recording of themselves of a musical or theatrical selection chosen by the instructor from the material that will be or was performed. This recording will be made during class time while performing as part of the ensemble using a recording device that is capturing mainly the absent student's performance of the chosen selection. This recording could be completed previous to the absence with enough notification.

*Please note that these district policies contained in this section were written before the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see *Section I. Attendance* regarding how COVID-19 affects exemption from a performance.

VIII. CONCERT DRESS

Each school differs in their concert attire policy. Each director will communicate to their students and families what the policy is for their program.

IX. VOLUNTARY OPPORTUNITIES

CPS Honors Orchestra

*Due to COVID-19, the CPS Honors Orchestra is currently not scheduled to take place during the Fall 2020 semester. The COVID-19 pandemic will be monitored, and a decision about if/when the Honors Orchestra can safely start up again will be made later in the school year.

Students at all 7 CPS middle schools are able to audition for the CPS Honors orchestra. Students must fill out their audition form and return it to the orchestra director in order to be eligible to participate in auditions. It is expected that if you make the CPS Honors Orchestra, you attend **ALL** rehearsals and concerts.

CMU Solo/Ensemble Festival

In the second semester, 7th and 8th grade students have the option to participate in the CMU Solo/Ensemble Festival, held in Fayette, MO, at Central Methodist University. Participation is voluntary and requires extra practices. Students must pay their own entry/accompaniment fees. The event this school year is on February 26th, 2021.

*Due to COVID-19, it is possible this event may be reformatted to a virtual festival, postponed, or cancelled.

Private Lessons

Students are highly encouraged to enroll in private lessons for their instrument. *Any student who chooses to study their instrument privately with a professional will show rapid improvement in individual musicianship.* As these students improve, and their excitement towards practicing increases, they will

become stronger contributors to the overall success of the orchestra. If interested in private lessons, please contact your director for recommendations of reputable teachers in the area.

X. REQUIRED FORMS

Emergency Contact/Handbook Agreement Form

In order to participate in the orchestra program, all students are required to complete and return the *Emergency Contact/Handbook Agreement Form*. This form ensures the director has essential contact information, so parents/guardians can be contacted in an emergency. This form also doubles as an acknowledgement of the expectations outlined in this handbook. A director will carry these forms during all off-campus school events. Students must first complete this form before being allowed to travel with the orchestra or participate in any activities off campus.

*If the school year begins fully virtual, this will form will be submitted in a digital format.

XI. HANDBOOK DISCLAIMER

The procedures, practices, and policies described here may be modified or discontinued from time to time. Every attempt will be made to inform parents, guardians, and students of amendments and addenda to this handbook.