

McMeans Junior High Orchestra



Handbook
2018-2019

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McMeans Junior High Orchestra

Welcome to the McMeans Junior High Orchestra! It is wonderful to have you here as part of our team. This handbook is designed to inform you of all aspects of the McMeans Orchestra. You and your parents will need to read the entire handbook and become familiar with the rules and procedures for this class. Please also take a close look at the section marked "Important Dates". Know when your attendance is required. It is your responsibility to know what is expected of you this year as a member of our orchestra. Orchestra is not just another class; it is a performing group. By joining this group you have taken on a big responsibility. Every member of the orchestra is important and each person must do his or her part to create a strong group. Being a part of the orchestra is a lot of hard work but it is also a lot of fun. It is a great way to meet new people and make new friends while you improve your playing. This will be a fun and exciting experience for you while you are here at McMeans Junior High. With a little hard work and a lot of determination, you will be proud of what you accomplish as a musician in just one year. I look forward to a great year and a great orchestra with you a part of it!

Sincerely,



Mrs. Williams
Orchestra Director



Supplies

- Correct size instrument in good working condition.
- Method book (see below)
- Pencil every day in class
- Rosin
- Cleaning cloth kept in your case. (An old tee-shirt works great!)
- Name tag on your case
- Shoulder rest (violins and violas) Rock stop (cellos and basses)
- Orchestra uniforms (see the uniform section for information)
- Orchestra activity fee \$50 (This includes the orchestra t-shirt and any supplies not listed above)

Method Books

FYO (First Year Orchestra)

- Essential Elements for Strings, book 1 and 2 Michael Allen, Hal Leonard Publications

Philharmonic Orchestra

- No method book is needed

Sinfonia and Advanced Orchestras

- Essential Techniques for Strings, Michael Allen, Hal Leonard Publications

Camerata Orchestra

- Essential Techniques for Strings, Michael Allen, Hal Leonard Publications
- Advanced Techniques for Strings, Michael Allen, Hal Leonard Publications

Orchestra Uniforms

Students will wear the uniform assigned to their orchestra for each concert, contest and yearbook pictures. Please speak to Mrs. Williams in the case of any special financial circumstances

Girls: Solid black dress or skirt/pants and blouse with black dress shoes

Boys: Solid black pants, button down black dress shirt and black dress shoes and socks

Guidelines:

All items should be completely black.

No jeans material or cargo type pants.

Dresses and skirts must fall below the knee when seated.

Ladies sleeves should cover the shoulders completely.

Boys should wear a long sleeved, button down shirt.

No tennis shoes

Classroom Rules

1. Follow all directions the first time they are given.
2. Be in your seat with ALL materials when the “A” sounds.
3. You may talk only when called upon by the teacher.
4. Respect the people, equipment, and furnishings of the orchestra room.

If you choose to break a rule...

1. Verbal warning and student/teacher conference
2. Parent contact
3. Student will follow the school wide discipline policy with the grade level assistant principal

The previous consequences refer to Level I offenses only.

Severe disruptions: student sent immediately to the office

Tardy Policy

It is vital to the success of any orchestra that every single member comes to rehearsal prepared and on time. You are considered tardy if you are not in the room when the bell rings. One minute after the bell rings, you need to be in your assigned seat with all your materials, ready to begin the rehearsal.

Consequences will be determined by the school-wide tardy policy established at MMJH.

End of Class

The teacher dismisses the orchestra; the bell does not. After being dismissed by the teacher, return ALL music, folders, and instruments to their assigned places. Failure to do so will result in a lowering of your weekly participation grade.



Grading Procedures

Numeric grades will be issued in accordance with school district guidelines. An average grade will be earned from the following:

Daily grades 15%

This includes weekly practice records, quizzes and some written assignments.

Minor grades 35%

This includes a weekly participation grade, sectional attendance (Camerata only) and after school rehearsals. For the participation grade, all students will start with a 100% each week. Points are deducted if the student does not come to class prepared with all their supplies or does not fully participate. Students who leave their supplies out at the end of class may have their participation grade lowered.

Major grades 50%

This will include all playing tests, written tests, and concerts. **Please note that all concerts are counted as a test grade.**

Extra Credit Opportunities:

Extra credit will be added to the final grade for any of the following activities:

Audition for All Region orchestra

Participate in solo/ensemble contest

Participate in Youth Orchestra

Attend any approved concert

You may do any number of these activities. Each activity will add points to your average. The number of points added will depend on the activity and time required.



Practice Records

The practice record is due every Monday (or the first day of the school week). Parents must sign each week to verify accuracy of the listed practice time. Only signed practice records will be accepted. Practice records will be accepted late with a penalty of 30% taken off of the grade earned.

Students will be excused from practicing only when:

- The student is ill.
- The instrument is in the shop and the student is unable to borrow one from the school. (In most cases the student may borrow a school instrument until the instrument is repaired.)
- Extenuating circumstances may be excused with approval from Mrs. Williams.

Parents: Please make a note on the practice record or contact Mrs. Williams if any of the above situations arise. Written or verbal notice from the parent is required in order for the student to be excused.

The practice record each week lists announcements for that week. Please pay close attention to these announcements, as they will often contain information about tests, concerts, rehearsals, and deadlines.

Practice rooms

Practice rooms will be open from 7:00 am-8:45 am. Practice rooms are open to all music students in the morning on a first come, first served bases. Practice rooms are intended for practicing a musical instrument only. Any student who is found not practicing will lose privileges at the discretion of the music directors at MMJH.

Practice Guidelines for Parents

Your child's achievements in orchestra will depend greatly on the amount and quality of the practice sessions at home. You can help your child by using the following guidelines.

Schedule

Have your child set aside a time each day when he or she would prefer to practice. A half hour is the minimum time that should be scheduled. This practice time does not have to be the exact same time each day.

Environment

Practicing should be done away from any sort of distractions. Poor playing posture hurts your child physically as well as musically. Therefore a music stand should be used during practice. Your child should practice in a well-lit area to avoid eyestrain. Younger siblings should be informed of the importance of this time and know not to bother big brother or big sister during practice time.

Feedback

Perhaps the biggest help you can offer your child is encouragement. Listen to your child practice and offer words of encouragement. Ask them to play a song for you occasionally. Learning to play an instrument is incredibly difficult and often frustrating. When you hear improvement, tell them. The best motivation comes from knowing that your hard work has paid off.

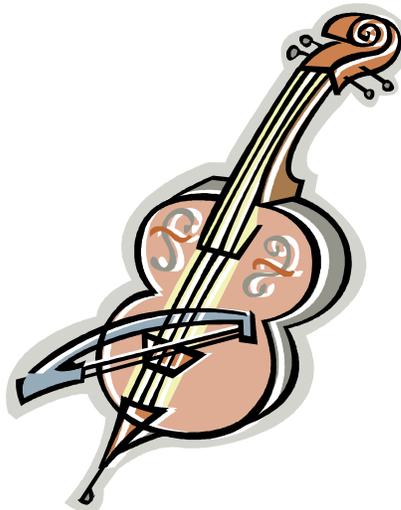
Sectionals, rehearsals and performances

Students will be required to attend all scheduled rehearsals, sectionals and performances scheduled outside of the school day. Sectionals will occur on a weekly basis for the Camerata orchestra. Sectionals and rehearsals will occur on an as needed basis for all other orchestras. Grades will be earned for these events and will contribute to the students' overall average. Before or after school rehearsals will occur occasionally throughout the year. Students and parents will be informed of these rehearsals in advance through letters, email memos, the web site and/or announcements made in class. Please communicate with Mrs. Williams directly if there are individual or unusual circumstances that may cause a conflict.

Students will be excused from performances for personal illness, family emergencies, and approved school activities only. In these cases, I will need to be notified by a parent or guardian. For an excused absence, an alternate assignment will be given. An alternative assignment will not be given for unexcused absences and will result in a zero in the grade book. If you have an unexcused absence for a performance, it is unlikely that you will be considered for the Camerata or Advanced orchestra for the following year.

Chair Tests

Auditions for chair placement within a section often bring a great deal of emotion and stress to the life of a student. Please remember that each and every musician is important to the success of the orchestra. Competition should be viewed as an isolated event, not an overall value judgment of the student as a person or musician. A chair test judges a student's performance at one specific time under one specific set of circumstances. Each student responds differently. Some perform easily under stress, others poorly. Each teacher who judges a student's performance has his or her own interpretation of how that student plays at that given moment. Therefore, it is essential that competition be viewed only as a part of the learning process and not as the sole judgment for success. Chair tests will be given approximately every two weeks. Typically, students will be informed of testing material one week in advance. Most (if not all) chair tests will be video recorded in one of the practice rooms during class.



UIL Orchestra Contest

The McMeans Camerata, Advanced, and Philharmonic orchestras will perform at the annual UIL orchestra contest in the spring. This is not a competition with other orchestras but is a chance to showcase our orchestras and their capabilities. Each group in attendance will prepare and perform three songs at the contest for a panel of judges. Immediately following the concert performance, each orchestra is required to sight-read a piece of music. In each case, a panel of judges will assign the orchestra a rating of “I” to “V” with “I” being the highest. An overall rating will be earned for each category according to the judges’ individual ratings. An orchestra that earns a “I” in both categories is awarded a Sweepstakes trophy. This is of course, the goal of any orchestra.

Region Orchestra/Solo and Ensemble

Students in the Camerata Orchestra are required to participate in one of these two events. All orchestra members are encouraged to participate in both events. Extra credit will be earned for participation beyond the requirement. Before committing to an ensemble or region auditions, you must commit to attend all rehearsals and performances. Students are expected to resolve any scheduling conflicts prior to auditioning or joining an ensemble.

Eligibility

To participate in any extra-curricular activity, students must pass all classes the grading period prior to the event. If a student earns a grade lower than a 70 in any class, state law prohibits participation in any extra-curricular event. **A student who has paid a fee to participate in any of these activities and does not make eligibility, will not receive a refund.**

Extra-curricular events:
(Eligibility rules apply)

Region auditions
Region clinic and concert
Solo and ensemble contest
UIL concert and sight-reading contest
Any orchestra contest
Field trips

Curricular events are:
(Eligibility does not apply)

Sectionals
Before/After school rehearsals
Concerts held at MMJH or THS
Any non-competitive concert



School Owned Instruments

The school owns a limited number of cellos, and basses for student rental. There is an annual KISD instrument fee of \$80 for all school owned instruments. This money is used to help cover repair expenses caused by normal wear and tear. It is not designed to cover cost from damage or loss of the instrument due to theft/misplacement or neglect. This type of repair is the responsibility of the student using the instrument. Registration cards (rental agreement) must be completed and returned with student and parent signature. Students are expected to keep the instrument clean and in good working condition. If the instrument is damaged in any way, the student or parent must inform Mrs. Williams immediately.

Violin and Violas:

Violin and viola students are expected to provide their own instruments. For extenuating financial circumstances, see Mrs. Williams.

Cellos:

All cello students will need to rent one cello from a music store to keep at home. A student who does not wish to transport his or her cello back and forth to school every day may rent one from the school. These cellos are shared between class periods. For example, a student in first period might play the same cello as a student in third period. For this reason, the school cellos that are rented out to the students remain at the school and are not available for home practice.

Basses:

Whenever possible, we try to provide two school instruments: one for the student to keep at home and one to have at school. However, there may not be enough instruments available for each bass player to have one at home and one at school. Much of the availability is determined by the size of bass the student requires. You will need to rent one from a music store to have at home should one not be available through the school.

Private Lessons

Private lessons are one on one lessons taught by professionals who specialize on each particular instrument. Private lessons are strongly encouraged for all students and are a vital ingredient for any successful musician. These lessons are helpful for working on fundamentals of performance, correcting poor playing habits, preparing audition or solo material and for enrichment outside of orchestra class. Most orchestra professionals prefer to teach in their own studios. Depending on experience, expertise and availability, prices will vary greatly.

The KISD Private Lesson Program is another option. Lessons are held once a week, after school in the orchestra rooms at Taylor High School. The cost is set by the school district and is often lower than students taking lessons from a studio teacher. Once students have enrolled in the program, private teachers are contacted with enrollment information. The private teacher will then contact assigned students and schedule convenient lesson times. Parents and students are expected to follow the KISD Private Lesson Program Guidelines, which are sent from the Fine Arts Office after enrollment. If you are interested in private lessons, complete and return the private lesson form given to the students and found on Mrs. Williams' teacher web page.

Student Pick-up Procedures

Katy ISD's safety guidelines for pick-up procedures affect your students when they have after-school events, practices, rehearsals, and need to be picked up after trips. These procedures include the following rules:

After school orchestra events:

- Students must be picked up on time. If this is a problem, then arrangements must be made for your child to ride home with another student.
- Students are allowed to walk home.
- All students are to be picked up in the bus circle when involved in orchestra activities, not the front of the building.
- After school events: If you are not on time at the bus circle to pick up your child, he or she will be waiting in the Fine Arts hallway for you to come and get them. Teachers will be working inside their rehearsal rooms.
- Students who are disruptive while waiting for parent pick up will receive disciplinary consequences (according to KISD policy), as if they were in a classroom.
- When picking up your child from an event off campus, parents will need to come inside and sign their child out.

Trips

Parents must be on time for pickup as stated on the itinerary. When picking up a student after a trip or rehearsal, use the large parking lot on the east side of the school, not in the front of the school. When the group is traveling by bus, KISD requires all students to travel together on the bus. Parents who wish to take their child home from the event must fill out a "Request for Post-Activity Student Release" one week prior to the event. You may find this on Mrs. Williams' web site.



MMJH Orchestra Calendar 2018-2019

****Dates are subject to change****

Tuesday, August 21 st :	Orchestra Parent meeting	Orch room	6:00 pm
Thursday, August 30 th :	Orchestra Pizza Party	Cafeteria	4:15-5:15pm
Friday, September 7 th :	Camerata Orchestra Pictures	Orch room	4 pm
Tuesday, October 16 th :	FYO and Camerata Fall concert	MMJH stage	7 pm
Saturday, October 20 th :	Region auditions	TJH	8:00 am
Monday, October 22 nd :	Masquerade Serenade rehearsal: CAS	THS	TBD
Tuesday, October 23 rd :	Masquerade Serenade: CAS	THS	7:00 pm
Friday, October 26 th :	Orchestra yearbook pictures	MMJH stage	during school
Thursday, November 1 st :	Orchestra ice Cream Social	cafeteria	4:15-5:15 pm
Thursday, November 8 th :	FYO trip to Houston Symphony(tentative)	Jones Hall	all day
Monday, November 12 th :	Veteran's Day performance: Cam	MMJH	during school
Friday, November 30 th :	Camerata performs for 5 th graders	THS	during school
Friday, November 30 th :	region orchestra rehearsal and reseating	TBD	TBD
Friday, December 7 th :	region orchestra clinic		TBD
Saturday, December 8 th :	region orchestra clinic and concert		TBD
Monday, December 10 th :	Orchestra winter concert	MMJH café	7 pm
Tuesday, December 11 th :	Midwest preview concert	THS	7 pm
December 18-21 st :	Camerata trip to Chicago		
Monday, February 4 th :	ensemble recital: CAS	MMJH	5 pm
Saturday, February 9 th :	Solo and ensemble contest CAS	TBD	TBD
Tuesday, February 12 th :	FYO solo and ensemble contest	stage and orch room	4:30-6 pm
Friday, March 1 st :	FYO performs at Mustang Music Festival	THS	all day
Thursday, March 7 th :	FYO Medieval Concert	MMJH café	7 pm
Tuesday, March 19 th :	Pre-UIL concert	MMJH café	7 pm
March 26-27	Varsity UIL contest	Paetow HS	all day
March 28-29	non varsity UIL contest	Alief Taylor	all day
Friday, May 3 rd :	Camerata recording concert	THS PAC	7 pm
Saturday, May 4 th :	Schlitterbahn trip: CAS	Galveston	7:45 am-6 pm
Tuesday, May 7 th :	potluck dinner	MMJh café	6-7:30 pm
Friday, May 10 th :	Spring concert	MMJh café	7 pm

Events are for all orchestra students unless otherwise specified.

CAS=Camerata, Advanced, Sinfonia

FYO=First Year Orchestra (beginners)