

SEVEN LAKES JUNIOR HIGH ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK

Introduction

Katy ISD is proud to offer a comprehensive music program that includes string instruction from grades 6 – 12. SLJH Orchestra is a vital segment of the music curriculum. It is expected that members of the Seven Lakes Junior High Orchestra will exhibit the highest possible standards in the following areas:

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

It is the goal of the directors to promote musical understanding and produce outstanding orchestras. It is also the belief of the directors that students learn more and develop better self-discipline, responsibility, and knowledge and take more pride in superior orchestras than in weak ones. To produce an outstanding orchestra requires that each student accept certain responsibilities.

Purpose

The Seven Lakes Junior High School Orchestra is a class that meets for one forty-five minute period each school day. The nature of this class requires the development of skills, concepts, and attitudes to be learned in class. These must, however, be demonstrated outside of class via many varied forms of rehearsals and performances. Along with your musical growth, we expect to see development in the areas of leadership, self-discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and a deeper appreciation for the beauty and joy that music offers to all who partake in it.

Conduct

The behavior of an orchestra student reflects not only on him or herself, but also on other students and his/her school and community. It is expected that each orchestra student abide by the following at all times:

1. Make a positive contribution to the SLJH Orchestras;
2. Display common courtesy and respect to all adults and peers;
3. Follow expectations as outlined by the orchestra directors below;
4. Follow rules and policies outlined in the KISD and SLJH Student Handbooks.

Classroom Expectations

1. Candy, gum, food, and/or drink are not allowed in any area within the orchestra rehearsal space. Water is permissible as long as it does not distract from the rehearsal.
2. Speak or play only when invited.
3. Bring your instrument, music binder, and all necessary supplies to class each day.
4. Fingernails must be kept short at all times. It is not possible to play a stringed instrument with long nails (even moderately long nails). Keeping nails short is a requirement for all SLJH Orchestra members. Acrylic nails are permissible; however, they must be filed to a short length. Students out of compliance with this rule will not be able to participate for the day.

Attendance and Sectionals

An orchestra performs at its optimum with all members present; therefore, students are required to participate in all rehearsals, sectionals, and performances unless excused by the director. An orchestra calendar is available on Canvas and given to each student to keep in their orchestra binder. Sectionals, extra rehearsals, concerts, contests, and UIL Concert and Music Literacy Evaluations are considered an extension of the classroom instruction and are considered **co-curricular** by the district.

Sectionals are essential to the continued success of the orchestra. The Chamber and Sinfonietta orchestras will have weekly sectional rehearsals outside of class time. Philharmonic Orchestra may have scheduled rehearsals in January and February at the discretion of the directors. It is during sectional rehearsals that we will focus on the specific concerns that are unique to your individual part (i.e. intonation, rhythmic precision, fingerings, bowings, and phrasing).

Students who enroll in other school activities such as athletics, choir, drama, etc., must plan ahead to avoid conflict. The orchestra directors will work together with the other teachers, coaches, and directors of these activities to give each student every opportunity to be a part of other groups. **Non-school sponsored activities, teams, and organizations must not conflict in any way with the practice or performance schedule of the orchestra.**

Absence Policy

- Written notices from parents are required for all absences. Verbal or written notices from students will not be accepted.
- Advance notices are required for all prior commitments. A prior commitment is defined as an event already committed to before the orchestra time schedule is announced. A notice of such a commitment should be sent to the director the next school day after a date is announced.
- Doctor, orthodontist, dental, eye, etc. appointments are unexcused during scheduled events outside of regular classes. These appointments are considered routine and will not result in an excused absence unless your child is unexpectedly ill.
- In the case of illness and/or family emergency, parents should send a written notice or email to the orchestra director as soon as they are aware that such a situation exists. If in the emergency situation it is not possible to get in touch quickly, please follow up with a written note within four days after the fact. This is the only category where absences will be excused the same day or after the event.
- Religious holidays or conflicts with individual religious beliefs are considered excused if the director is notified the next school day after a date is announced.
- Non-school sponsored activities will not be excused for any reason.
- Although it would be impossible to include a complete list, the following items are other examples of unexcused absences:
 - Commitments accepted after a rehearsal or concert date is announced;
 - Homework;
 - Lack of planning in regards to transportation;
 - Forgetting instrument and/or music;
 - Forgetting about a rehearsal or concert.

In order to encourage regular attendance at scheduled events, the following policies will take place:

1. Any absence from an event without a note from the parent/guardian will be considered unexcused unless prior arrangements have been made with the director. The grade for the event will be a zero.
2. Failure to meet the attendance requirements for orchestra can result in a student losing the privilege of traveling with the orchestra on any extracurricular trips.
3. Unexcused tardiness will result in the lowered grade for that event.
4. Any absence that is excused will be accompanied by an alternate assignment to make up the grade for the event.

Please communicate directly with your child's primary orchestra teacher if there are individual or unusual circumstances that may be a problem. Good communication between parents and teachers can prevent misunderstandings.

Grades

- **50% Written and Playing Tests/Performances**
 - A form of written or playing test will be given most weeks
 - All performances
- **35% Posture and Participation**
 - Being an active member of class performance and discussion.
 - Students begin with 100 participation points each week; however, points will be deducted for: supplies not brought to class, lack of effort, disruptive class behavior/talking, and not following classroom expectations.
- **15% Practice Planners**
 - The amount of time your child spends practicing each day is entered on the weekly practice planner that is kept in their Orchestra Binder. Planners will be graded every Tuesday. Failure to have a parent signature or a completed planner on these days will result in a grade of zero.
 - All practice planners must be recorded on the official practice planner; in the case of a lost or missing planner, students may download and print an extra copy via Canvas. Practice minutes may not include rehearsals, sectionals, or any musical concerts.

Academic Eligibility

A student shall be suspended from participation in all extra-curricular activities during the six-weeks period following a grade reporting period in which the student received a grade lower than 70 in any class on their report card. This ineligibility begins seven days after the end of the six weeks period. Events affected by this state law would include Solo and Ensemble, Region, and any event where admission is charged. Ineligible students are required to participate in concerts where no admission is charged. An ineligible student may regain eligibility seven days after the grading period ends or after the Progress Report if all classes are passing with a grade of 70 or higher.

Equipment

- Personal instruments (violins/violas) and binders should be placed in your storage area. After class, all instruments should be completely packed (end pins in and bows loosened) and stored in their assigned areas for safe-keeping. Instruments may not stay at school overnight; **it is required that every violin, viola, and binder go home every day.**
- All instruments are to be in good playing condition. Proper maintenance is required. Most shops will provide a "loaner" instrument while yours is being repaired should it need to be left in the shop.
- Students are expected to bring their orchestra binder to every orchestra class and co-curricular event. Violin and viola players must bring their shoulder rest, rosin, and soft cloth every day to class. Cello and bass players must have a soft cloth, roc stop, rosin, and bass stool (basses only) for at-home practice.
- All instruments kept in the orchestra rooms **MUST** have the student's name clearly printed on the outside of the case.
- Students are to purchase replacement strings immediately following a string breaking. Lisle Violins, Sam's Strings, Katy Violin, and Fishburn Violin Shop can arrange to bring supplies (like strings) you purchase to school for no extra charge.
- Many times minor adjustments can be made by the director which may eliminate a trip to the repair shop, so should you have any questions please consult your child's primary orchestra teacher. *Please do not attempt to repair the instrument yourself.* Realize that neglecting a repair may lead to long term damage and depreciation in the value of your instrument.

SLJH Orchestra Supply List

- INSTRUMENT (Correctly sized by the directors and in good condition)
- MUSIC BOOKS
- BINDER (1" Black Viewfinder)
 - 2 Pencils
 - Highlighter
 - Pencil Pouch
 - Dividers
- SHOULDER REST (violin and viola only)
- ROC STOP (cello and bass)
- TUNER and METRONOME (Recommended: Korg TM-5o with tuning clip)
- SOFT CLOTH
- WIRE STAND
- UNIFORM, INFORMAL AND FORMAL

Orchestra Uniforms

- *Performing Orchestra Formal Concert Dress*
 - **Ladies:** Cousin's "Natalie" dress; black, dressy closed-toe shoes.
 - **Gentlemen:** Cousin's "Logan" shirt package; black dress slacks, black belt (if needed), black socks, and black dress shoes.
- *FYO Formal Concert Dress*
 - **Ladies:** School-appropriate length dress/skirt, or a nice blouse with dress slacks; dressy closed-toe shoes.
 - **Gentlemen:** A collared shirt with dress slacks and dress shoes.
- *Informal Concert Dress*
 - Current Seven Lakes JH Orchestra tee-shirt with nice blue jeans and close-toed shoes.

Private Lessons

Private lessons are offered by the Katy ISD Fine Arts Program to instrumental music students that are interested. Most of the lessons are at a high school nearby. These teachers' dedication and service to our orchestra program is exemplary and worthy of your consideration. Space with these teachers is limited and openings do fill up quickly.

There are also instructors in the area that do not teach in the KISD Fine Arts Program. These fine teachers may request that you travel to their home or studio. In any case where the lesson does not take place on a KISD campus, payments are scheduled between the student and the instructor.

Although your child receives valuable instruction in our classes, private lessons provide:

1. Students with an opportunity to deal with the unique challenges of the particular instrument one-on-one with an expert teacher. This will allow him/her to progress at his/her own level at all times rather than at the rate of the class.
2. Review and reinforcement of class assignments when necessary.
3. Earlier exposure to techniques such as vibrato, advanced bowing, shifting, and intonation.
4. Expanded opportunities for advanced solo and ensemble instruction.
5. Greater confidence in their individual performance because of the individual attention that private lessons provides.
6. Enhanced opportunity for success at individual competitions such as All-Region Orchestra and Solo & Ensemble Contest.
7. Heightened standard for group endeavors such as concerts and contests.

Private lessons are not required but are one of the *best investments* in a student's success!