



# Still Middle School

## 2023-2024

### ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Orchestra Department at Still Middle School! The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an awareness and understanding of the policies, organizational structure, and general functioning of the Still Middle School Orchestras. **Please read the handbook in its entirety, discuss it with your family, and keep it for future reference.**

Music in District 204 is a vibrant part of a student's education. In addition to developing students' musical skills, our orchestra program grows students' social/emotional skills, cultural responsiveness, critical thinking, and creativity. These outcomes are determined by the National Music Standards, the Illinois Fine Arts Music Standards, the American String Teacher Association's National Curriculum, the Illinois Social Emotional Standards, and the Illinois Cultural Responsive Teaching Standards.

The handbook is broken into three sections:

1. Curricular Information
2. Instrument Care
3. Extra Opportunities

Make sure to bookmark the Still Music Department website, **[stillmusic.weebly.com](http://stillmusic.weebly.com)**, for updates, helpful links, and tips for practicing.

Please keep this handbook for future reference and to complete the handbook form sent out via email to acknowledge that you have read and understood the information and policies listed in this handbook.

We're looking forward to a great year!

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# Section 1

## Curricular Information

### Calendar

**Dates in bold are required performances for the indicated grade level orchestra class.**

Students are graded for their performance at these concerts; attendance is crucial. **If your student cannot attend a required concert, notify the director as soon as possible to help them plan accordingly.** Please print out, complete, and turn in the Absence Request Form found on [stillmusic.weebly.com](http://stillmusic.weebly.com). We ask that you notify us of any concert absence at least two weeks prior to the concert date. Please see the [Concert Attendance Policy](#) on the following page for more details.

The other dates that are listed are important events or non-required events or concerts for class. They may be required if your student performs in extra-curricular ensembles.

### September

- 8 Music Polo order deadline (on Pushcoin)**
- 11-15 Chamber Orchestra Auditions (for students who wish to audition)
- 20 Virtual ILMEA Audition Registration Deadline (for students who wish to audition)
- 27 Virtual ILMEA Audition Video Submission Deadline (for students who wish to audition)

### October

- 18 8th Grade Orchestra Concert at WVHS 8:00 pm**
- 25 6th & 7th Grades Demo Concert at Still 6:30 pm**

### November

- 11 ILMEA Jr. Festival, West Aurora High School (for those students who made it) Times TBA
- 16 Parent-Teacher Conferences 4:30 - 8:00 pm
- 20 Parent-Teacher Conferences 8:00 am - 3:00 pm & 4:30 - 8:00 pm

### December

- 11 Honors Concert 7:00 pm (Chamber & Alternative Assembly only)

### January

- 29 6th Grade BCO Concert at Still 6:30 pm**
- 29 7th Grade BCO Concert at Still 8:00 pm**

### February

- 5 8th Grade BCO Concert 7:00 pm**
- 17 Solo and Ensemble Contest for interested students at Fischer Middle School
- 29 Parent-Teacher Conferences 1:00 - 8:00 pm

### March

- 15 District 204 Organizational Music Festival at Still Middle School (*Chamber Orchestra only*)

### May

- 13 Spring Orchestra Concert at 7:00 pm**
- 18 Fine Arts Festival at MVHS Times TBA**
- 29 Funway for interested students (optional)

Concert dates and special events are subject to schedule changes depending on the current guidance and restrictions for public events.

## Grades

Grades are given each quarter to reflect your students progress and achievement toward standards-based learning outcomes in orchestra. Growth toward these outcomes will be measured video playing tests, Benchmark assessments in technique class (discussed later), written tests, projects, portfolios, and more. Attendance at all performances is a crucial part of the curriculum, and consequently a large part of students' grades. Homework is rarely given but many of the assessments and projects will require students to work outside of class time. Most assignments will be given on Google Classroom. We recommend that assignments and grades are checked regularly on Synergy and Google Classroom. Additionally, there is an assignment tracker on our website, [stillmusic.weebly.com](http://stillmusic.weebly.com)

## Grading Policies

- The teacher will set a final turn-in date for all assignments about week before the end of each quarter
- Students can retake, redo, or correct any assignment or assessment from class for a better grade; all retakes must be turned in by the final turn-in date
- No late points will be deducted for late assignments; late work must be turned in by the final turn-in date
  - Grades for late assignments take additional time; expect about two weeks for grades to be entered
- The teacher will determine if a grade/assignment should be excused from a student's final grade based on individual circumstances
- Plagiarism of any kind will result in consequences listed in the Student Handbook

## Home Practice

Quality practice at home practice helps make it possible to play a musical instrument to the best of one's ability. All orchestra members should practice regularly at home to insure progress. Practice is essentially homework for the class and students will need to practice in order to prepare for performances and playing tests. Students will learn about effective and rewarding practice habits in class that should be used at home.

It is recommended that students should aim to practice a minimum of 5 days each week. 6th-grade students should start with 5 minutes each time they practice and build up time throughout the year. 7th & 8th Grade students should practice a minimum of 20 minutes each practice session. If your student cannot practice the recommended amount of time, **any practice is much better than no practice at all.**

## Technique Class

In conjunction with the daily rehearsal, the District 204 music curriculum provides an opportunity for instrumental music students to have technique classes during their ensemble rehearsal. The benefit of technique class is that it allows for small group instruction that addresses students' specific needs. They will be grouped with students of the same instrument and receive three or more (calendar depending) small group lessons per quarter. At the end of the quarter, students will record a Benchmark video assessment to demonstrate their progress on music assigned in these lessons.

## Concert Attendance Policy

- Students are expected to attend all performances. Failure to attend a required concert without a valid, written excuse via the Absence Request Form will result in a zero for that concert grade. The Absence Excuse Form can be found on the music website (stillmusic.weebly.com) and must be turned in **at least 2 weeks prior** to the event. The preference is that all excused absences will be reported by the time the handbook is due in class. (Notification of emergency conflicts should be received up to one week following the concert.)

- Upon notification of an absence via the Absence Request Form, the teacher will acknowledge on the form whether the absence is either Excused or Unexcused. **An excused absence** allows the student to make up the grade in the form of an alternative assignment for a possible 100%. In the case of **an unexcused absence**, the student will be given the opportunity to make up the event; however, the highest possible grade a student can receive will be 50%.

- For the Fine Arts Festival and Grade Level BCO concerts, **Combo students** must complete two separate Absence Request Forms: one submitted to their Choir Teacher and one submitted to their Orchestra Teacher.

## Concert Behavior Expectations

- Students are expected to arrive promptly at their call time with all necessary materials and in concert uniform
- Students are expected to demonstrate appropriate concert behaviors as discussed in class
- Students will need to remain for the entire concert
- All school rules apply (including the cellphone/digital device policy)
- School policies applying to concerts will apply for all performers and audience members.

## Music Uniform

Uniformity is a common expectation of performing ensembles to ensure attention is paid to the collective performance instead of an individual. All students should have the following:

- Music department polo – polos should be tucked into the pants
- Black dress pants – no jeans, shorts, or skirts
- Black socks – high enough to cover the ankles when seated
- Black closed-toed, dress shoes – no athletic shoes, flip flops, or sandals

**The music shirt should be ordered via the Still Middle School Push Coin site.** Shirts will only be available in adult sizes. Shirts this year will cost \$20.00 each. Please remember that you will need this shirt for concerts for all three years of middle school, so we would recommend purchasing a shirt with room to grow so that you don't need to repurchase it every year. **Shirts ordered via the Push Coin site cannot be returned or exchanged should the size be incorrect. Late orders or replacement shirts will be charged at a much higher price due to the minimum order price from our shirt vendor. Please make sure to order on time and the correct size with room to grow.**

Make sure your uniform is neat and tidy. Alterations to the polos are not allowed and may require the purchase of a new shirt

## Lockers (for 7th and 8th-grade Violin & Viola students)

Orchestra lockers are available for seventh and eighth grade violin/viola students and will be assigned during the first week of school. We ask that students store only their instrument and orchestra related materials in their orchestra locker. **We recommend that any student using an orchestra locker should purchase a combination lock via Push Coin on Still School website after they receive their locker assignment.** Locks cost \$8.00. All 6th grade violin/viola students will have instrument racks to store their instruments in the orchestra room.

**Supplies** (see [stillmusic.weebly.com](http://stillmusic.weebly.com) for detailed list with links for ordering)

### **Sixth Grade**

- Essential Elements for Strings Book 1 (Orange Cover)
- Orchestra Expressions Book 1 (Yellow Cover)
- Practice stand
- Violin & Viola students: shoulder rest
- Cello & Bass students: rock stop
- Rosin – please label with your name
- Soft cloth for cleaning the instrument
- 1-inch three ring binder
- 4 tab dividers
- Pencils
- Metronome to be used at home when practicing - this could be an app on a personal device

### **Seventh Grade**

- NEW Essential Elements for Strings Book 2 (Purple Cover)
- Essential Elements for Strings Book 1 (Orange Cover) - same book used in 6th grade
- Orchestra Expressions Book 1 (Yellow Cover) - same book used in 6th grade
- Practice stand
- Violin & Viola students: shoulder rest
- Cello & Bass students: rock stop
- Rosin – please label with your name
- Soft cloth for cleaning the instrument
- 1-inch three ring binder
- 4 tab dividers
- Pencils
- Metronome to be used at home when practicing - this could be an app on a personal device

### **Eighth Grade**

- NEW Orchestra Expressions Book 2 (Red Cover)
- Essential Elements for Strings Book 2 (Purple Cover) - same book used in 7th grade
- Practice stand
- Violin & Viola students: shoulder rest
- Cello & Bass students: rock stop
- Rosin – please label with your name
- Soft cloth for cleaning the instrument
- 1-inch three ring binder
- 4 tab dividers
- Pencils
- Metronome to be used at home when practicing - this could be an app on a personal device

## Section 2

### Instrument Care

#### School Owned Instruments Use & Contract (for cello and bass students)

Students using school owned instruments are responsible for their care while in class. Such students will need to read, sign and return the “District 204 Music Instrument/Equipment Contract”. Contracts will be passed out by orchestra teachers so that students have the correct instrument identification numbers on their contract.

#### Instrument Care

String instruments are delicate and subject to damage from temperature extremes, humidity, and careless handling. The following suggestions are offered for their care:

- Do not touch the hair of the bow as moisture, perspiration, oil, or dirt from your hands, face, or hair will spoil the bow hair
- **ALWAYS** loosen the bow hair after you play
- After playing, use a soft cloth to wipe rosin from the instrument, bow stick, and strings
- Do not expose your instrument to excessive heat or cold
- When you are not using your instrument, always store it in your case
- Never put books or music in the case unless it has a music pocket
- Never polish the instrument with furniture polish
- Place a cloth over the top of a violin or viola before closing and make sure to latch the case
- If you noticed your bridge is not standing straight, ask your teacher to adjust it; **DO NOT** do it yourself
- Do not let other people play your instrument
- Never use glue on any part of the instrument
- **DO NOT** attempt your own repairs (see below)

#### Instrument Repair

Instrument repair is a highly specialized area. It is very easy to damage an instrument in an attempt to repair it if you are not a trained professional. Please share any instrument problems with the orchestra directors so that we can assess the problem and make recommendations as to what sort of repair it needs. This is to protect you and your instrument from unnecessary or costly repairs.

#### Purchasing an Instrument

Once your student grows to play on a full-sized instrument and they have progressed to more advanced music that is affected by the quality of their instrument, you may consider purchasing an instrument. This purchase usually occurs when a student is a freshman or sophomore in high school, though can happen as early as 8th grade. When you feel it is appropriate for your child to purchase an instrument, please contact the orchestra teachers for information on reputable stores in the area. You need to be able to see and play a variety of instruments before you purchase one. Most stores will allow you to take instruments to compare in your home. We will be happy to play them as well.

## Section 3

### Extra Opportunities

#### Alternative Assembly

Alternative Assembly is designed for students wishing to experience other styles of string music. Membership for this ensemble is open to all 7th and 8th grade students in the Still Orchestra Program. 6th grade students are allowed to join during second semester. **Alternative Assembly meets from 6:45 am-7:50 am on Monday and Thursday mornings.** Please listen for announcements. There will be further information provided to students about concerts and participation requirements at the first rehearsal this fall.

#### Chamber Orchestra

The Still Middle School **Chamber Orchestra** is designed for students wishing to broaden their musical development and participation. Membership for this ensemble is based upon student desire, musical ability, and instrumental needs. **The Chamber Orchestra meets from 6:45 am-7:50 am on Tuesdays and Fridays.** Audition information and materials may be obtained from the director at the start of the school year. There will be further information provided to students about concerts and participation requirements at that time.

#### Solo and Ensemble Festival

Orchestra students are given the opportunity to perform solos and/or ensembles at the Illinois Grade School Music Association (IGSMA) contest in February. **Registration for this event will occur in October.** If you are taking privately, your private teacher should be selecting a piece with you.

#### ILMEA Jr. Festival Orchestra

More experienced orchestra members also have the opportunity to audition for and perform in the Illinois Music Educator Association (ILMEA) festival orchestra. Students who will audition for ILMEA must sign up by September 20th. Auditions for the orchestra will be virtual and any audition video will need to be submitted by September 27th. The directors will host a help session for any interested student to prepare for auditions on **September 21st afterschool**. More information about the help session will be sent out closer to the date. The festival will be on November 11th, 2023 at West Aurora High School. If you cannot attend the event, please do not audition.

#### Summer Orchestra

Students are highly encouraged to participate in the District 204 summer music program. This is an excellent way to continue improving skills during the summer months. Registration information will be available in the spring.

#### Private Lessons

It is **impossible** for us to overemphasize the positive impact of private lessons. Individual instruction is the best way to help students fulfill their potential. The benefit of taking private lessons is weekly one on one instruction with a specialist on your particular instrument. A private instructor will immediately reinforce strengths and give specific instruction for improvement. A list of professional instructors or high school guided practice teachers is available on the music website ([stillmusic.weebly.com](http://stillmusic.weebly.com)).



## Handbook TO DO checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ **ASAP** Review the Calendar and write down the dates on your calendar to avoid conflicts. More information may be found on **page 3**.

\_\_\_\_\_ **ASAP** Review supply list for your student's grade and secure any missing materials **page 6**.

*NOTE: Please don't let financial concerns keep your child from participating in orchestra! Contact Mr. Naughton or Mrs. Zalokar if you need assistance renting or purchasing supplies.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **ASAP** Order a red Music Polo Shirt on Pushcoin (if needed) **OR** locate your student's polo and have them try it on. **page 5. DUE Sept. 8th**

*NOTE: Please don't let financial concerns keep your child from participating in orchestra! Contact Mr. Naughton or Mrs. Zalokar if you need assistance purchasing a polo.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **ASAP** Review Orchestra Handbook and complete Handbook Agreement Form in email **DUE Sept. 11th**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Cello and Bass students only:** Read, sign, and turn in the school instrument contract **DUE Sept. 11th**

\_\_\_\_\_ Students interested in auditioning Chamber Orchestra: You must already know how to play your instrument. Take an audition packet and turn in a complete permission form. Permission forms must be turned in **BEFORE** you sign up for an audition slot with Mrs. Zalokar. Auditions will be either before or afterschool from **Sept. 11th - 15th**. Look for a sign up sheet in the classroom for times.

\_\_\_\_\_ Students interested in joining Alternative Assembly: You must already know how to play your instrument. Take, sign, and turn in a permission slip form before the first rehearsal, **Monday Sept. 18th**

\_\_\_\_\_ Students interested in auditioning for the ILMEA Jr. Festival Orchestra, make sure to take an audition packet and begin practicing the music. Audition excerpts will be announced in September. Additionally, take, sign, and turn in an interest form to secure an audition **by Sept. 20**. Videos for the virtual audition will need to be submitted to your orchestra teacher **by Sept. 27th**.