Mint Hill Middle School
Orchestra Handbook

2016-2017

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MINT HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

Mint Hill Middle School takes pride in being able to offer orchestra as a class for all three grade levels. The following pages will outline the basic requirements for the Mint Hill Middle School Orchestra. All members must fill out and return all forms in this handbook to me with all requested information completed and signed by September 2. 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 Mint Hill Middle School Orchestra is a legitimate class that meets 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 performances at local elementary schools and locations throughout the area.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the school year, each Mint Hill Middle School Orchestra member should be able to:

- Demonstrate the proper maintenance techniques of an instrument.
- Demonstrate the proper posture for playing an instrument.
- Demonstrate the proper bow and instrument hold for playing his/her specific instrument.
- Demonstrate the use of proper hand position on his/her specific instrument.
- Demonstrate the ability to produce a good characteristic tone on his/her instrument.
- Identify and demonstrate proper use of various articulation markings.
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of rhythms and rhythmic structure.
- Identify and define various musical terminologies.
- Demonstrate an enhancement in discriminatory listening skills.
- Demonstrate the ability to interact responsibly and appropriately within a large group.
- Demonstrate characteristics of good self-discipline as it relates to classroom structure and practice habits.
- Demonstrate the ability to tune his/her specific instrument by use of an electronic tuner AND by aural recognition.
- Demonstrate the physical coordination necessary to facilitate technical passages of music.
- Perform a solo (accompanied or otherwise) in front of a group of people.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate musical performances and to express thoughts and feelings about those performances in a variety of contexts.
- Demonstrate the appropriate strength, endurance, stamina, and coordination as it relates to an instrumentalist at the middle school level.

CLASS RULES AND GUIDELINES

Rules:

Absolutely NO food, gum, or candy is allowed in the orchestra room! NO sodas or other liquids are allowed!! Only water is allowed on an individual basis, check with the director first.
Guidelines for the class and life:
1. RESPECT! Do it, demonstrate it, expect it, live it! Use the “Golden Rule.”
2. Be considerate.
3. Treat others as more important than yourself.
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 orchestra room is for rehearsals. NEVER do anything that would interrupt a rehearsal. Examples of disruptions are: talking, walking in front of a group that is rehearsing, waving, etc.
2. Follow the “Be-Attitudes:” BE Present, BE Prompt, BE Polite, BE Prepared, BE Positive, BE Persistent.
3. NEVER leave your instrument unattended. Students may be able to drop off their instruments in the band room in the morning and picked up in the afternoon. Do NOT drop instruments in the hallway outside the orchestra or band room!!
4. All instruments will be stored in designated areas only.
5. 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.
6. It is suggested that all personal instruments have proper insurance coverage. Mr. Arbuthnot, Mint Hill Middle 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 instruments must go home with you DAILY.
7. No one shall play, hold, or otherwise operate or handle another person’s instrument. This includes all equipment around the room. If it is not yours, do not touch it!!
8. It is everyone’s job to assist in keeping the room neat, clean, and in an orderly manner. Please do your part by picking up after yourself, and occasionally after other careless people.
9. All students must have their required materials, see page 5, in class each day.
10. All instruments will go home every day. Instruments will be taken with you after class unless permission has been given by the director, at which time instruments must be picked up before 3:00 pm. If you must leave school early, be sure to come by and pick up your instrument before you leave.
11. Chairs are for sitting only – sit properly with all six feet on the floor.
12. Music stands are for holding music only. Please do not use them as a footrest or surfboard.

Students will be successful when they live within these expectations. Whenever problems arise, they can almost always be traced back to not following a procedure. We will follow the school discipline plan.
GRADING POLICY

Grades will fall into two categories: **Formal (65%) & Informal (35%)**

We will also be using the North Carolina 10-point grading scale for all assignments and assessments.

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 (including bow)
- 1 Point = Instrument accessories (rosin, shoulder rest, rock stop, etc)
- 1 Point = Method book and sheet music
- 1 Point = Pencil

Unacceptable participation will lead to losing all participation points for that day. Some possible ways to lose participation credit include:
- 1. Inappropriate talking.
- 2. Disrespecting or arguing with the director in an uncivil way.
- 3. Excessive playing after the Director’s cut-off.
- 4. Not playing when you are supposed to. Playing when not supposed to.
- 5. Not listening to all instructions and announcements.

While the above 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, including good strings. Instruments must be natural wood finish. Please plan repairs and maintenance so that instruments are not in the shop at inopportune times, i.e. concerts or performances.
2. Required method books and theory book:
   - 6th Grade = **String Basics, Book 1**
   - 7th Grade = **Sound Innovations, Book 1**
   - 8th Grade = **None**
3. Students are **required** to have rosin, shoulder rests, rock stops, music, pencils, and a **full set of extra strings** at all rehearsals (class periods).
4. **EVERY** student must have his/her own music with them at **EVERY** class period, rehearsal, and performance. (Checks will be done everyday for grade).
5. Fingernails must be cut short enough at all times as not to effect playing quality.
CONCERT POLICIES

We will have one major concert each semester and will be a major grade. Attendance at concerts and performance activities is required for ALL students! If an emergency situation arises that prevents you from attending a concert, please notify me PRIOR to the start time of the event if at all possible. You may call and leave a message at (980) 343-5015 or send an email to Thomas.arbuthnot@cms.k12.nc.us. Not having a ride is not an emergency and will be considered unexcused!

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 alternate assignment, which might be to play the concert on your own.

Grades will be determined based on being on time, having all materials for the concert, how prepared they are with the music, and complying with dress expectations (see concert attire requirements) as follows:

* 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.

ABSENCE POLICY

All rehearsals, concerts, and performances are considered a part of the class requirement for the middle school orchestra.

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.
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. Babysitting
CONCERT DRESS

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

ALL:
Black long sleeved shirt
Black Khaki style Pants
Black Socks
Black Dress Shoes

* No jeans, tee shirts, tennis shoes, flip flops, or shorts are allowed. Some exceptions to this dress code may be made by the director for certain performances and/or performance opportunities.

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.

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!
TIME: All times are VERY real when it comes to the Mint Hill Orchestra. If it is stated to be at a concert or rehearsal 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. 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.

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.

**INSTRUMENTS AND BOOKS**

*It is strongly recommended that students rent their own instrument.* I understand parents being cautious about putting a great deal of money into something that they are not sure their child will continue with. There are music companies in and around Charlotte that will rent instruments on a month-to-month basis with reasonable prices and rent-to-own incentives. This helps those who decide to change instruments or decide not to stay in orchestra. **Do not buy an instrument online unless you have talked to the orchestra director!** These are usually poor quality instruments that do not sound good, are cheaply made requiring many costly repairs, and will keep your child from truly enjoying playing their instrument. **All instruments must be of natural wood finish!** The school does own a limited number of instruments to loan to students. These are primarily the larger more expensive instruments and are not always in the best condition. These instruments are reserved for those students who have a financial need and cannot afford to rent an instrument from a music store. Students are required to purchase their own rosin, shoulder rests, polishing cloths, and extra strings. Instruments will come with a case and bow. If any parent has questions about how to secure an instrument for their child please feel free to contact me at school.

Students are required to purchase a method book that will be used throughout the school year. These can be purchased through your local music store. The required method books are listed in the section of the handbook under required materials.

**FUNDRAISING**

The Mint Hill Middle School Orchestra program receives a limited amount of funds from the school and school district to take care of necessary program expenses. Because of this, we take part in an annual fundraising activity to raise additional funds for the program. 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). Each student will be asked to take part in this fundraiser and sell a minimum number of items as their “fair share.” Your participation in the fundraiser has a direct impact on the quality of the Mint Hill Middle 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.**
NOTIFYING THE DIRECTOR

As I work at both Mint Hill Middle School and Independence High School, I am only at Mint Hill on “A” days. You may call the school, leave a message with the school secretary, and I will get back to you as soon as possible. The best way to contact me is via e-mail at: Thomas.Arbuthnot@cms.k12.nc.us

Remind…this is a new way of sending out reminders and information to classes. A handout with signup options has been given to your child.