

McIntosh High School Orchestra



HANDBOOK

2023 – 2024

201 Walt Banks Road
Peachtree City, GA
Rae Litowich, Orchestra Director

Dear MO Parents and Students,

To our new members, welcome to the McIntosh Orchestra program! Your young musician is joining a group of high achieving, dedicated students who have a passion for music. The information provided in this handbook is important. It lists a variety of details such as my contact information, important dates, my expectations for each student, as well as my grading criteria.

To our returning members, welcome back! I am very proud of the “Superior” ranking program here at McIntosh and am looking forward to another great year. We will be partnering with the Whitewater Band this year for some full orchestra work, as well as partnering with the MHS Choral program to perform a complete masterwork.

Each year I ask orchestra members to donate \$100 at the beginning of the year, and I am asking for you to please do the same this year. With last year’s donations we brought in guest artists to work with the students during class and after school. These musicians perform with the Atlanta Symphony, Atlanta Opera, Atlanta Ballet, Greenville Symphony, Chattanooga Symphony, and Atlanta Pops to name a few. We were also able to bring in composer, and author of two of the books we use daily in class, Jeremy Woolstenhulme. Your donation also allowed us to provide an orchestra t-shirt to each student, meals before every school concert, paid our mock LGPE judges and LGPE registration fees, allowed students access to all GMEA events such as All-State, provided us with additional music, provide all new members of the method books we use most in class, and covered the cost of busses to 6 Flags at the end of the school year. Your financial support of our program is a big part of why it is so strong.

Last year we took a spring trip to Universal Studios, and this year we are hoping to take a trip to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee March 16-18. Pricing information, trip meeting info, and payment schedules will be sent out once we have board approval. Please consider being a chaperone. The county requires one adult for every 15 students. We cannot travel without you.

Looking forward to a great year,

J. Rae Litowich

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CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

While students will receive a separate grade for fall and spring semester of orchestra, all orchestra levels are considered to be year-long classes. Students will not be able to change out of orchestra class part way through the year.

Concert Orchestra (labeled as Beginning Orchestra on schedules)

This orchestra is made primarily of freshman students who are experiencing their first year of high school orchestra, but have prior experience from middle school, private lessons, or Prelude Orchestra. The focus for the year will be to set a firm foundation of the skills and techniques needed for performance at the high school level, as well as those needed to rehearse properly as an orchestral ensemble.

Symphony Orchestra (labeled as Intermediate Orchestra on schedules)

This orchestra is by audition only. Students in this orchestra should already have the skills and techniques necessary to play GMEA Level 4 music. These students should also already know, understand, and consistently demonstrate the focus this music requires during all rehearsals.

Chamber Orchestra (labeled as Advanced Orchestra and Mastery Orchestra on schedules)

This orchestra is by audition only. This level of orchestra is reserved for advanced performers who are comfortable in multiple left hand positions. Students in this orchestra should already have the skills and techniques necessary to play GMEA Level 5 music and higher. These students already know, understand, and consistently demonstrate the focus, practice ethic, and rehearsal behavior this music requires during all rehearsals.

BEHAVIOR

Expectations

1. Be respectful to others and equipment
2. Follow directions the first time given
3. Stay in student designated areas

(all other rules in the MHS Student Handbook apply)

DAILY PROCEDURES

Expectations

1. Use the restroom prior to class
2. Tune on your own at, or before, the bell with a tuner
3. Have all necessary materials at your seat (binder, pencil, anything listed on the board)
4. Remain seated during rehearsal
5. Cell phones can be used as tuners at the beginning of the class, but should then be put away for rehearsal, unless requested otherwise by the director
6. No food during rehearsal
7. Water may be kept next to your chair—drink it at appropriate times, and not while you should be playing
8. Be ready to perform
9. Use proper rehearsal etiquette at all times

Conduct and Consequences

In a participation and performance-based class, exceptional conduct is non-negotiable. The MO will implement the disciplinary measures/consequences established by McIntosh High School. Students demonstrating chronic behavior issues that affect rehearsal, or the orchestra program, can be placed on probation, or removed from the orchestra by the director.

CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

As per the school's policy, cell phones are not to be used during class time unless directed by the teacher for instructional purposes. Cell phones should be put away (in a pocket, bag or purse) during rehearsal. No devices should be on a music stand or attempting to hide on a seat. Students are welcome to plug their phone in to charge during rehearsal, however, neither the school nor the director are responsible for lost or stolen property. Students choosing to charge their phones during rehearsal are not allowed to access their phones until the end of rehearsal. All devices should be on mute so they do not interrupt rehearsal with sound effects or vibration.

Smart watches should not be used for anything except telling time. Students who give the director the impression they are reading text messages, or accessing anything other than a clock, will be asked to take them off and put them away for the duration of rehearsal.

GRADING INFORMATION

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form at MHS.

Any attempt to obtain credit for work done by another is unacceptable, including:

- cheating on tests
- copying work of others
- copying ideas or copying word-for-word from books, magazines, encyclopedias, technology media (plagiarism)
- failing to cite proper documentation or authorship
- using someone else's term paper
- or other similar activities

Cheating includes the following:

- possessing and/or using unauthorized material during quizzes, tests, and exams
- providing or accepting specific information about a class assignment, project, homework, quiz, test, or exam (example: "The essay question is ..." or "Study all the definitions on page 3.")
- sharing work product on any independent assignment (The student is responsible for understanding when assignments are to be completed independently or as a group.)

Please note: College and scholarship applications frequently request disclosure regarding academic dishonesty.

Grading Scale

- A - 100-90%
- B - 89-80%
- C - 79-71%
- D - 70%
- F - 69-Below

Grading Category Breakdown

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Summative Assessments</i> | 50% |
| Playing Tests | |
| Concerts | |
| Written Tests | |
| <i>Formative Assessments</i> | 30% |
| Daily Skills/Technique | |
| Practice Logs | |
| Written Work | |

Extra Help

Extra help or personal lessons are always an option! It is better to start getting help immediately instead of waiting until you feel overwhelmed. Contact Mrs. Litowich via e mail or before/after rehearsal to request help and set-up a lesson time.

Extra Credit

Due to the generous nature of the Playing Test Retake Policy, extra credit is not given. Please see this policy section, and take full advantage of it.

Daily Skills and Technique

Students earn a 10 point Daily Skills/Technique grade under the category “Formative Assessment” for participating fully. Students who are unprepared, refuse to participate, are insubordinate/disrespectful, or hinder the progress of rehearsal will lose points based on severity. Students may also be asked to pack up and switch to an alternative assignment at the discretion of the director.

If a student forgets his/her instrument, five points will be deducted from the Daily Skills/Technique grade since those skills/techniques cannot be worked on fully.

If a student has sustained an injury that makes it impossible to play, an email should be sent to the director ahead of time, preferably from a parent/guardian. If the injury is in one hand or arm, and the other is still usable, the student will still be expected to participate with the usable hand/arm and should still bring the instrument to class.

It is physically impossible to play a string instrument correctly with long fingernails whether they are synthetic or real. All orchestra musicians should be able to play on the tip of the finger when curved. The one exception to the finger length policy will be the week following prom. For this week only, no points will be deducted for not being able to meet the standard due to long fingernails.

Practice Logs

Practice logs are classified as a “Formative Assessment,” and are worth 50 points per assigned week. Individual practice is equally important as group rehearsal, and makes the group rehearsal possible. Students are required to practice the following amount of time outside class each week: Concert Orchestra=100 min., Symphony Orchestra=150 min. Chamber Orchestra=180 min. These logs are to be signed by a parent or guardian to verify the amount of practice. Students should then upload a picture of their log to the appropriate Schoology assignment. Logs will lose 10 minutes of the required minute time per day late (this includes weekends since students have access to Schoology 24/7). For example, a practice log for Concert Orchestra turned in 3 days late will receive a 70%.

Performance Tests

Performance tests fall under the “Summative” category. Performance tests are video recorded and should be submitted to the corresponding Schoology assignment. Videos will not be accepted via email. If you are having a problem uploading a video to Schoology, try the following:

- create a link to the video
- paste the link in a word document
- upload the word document instead of the actual video
- make sure you make the document visible to anyone who has the link

Only videos meeting the video turn in requirements will be accepted and graded. Videos that do not meet the requirements will not be considered turned in until the requirements are met. A video demonstrating these requirements is posted on Schoology for students.

Requirements:

- Adequate lighting so that the instrument, bow, musician’s face and both hands are clearly visible

- The area between the bridge and fingerboard should face the camera directly so the director can evaluate bow angle as the bow travels up and down
- Both hands must remain in the video at all times
- Musician's face should be in the video at all times
- Sound should be clear with no distortion
- No part of the instrument or musician should be blocked from view at any time
- If the directions require a metronome in the background, it must be audibly present
- Only submit the one take you wish to be graded

Performance tests that receive a grade less than 100 will have commentary in Schoology as to why, and suggestions on how to work towards correcting skills/technique.

Playing Test Resubmission Policy

If the playing test is turned in on time, and was a true attempt, the student may resubmit the test continuously until the Test Resubmission Cut-Off Date. Students should make sure they practice between resubmissions and address the comments left by the director. If the resubmitted assignment scores lower than the previous score, the previous score will stand, thus no penalties occur for continuing to try to improve.

By submitting the test late, the student waives the right to a resubmission. The student should make sure the test is in its best condition before submitting, and can take until the last day of regular class before final exams to turn in their singular attempt. This one-time submission will still be worth full credit. No points will be taken off due to late submission.

Missed Non-Concert Day After School Rehearsal

After school rehearsals that are scheduled on days that are not concert days will be put in the "Formative Assessment" category. The purpose of these rehearsals is to allow the director extra time to work with a specific group of instruments or musicians in preparation for our concerts. I am very aware the students have many after school commitments, and hope that by communicating the dates in a timely manner (see the MO website and add the Google Calendar), you can plan around them.

I am also very aware of the amount of athletes within the MO. The coaches and I know your time is limited and that you are very involved, which is why we work together to try and help you balance your schedule. Make sure to communicate your orchestra schedule to your coach quickly and early. They do not know your orchestra schedule, and I do not know your sports schedule. We cannot help you when you wait until the last moment.

Present for School/Missing Rehearsal Prior Notice Given

If a student is not able to be present, or needs to leave early, a parent needs to send an email to the director 24 hours in advance. The student will be marked as excused in the gradebook and no make-up work will be assigned. After school rehearsals are to work on the music and sound created as a group, and no individual assignment can make up for what is missed.

Absent for School/Missing Rehearsal

If the student was marked as "Absence Excused Illness" for the school day, or early check out, the student will be marked as excused in the gradebook and no make-up work will be assigned. Make sure to turn your note in to the attendance office when returning to school.

Present for School/Missing Rehearsal/No Prior Notice

If a student was present for school, but not for rehearsal, with no prior warning, the student will receive a 0 in the gradebook. Parents may send the director an email explaining the sudden need for the absence within 24 hours of the student's next present school day. These will be considered on an individual basis, but in general, are only accepted for emergency health issues, or death, in the immediate family.

Concerts

Concerts will be placed in the "Summative Assessment" category, and participation is required. Full credit requires students to report on time and perform in correct concert attire. Attendance is taken on stage during after school rehearsal and prior to our start time. See uniform section for further information on

how the uniform can affect your grade. Please make sure your uniform is ready prior to the performance date!

Standard Concert Day Procedures:

- Bring uniform to the orchestra room in the morning and hang it up
- Immediate rehearsal after school on stage until 5:30 (50 points)
- 5:30-6:45 Catered group dinner and change into uniform
- 6:45 Attendance on stage (150 points now until concert ends)
- 7:00 Concert begins

Missed Concert Day Rehearsal

The after school rehearsal is mandatory, and part of the concert day summative grade. No excuses will be accepted for missing the rehearsal, and being present for the concert. This rehearsal is worth 50 points of the overall 200 concert day points. Please plan accordingly when making doctor's appointments, and make sure to check your sports calendars.

Missed Concert

Performing is the culmination of all the work put forth in class, the purpose behind what we do, and mandatory. Orchestra is a team effort and absences impact what happens on stage. Any need for absences should be communicated 48 hours in advance via parent email, and will be evaluated on an individual basis. Please be advised that in general, the only pre-planned excused absences are for immediate family emergencies due to someone's health, or a death in the family.

Students who are coded as "Absence Excused Illness" by the school on concert day will be given the opportunity to submit a video of their concert performance as an individual in full concert attire. Students coded Absent Unexcused will be given a 0. Please make sure to turn in your note to the attendance office promptly upon your return to school.

Students present for the school day, who were absent from the concert with no prior communication, will receive a 0 for the concert grade. Parents may send the director an email explaining the sudden need for the absence within 24 hours of the student's next present school day. These will be considered on an individual basis, but in general, are only accepted for emergency health issues, or death, in the immediate family.

Final Exams

Students taking the orchestra final exam may pick between two options at the end of each semester.

Option 1:

- Take the average of all playing tests for the semester and have that as your final exam grade (this does not include points for concerts)
- Student not required to be present for the final exam

Option 2:

- Take a multiple choice exam covering material we have worked on that semester
- Student required to be present during final exam time
- Student must bring school supplied Chromebook

Option 1 is great for those students who worked diligently throughout the semester and constantly resubmitted their playing tests and continued to raise their test grades.

Option 2 is great for students who may not have been able to demonstrate physical mastery throughout the whole semester, but would like to demonstrate their mental understanding.

UNIFORM

Concert Attire Policy

The orchestra has a set concert uniform. Having a set uniform allows us to look like a unit, and allows the audience to focus on the music they hear, instead of the fashion choices they see. Students not wearing parts of their uniform will be deducted 10 points off their concert grade for every missing piece. Students may not deviate from the uniform.

Jewelry:

No accessories should draw attention to the individual, make noise, flash, stand out from our concert black, or too easily catch the stage lights. Students with jewelry that draws attention will be asked to remove it for the concert.

Uniform Option #1

Black shirt with $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeves ordered through the orchestra. Black palazzo pants ordered through the orchestra. Solid black closed toe dress shoes.

Uniform Option #2

Black shirt with $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeves ordered through the orchestra. Black floor length full skirt ordered through the orchestra. Solid black closed toe dress shoes.

Uniform Option #3

Black tuxedo with white tuxedo shirt ($\frac{1}{4}$ " pleats and wingtip collar), black satin vest, black satin bow tie, black tuxedo pants with satin stripe, black tuxedo jacket (flat black buttons), solid black business socks (sock should go completely up the lower leg), solid black closed toe dress shoe. This uniform is available for purchase through the orchestra, however, if you decide to purchase elsewhere, please make sure it completely matches the one ordered through the school.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising will be made available periodically throughout the year. Fundraisers are not mandatory and money will not go to the overall program as a whole. Money raised by students will be tallied and set in escrow for that student's personal use on orchestra related events or materials that are available through the school. This includes, but is not limited to, the \$100 donation we ask of each member, trips, new strings, damage to a school instrument, audition fees for All County and All-State, registration fees for Solo and Ensemble, and orchestra spirit wear. Students will fill out a form (available from the director) stating how much is to be used, and for what purpose. The orchestra will then allocate those funds accordingly.

Funds raised by the student will roll over to the next year. When a student leaves the program, any leftover funds in the student's account can be handed down to a sibling who will be joining the McIntosh Orchestra the following year or who is already in the McIntosh Orchestra. If no sibling is in the McIntosh Orchestra the following year, the funds are then allocated to the orchestra's general account.

NON-INSTRUMENT MATERIALS

Every student needs to have:

- a pencil, daily, for class to mark music. No other writing utensil is acceptable.
- A black, 1 inch, 3 ring binder (no other colors accepted-used for this class only)

INSTRUMENTS

Instruments

High School students are encouraged to rent or buy an instrument. Violins and violas are rather inexpensive to rent and many stores offer rent-to-own plans. When renting or purchasing a string instrument, be sure you know the correct size and these specifications: quality string instruments should have a maple scroll, neck, back, and ribs. The top should be spruce. The pegs, nut, fingerboard, tailpiece and saddle should be ebony. The instrument should have “true” inlaid purfling. All instruments will need a bow and rosin; violin and viola players need a shoulder rest; cello and bass players need an endpin stop.

A limited number of school instruments are available for student use in the classroom. Students needing to use a school instrument will need to fill out the county’s rental agreement prior to being assigned an instrument. Please note the county requests \$50.00 as the rental fee to keep up with maintenance. You are also able to pay for a bow rehair and new strings in lieu of the \$50.00. A receipt must be provided to the orchestra teacher to prove you have taken care of these purchases.

Lockers

Violin and viola students will be issued a locker to keep their instrument in while at school. This is in addition to their regularly assigned locker. Lockers should be kept free of food and drinks, and should only be used to house the instrument. It is the expectation that students take their instruments home for practice daily.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Orchestra members are able to participate in many extracurricular activities, which are fun and educational for the student and may benefit the orchestra. I encourage students to take part in private lessons, extra performances at Solo and Ensemble, chamber music groups, youth symphonies, and community and church orchestras. Please let me know when and where you are performing, and if you would like any help preparing auditions.

SENIOR RECOGNITION

Seniors are able to earn to honors cords for taking four years of fine arts electives. Three of those years must be in the same fine art. For example, you could take three years of orchestra and one year of choir and receive fine arts honors cords. However, you should take four years of orchestra!

The orchestra also gives our seniors who were in the orchestra for all four years a parting gift as a thank you for their time and dedication to the orchestra program. Students taking less than four years of orchestra do not qualify for a parting senior gift.

ORCHESTRA ORDERS

Please see this year’s order guide for a list of items. The order guide can be found on Schoology, will be sent out in an IC blast email, and will be available on our website, www.mcintoshorchestra.com.