



**MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA
COURSE HANDBOOK
2019-2020**



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome! You have chosen to be a part of an outstanding organization here at Bellefonte Area School District. By enrolling in orchestra your entire family has signed up for a truly unique experience. I hope that you will approach the upcoming year with the same excitement that I have. Please take the time to read through this handbook as a family. It contains the various policies and procedures concerning the orchestra program. I firmly believe that family support is crucial, not only to the success of the student, but the overall program as well. If we follow these expectations we are certain to have a fantastic year. After you have read through the handbook in its entirety please sign and return the required form.

Orchestra is a class in which all students and can be successful regardless of differences in ability, experience and skill level. To do this, I will set different expectations for task completion for students based upon their individual needs. This is known as differentiated instruction and assessment. Students in Orchestra vary in culture, socioeconomic status, language, gender, motivation, ability/disability, personal interests and more. By considering varied learning needs, I will develop instruction and assessment so that all children in the classroom can learn and demonstrate growth. One of the goals of orchestra class is to make certain that everyone grows in all key skills and knowledge areas, encouraging student to move on from their starting points and to become more independent musicians.

I hope that this handbook will answer all of your questions. However, if you need anything else please don't hesitate to let me know. I am here to make this the best possible musical experience for you and your student. As I said, I make an effort to individualize each student's education and accommodate each student's needs (financial, educational, physical, emotional, etc.). However, since it is impossible to plan for all possible student needs, please communicate with me about how I can better assist you or your child.

Office Hours:

Fridays, 3:30-4:30

in the Middle School room 507 (Orchestra room)

Additional appointments available upon request.

Class Website:

bellefonteorchestra.weebly.com

Email:

jrenne@basd.net

Sincerely,
Mrs. Julie Renne

AFTER SCHOOL EVENTS CALENDAR

Additional events may be added throughout the year.
For more details, refer to the class calendar available on the class website.

(R) = required event for all students

September	6	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
October	4	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
November	1	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
December	6	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
	16	7th & 8th Grade Orchestra, Choir and Band Winter Concert (Required for 7th and 8th grade only)
	18	6th Grade Orchestra, Choir and Band Winter Concert (Required for 6th grade only)
January	10	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
	24	Keystone String Fest
February	7	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
	7	Keystone String Fest Snow Make-Up Date
March	6	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
	27	7 th and 8 th Grade Fine Arts Trip (Possible)
April	3	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
	3	7 th and 8 th Grade Fine Arts Trip (Possible)
May	1	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting
	29	6th, 7th & 8th Grade Orchestra Spring Concert (R)
June	5	Orchestra Club Officer's Meeting

COURSE DESCRIPTION & MATERIALS

Middle school orchestra is a beginning, intermediate or advanced presentation of the concepts and skills required to learn to play a bowed stringed instrument. Among topics presented are: instrument care, tuning and intonation, reading musical notation, fingering and bowing skills and study of musical style and forms used during various musical periods in history. Emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking skills, psychomotor skills, performance skills, evaluation abilities, goal-setting and initiative set within a framework of music appreciation and understanding of the value of music as a form for deeper expression

6th Grade Class Schedule

Day 1 – Small Group Class (Groups A, B, C)
Day 2 – Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9
Day 3 – Small Group Class (Groups G, H, I)
Day 4 – Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9

7th Grade Class Schedule

Day 1 – Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9
Day 2 – Small Group Class (Groups D, E, F)
Day 3 – Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9
Day 4 – Small Group Class (Groups J, K, L)
Day 5 - Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9

8th Grade Class Schedule

Day 1 – Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9
Day 3 – Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9
Day 5 - Large Group Rehearsal, Period 9
Day 6 – Small Group Class (Groups M, N, O)

Students in Orchestra will develop the following skills and concepts:

1. To develop psychomotor skills required to play a stringed instrument
2. To develop the ability to transfer reading musical notation into the correct corresponding reflex
3. To develop the skills to perform assigned music
4. To discern “form” in music
5. To learn of various musical periods correlated with history
6. To become familiar with composers and performance
7. To learn correct concert and classroom conduct
8. To become aware of career and scholastic opportunities relative to music
9. To have a pleasant, enriching experience in orchestra

It is required that students come with all of their materials on a daily basis. Not having the supplies will affect the student’s class grade. All students are eligible to participate in orchestra regardless of their individual financial circumstances. If you cannot afford to purchase or rent these supplies, please contact the director.

Required Materials

- **6th and 7th Grade: String Basics Book 2, 8th Grade: String Basics Book 3** by Terry Shade and Jeremy Woolstenhulme. (Books are instrument specific) About \$10
- **Instrument and bow** of good quality from a reputable instrument vendor. No unusual colored instruments.
- **Name tag** attached to your instrument case. Student’s name must be on name tag.
- **Shoulder Rest** for violin and violas. Student’s name must be on shoulder rest.
- **Endpin Rest** for cellos and basses. Student’s name must be on endpin rest.
- **Rosin** with student’s name. Basses must use bass rosin.
- **Cotton cloth** to clean strings after each use
- **Pencil** - an absolute MUST for every class
- **Music Stand** for home practice

Highly Recommended Materials

- **Chromebook, Computer or iPad** with internet connection for SmartMusic assignments
- **Headphones** for SmartMusic assignments
- **Digital tuner** or app on a smartphone

All students must acquire an instrument to participate in orchestra. The instrument must possess certain markers of quality, including working fine tuners, pegs and fingerboard made of ebony wood, and bow hair

made from real horse hair. Additionally the instrument must be of natural wood color. Painted instruments are novelty instruments. Please avoid purchasing instruments online, but rather purchase or rent an instrument from a reputable instrument dealer (see class website).

All students are eligible to participate in orchestra regardless of their individual financial circumstances. If you cannot afford to purchase or rent an instrument of quality, please contact the director. The district owns several instruments that students can use for no cost.

CELLO AND BASS $\frac{3}{4}$ and full size cellos and all sizes of bass are not permitted on BASD school busses. As a convenience for families who rely on the school bus to transport their student to and from school, every effort is made to keep an instrument available for at-school use for rehearsals. Please note: Instruments are first allocated to students who cannot afford to purchase or rent their own. Any remaining inventory will be available as “at school” instruments. Your personal instrument will then become you “stay at home” instrument. This ideal scenario is not guaranteed, and you may need to make arrangements to transport your child’s instrument between school and home.

VIOLIN AND VIOLA Students are permitted to transport all sizes of violin and viola on the BASD school busses. Instruments can be stored in the instrument storage area if the instrument case is clearly labeled with the student’s name. BASD is not responsible for lost or stolen items. The instrument storage area adjacent to the classroom is intended only for materials related to orchestra class.

INSTRUMENT REPAIR All instruments should be kept in excellent playing condition. This includes regular bow re-hairs and string replacement. If your instrument is in need of repair please contact your director immediately and they will advise you toward the best course of action. Do not try to repair the instrument yourself.

GRADING POLICY

Large Group Classes	2x per cycle (6 th Grade) 3x per cycle (7 th & 8 th Grade)	10 points each
Small Group Classes	1x per cycle	30 points each
SmartMusic Homework	1x per week	50 points each
Worksheets	see p. 10 or 11 for details	Various point values
Test & Memorization Line Assessments	see p. 10 or 11 for details	20 points each
Performances	2x per year	100 points each

LARGE GROUP CLASSES --- All students in Orchestra meet as a large group 9th period. 6th Grade meets on days 2 and 4, while 7th and 8th grades meet together on days 1, 3 and 5. Attendance is mandatory. 5 points for being prepared for class with instrument, 5 points for being prepared for class with music. 10 points total for each large group class.

SMALL GROUP CLASSES --- All students in Orchestra will attend 1 small group class each cycle. Every effort will be taken to rotate the lesson schedules to minimize the amount of classroom time missed. Students are expected to check-in with their classroom teacher for permission to attend their lesson that period. 15 points for being prepared for class with instrument, 15 points for being prepared for class with music. 30 points total for each small group class.

- **Missed Small Group Classes:** If a student has a test, quiz, major project or required in-class work, they should remain in their class that period. Students will need to notify Mrs. Renne by completing a Lesson Absence Card (“Yellow Card”) (including date, period, teacher name and reason for absence) either before the lesson or within two school days after the missed lesson. If a student has completed a Lesson Absence Card, Mrs. Renne will work to schedule a make-up time. If no Lesson Absence Card is received, a grade of ‘0’ will be given for that lesson. If a student misses a small group class for any reason, the student is still responsible to find out what they missed.

SMARTMUSIC HOMEWORK --- Students will complete multiple practicing assignments on their SmartMusic account each week.

- **Scoring:** Every SmartMusic assignment is worth 50 points. The number of assigned songs varies each week. A 10% curve will be added to all SmartMusic submissions to compensate for any other technical difficulties students may encounter with the program.
- **Tolerance Setting:** Based on student and parent feedback, I will be utilizing the tolerance setting feature this school year. Assignments will be set to the "lenient" setting as opposed to the "standard" or "strict" settings that were used in the past. This will help students more easily earn high scores increase student achievement.
- **Due dates:** Assignments will be due each Sunday before 11:59 PM and **no late work will be accepted.** The SmartMusic assignments are designed for students to work on little by little over many days. Waiting until the last minute to complete these assignments is not only less beneficial for student learning, but will also likely be a stressful experience.
- **Award Badges:** SmartMusic will track student practice and award a badge to students for their achievements. The Discipline Badge will be awarded to students who play or record for 100 minutes over the past 1 week for assigned content. The Consistency Badge will be awarded to students who play or record 1 time each day over the past 1 week for any content. Students who earn these badges will receive 10 extra credit points for each badge. **Click “DASHBOARD” on the upper right corner before closing the page to make sure that your practice time is recorded.**
- **Differentiation in grades 7 and 8:** Students of each grade level will be differentiated into two groups: Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra. Most students will be in the Orchestra group and will receive

appropriately leveled assignments on SmartMusic that complete the curricular requirements. Students who wish to play music more challenging than the curriculum requires will have the option of joining the Chamber Orchestra group. These students will complete the standard requirements, but with more challenging versions of the assignments. Chamber Orchestra students will not receive more homework than other students. Students in the Chamber Orchestra group will have the option of performing an additional piece at performances.

Q: How do I get help if I run into technical issues with the computer, the microphone or the speakers?

A: You will find a lot of good information at www.smartmusic.com/support. There is a Knowledge Base that has Frequently Asked Questions along with great answers. You can also submit a question to the SmartMusic customer support group online here as well. Or, you can call the toll-free technical support number: **(866) 240-4041.**

Q: Do I have to be connected to the internet in order to use SmartMusic?

A: Yes, Internet access is required to use SmartMusic.

Q: Does Smartmusic work with a dial-up internet connection?

A: While it is possible to use SmartMusic with a dial-up Internet connection, some users will experience poor results compared to those with a high-speed connection (such as DSL or cable). Known problems with dial-up connections include: slow music downloads, slow download times for SmartMusic software updates., slow downloads or download time-out issues with Method books or ensemble music, time-out errors when submitting or receiving assignments. We recommend a high-speed Internet connection for optimal use of SmartMusic.

Q: I'm not good with computers. Who is going to help me with this?

A: Extensive self-help tools are available at www.smartmusic.com/support. Specifically, the QuickStart Videos will take you through every feature step by step. Or, you can call the toll-free technical support number: 866.240.4041.

Q: What are the system requirements?

A: Supported Web Browsers: Designed for Google Chrome

Devices:

- **General computer and Chromebook requirements:** High-speed internet access, speakers, a microphone, 4gb RAM
- **iPad requirements:** SmartMusic requires a dedicated app for iPad. You can download the app at the Apple app store. A7 processor models and later - iPad Air, iPad Air 2, iPad mini 2, iPad mini 3, iPad mini 4, 12.9-inch iPad Pro, or 9.7-inch iPad Pro, iOS 9.0 or later required
- **Smartphones and Android tablets are NOT SUPPORTED**

WORKSHEETS --- Students will complete multiple worksheets each quarter. Points possible varies by worksheet. Students can resubmit some worksheets after making corrections to try for a higher score.

TEST LINES & MEMORIZATION LINES --- Student performances will be individually assessed from time to time during Small Group Classes. This provides an opportunity for students to receive individualized, formal feedback from their teacher about their progress. All Test Lines and Memorization Lines are indicated in the String Basics book. 20 points each.

PERFORMANCES --- For more about the policies regarding attendance at performances, please read the next section. The performance schedule is on page 3 of this handbook and available on the class website.

- 35 points for being prepared for performance with instrument, 35 points for being prepared for performance with music, 30 points for contributing positively to all aspects of the performance. 100 points total for each performance.

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

TOP: **Solid white** shirt. Shoulders must be covered. Boys are encouraged to wear a golf shirt or button-down. Neckties are encouraged for boys.

BOTTOM: **Solid black** trousers or skirts (must be knee-length or longer). Avoid jeans if possible.

SHOES: Avoid sneakers if possible. Dress shoes are encouraged.

All other components of the school dress code must be followed. Students with inappropriate concert attire might not be permitted to perform with the group.

SEATING

Since this is primarily an educational experience for the students in class, seating decisions are not made the way professional orchestras do – ranking musicians solely based on playing skills. Instead, seating decisions are influenced by several factors that may include: student leadership skills, years of experience, playing skills, the musical needs of the section, and balance across the ensemble. The result is that the most skilled players will be distributed across the orchestra, and not simply fill the front rows. **Changes to the seating assignments may be made by the director at any time for any reason.**

ORCHESTRA CLUB

All students enrolled in the Orchestra class are members of the Orchestra Club. The club's purpose is to supplement the educational experiences of students in the orchestra class with extra-curricular opportunities for club members. Club officers will meet on the first Friday of each month at 3:30 at the Middle School. Fundraising may be a part of membership in the Orchestra Club. School rules regarding academic eligibility apply to all Orchestra Club events and meetings.

The orchestra director handles music and orchestra issues.

The Orchestra Club handles Orchestra Club issues with the approval of the Club Advisor.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Fingernails must be kept short at all times. It is impossible to play with long fingernails and maintain good posture, let alone play in tune. If a student comes to class with long nails, they will not be able to fully to participate in the class, and thus will lose the day's participation points.

KEYSTONE STRING FEST (available to students in grade 8 only)

Keystone String Fest is an annual event for interested students in 7th through 9th grade who are enrolled in their school's orchestra class and are interested in participating in an enriching and challenging musical experience. The event is organized by several area public and private school orchestra teachers who volunteer their time to make this event possible. In addition to experiencing a quality educational experience, this event may help students to prepare for the PMEA Festivals (tournaments) available to students in 10th through 12th grades.

The Bellefonte Area School District pays the student fees associated with this festival. Your only expenses will be to purchase a ticket to the culminating performance. A group picture and professional recording of the performance will be available for purchase if you choose.

Students are expected to learn all the festival music before the day of the festival. Students will be given the festival music with plenty of time to prepare. Students need to be able to perform all the notes, rhythms, dynamics, bowings and articulations printed in the music as accurately as possible, at the tempo (speed) indicated in the music before the day of the festival. **This will require significant home practice for your child.** In addition to their independent home practice, students are encouraged to attend the after-school rehearsals offered by Mrs. Renne. While these rehearsals are not mandatory, those who do not attend will likely find themselves underprepared at the festival. Students who are exceptionally underprepared could be affecting their future selection for events of this nature.

All BASD dress-code policies apply at the festival. Students are encouraged to wear their Bellefonte Orchestra t-shirts to the festival. Students should wear casual clothes (jeans, sneakers, etc.) to the festival. Since the students will be rehearsing for long hours on stage, they should consider dressing in thin layers in case they get warm under the stage lights. Students need to bring their performance clothing to the festival. Changing rooms will be available. Students will follow the Bellefonte High School Orchestra performance dress code.

Up to 5 students from each participating school can participate in an audition during the festival. The audition process is modeled after the PMEA Festival auditions to help them prepare for the competitions to come. Since only 5 students from our school can participate in the auditions, only the most prepared students will be offered this opportunity.

If you are thinking about applying, please only complete the application if you can commit to participating fully in the complete festival program. Students must stay at the festival through its duration, starting with registration and concluding with the formal performance.

GRADES 6 & 7 HOMEWORK CALENDAR

Due Date (Sundays)	SmartMusic Homework Assignment	Due Date (Mondays)	Workbook Homework Assignment
9/1	Exercises from String Basics Book 2, Page 4 (Grade 7 only)		
9/8	Page 5	9/9	10. More Rhythm Practice, Self-Evaluation – pages 4-5, 22 points
9/15	Page 6	9/16	16. More Pitch Names, 32 points
9/22	Page 7		
9/29	Page 8		
10/6	Page 9		
10/13	Page 10	10/14	37. More Pitch Names, 36 points
10/20	Page 11		
10/27	Page 12	10/28	43. More Half Steps and Whole Steps, 22 points
11/3	Page 13		
11/10	Page 14		
11/17	Page 15	11/18	63. More Rhythm Practice, 26 points
11/24	Page 16		
12/1	Page 17		
12/8	Page 18		
12/15	Page 19	12/16	79. More Rhythm Practice, Self-Evaluation – pages 18-19, 26 points
1/5	Page 22		
1/12	Page 23		
1/19	Page 24	1/21 (Tues.)	Self-Evaluation – pages 24-25, 8 points
1/26	Page 26		
2/2	Page 27		
2/9	Page 28		
2/16	Page 29		
2/23	Page 30		
3/1	Page 31		
3/8	Page 32		
3/15	Page 33	3/17 (Tues.)	133. More Whole Steps and Half Steps, 22 points
3/22	Page 34		
3/29	Page 35	3/30	Self-Evaluation – pages 34-35, 10 points
4/5	Page 36		
4/12	Page 37	4/13	151. More Rhythm Practice , 32 points
4/19	Page 38		
4/26	Page 39	4/27	157. More Rhythm Practice, Self-Evaluation – pages 38-39, 22 points
5/3	Page 40		
5/10	Page 41	5/11	170. More Terms and Symbols, 13 points
5/17	Page 42		
5/24	Page 43		
5/31	Page 44		
6/7	Page 45		

GRADE 8 HOMEWORK CALENDAR

Due Date (Sundays)	SmartMusic Homework Assignment	Due Date (Mondays)	Workbook Homework Assignment
9/1	Exercises from String Basics Book 3, Page 4		
9/8	Page 5		
9/15	Page 6	9/16	Counting Review: Eighth Notes, 24 points
9/22	Page 7		
9/29	Page 8	9/30	Counting with pick-ups and ties in 4/4 and 2/4, 35 points
10/6	Page 9	10/7	Counting with pick-ups and ties in $\frac{3}{4}$, 26 points
10/13	Page 10	10/14	Half Steps & Whole Steps I, 24 points
10/20	Page 11		
10/27	Page 12	10/28	More Rhythm Practice I, 16 points
11/3	Page 13	11/4	More Rhythm Practice II, Self-Evaluation - pages 12-13, 22 points
11/10	Page 14		
11/17	Page 15	11/18	More Rhythm Practice III, 18 points
11/24	Page 16		
12/1	Page 17	12/4 (Wed.)	More Rhythm Practice IV, 16 points
12/8	Page 18		
12/15	Page 19		
1/5	Page 20		
1/12	Page 21		
1/19	Page 22		
1/26	Page 23		
2/2	Page 24		
2/9	Page 25	2/10	More Rhythm Practice V, 28 points
2/16	Page 28		
2/23	Page 29	2/24	Counting in Slow 6/8, 24 points
3/1	Page 30		
3/8	Page 31	3/9	Counting in Fast 6/8, 24 points
3/15	Page 34	3/17 (Tues.)	More Rhythm Practice VI, 24 points
3/22	Page 35		
3/29	Page 36	3/30	Counting Review: Dotted Notes, 25 points
4/5	Page 37		
4/12	Page 38		
4/19	Page 39		
4/26	Page 40		
5/3	Page 41		
5/10	Page 42	5/11	Counting Review, 28 points
5/17	Page 43	5/18	Self-Evaluation - pages 42-43, 6 points
5/24	Page 44	5/26 (Tues.)	End Of Year Reflection, 6 points

PRIOR COMMITMENT FORM

If a student has a conflict that was planned before the required rehearsal or performance is announced, the parent must communicate this conflict in writing to the director. Established religious holiday are excused but should be communicated by the parent using the Prior Commitment Form.

Name of Student _____

This form is due **September 15** for conflicts with any event announced in August on the handbook calendar. For conflicts with events added later to the performance calendar, parents have 10 days to submit this form notify the director of the conflict.

Today's Date: _____

Date, Time, and Name of the event the student cannot attend:

Please describe the reason (wedding, athletic event, etc.) for the conflict and why the student cannot attend:

If this event is excused, the student may be required to make up his or her grade by submitting a recording before the date of the missed event. Students must video record themselves performing all of the music from the event that will be missed. For every day the recording is late, 10% will be deducted from the student's grade.

Student Signature _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature _____ Date: _____

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

The key to a successful program is the support of staff, students and especially, the parents. If you can be of assistance in any of the following areas, please volunteer your time and talents. There is nothing more rewarding than being an active member of a fine organization, and your involvement speaks volumes about how you value the choices your child makes. Check areas of interest below, and I will be getting in touch with you!

Organize Help Out

- _____ **Hospitality:** Social activities, refreshments after performances, etc.
- _____ **Newsletter:** Help compile the monthly newsletter
- _____ **Field Trip:** Help plan trips, chaperone students
- _____ **Fundraising:** Help organize fundraiser, work events

SPECIAL SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Check one or more of the areas where you can assist.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| _____ Legal advisors | _____ Nurse | _____ Other: (use space below) |
| _____ Sound equipment | _____ CPA | |
| _____ Audio / visual | _____ Graphics / art | |
| _____ Notary public | _____ Crafts | |
| _____ Computers | _____ Carpentry | |

(Name) _____ Job description _____

(Name) _____ Job description _____

Please list any other skills you believe will be helpful to the orchestra:

How much time can you help?

_____ 1-2 hours a year _____ 1-2 hours a month _____ 1-2 hours a week

I can help more in the months of _____.

_____ Yes, I can be on hand (on occasion) to help out during the school day.

_____ Yes, I can be on hand (on occasion) to help out after the school day.

STUDENT & PARENT SIGNATURE PAGE

Due: September 15

Please read the handbook and sign below to indicate your understanding and support of the classroom system. Parents, please initial to confirm that your child has the required supplies for class. Some supplies may be available for loan if you are unable to purchase them at this time. Please contact Mrs. Renne for more information.

Required Materials

6th and 7th Grade - String Basics Book 2, 8th Grade - String Basics Book 3 (Books are instrument specific) About \$10

Instrument and bow of good quality from a reputable instrument vendor. No unusual colored instruments.

Name tag attached to your instrument case. Student's name must be on name tag.

Shoulder Rest for violin and violas. Student's name must be on shoulder rest.

Endpin Rest for cellos and basses. Student's name must be on endpin rest.

Rosin with student's name. Basses must use bass rosin.

Cotton cloth to clean strings after each use

Pencil - an absolute MUST for every class

Music Stand for home practice

Highly Recommended Materials

Chromebook, Computer or i-pad with internet connection for SmartMusic assignments

Headphones for SmartMusic assignments

Digital tuner or app on a smartphone

Parent/Guardian Name

Parent phone

Student school e-mail

Parent/Guardian signature

Date

Parent email (use capital letters only)

Student signature

Date