***Bennett’s Mill Middle School Orchestra Handbook***

***Purpose***

The purpose of the Bennett’s Mill Middle School Orchestra is to impart the appreciation of music to all of its members through successful study and performance. Students are given the opportunity to acquire the skills needed for progression into a high school orchestra program. It is the goal of the orchestra program to develop lifelong advocates of music.

Orchestra has a unique place in the school curriculum. While it is an academic class in the sense of having a definite curriculum and expected competencies, there are many aspects of orchestra membership that require participation outside of the normal school day. Such activities are considered to be an extension of the classroom. The success of the orchestra program depends on **each** orchestra memberperforming **their** responsibilities to the group. Orchestra is a “team sport.”

***Attitude, Effort and Personal Character***

Attitude, character, and persistence are the most important factors in determining how successful a young musician will be. Every orchestra member has an obligation to the other orchestra members, the school, and most importantly to themselves to strive to be the very best that they can be. The high expectations of the orchestra program enable the student to achieve more than they think is possible. Students are expected to **always** act like ladies or gentlemen. We all have to live with the reputation that we make for ourselves. All students should strive to make a positive reputation for the orchestra concerning their musical quality, attitude, and conduct both in and out of the orchestra class.

**General Information and Expectations**

##### Grading Policy

Final numeric averages will be determined using the following formula:

* **Performances (25%**) –The success or failure of each performance depends upon the hard work, cooperation and dedication of our members, therefore, our **concert performances are mandatory**. I will provide the schedule of performances at the beginning of the year. Please see the “Fine Arts Attendance Policy” for clarification.
* **Quizzes (30%)** - Written and playing tests will be given. A test grade will be given for each performance. Unexcused absences will result in a test grade of zero.
* **Participation (40%)** – Participation includes bringing class supplies, proper behavior, cooperation, and following the orchestra rehearsal procedures.
* **Practice Charts (5%)** – Please record your practice weekly on the practice sheets that will be provided. Total the points for the week and turn in EVERY Friday. This is your homework for orchestra. Practice charts without parent signatures will NOT be accepted. I will accept a late practice chart for ONE WEEK after the due date only.

100 min. 100

90-99 min. 95

80-89 min. 90

70-79 min. 85

30-69 min. 80

1-29 min. 75

0 min. 0

110 min. 110 (extra credit)

***Fine Arts Attendance Policy***

Music has a unique place in the school curriculum. While it is academic in the sense of having a definite curriculum and expected competencies, there are many aspects of musical ensemble that require participation outside of the normal school day. Such activities are considered to be an extension of the classroom. Much like a sport, the success of a music program is contingent upon eachmemberperforming their responsibilities to the group (both in the classroom and beyond).

Our orchestra calendar has almost every event listed for the entire school year. Students are expected to participate in all performances and rehearsals for their musical ensemble unless excused by the director. Known conflicts should be communicated via E-mail, note, or phone call as soon as the conflict is realized. This will open a dialog in between the parent and teacher that, in most cases, will allow us to resolve the conflict. If no resolution can be found after the steps above have been taken, an administrator may be consulted.

Absences are serious and are either excused or unexcused. Examples of ***excused*** absences are personal illness (with a doctor’s note), a serious illness in the family, a death in the family, and a religious conflict (communicated in writing when the in-class preparation begins for the event). Students with an ***excused*** absence will be given an alternative assignment equal to the time and effort required for the event missed.

* An ***unexcused*** absence from a ***regular*** ***rehearsal*** will result in a daily grade of zero. Multiple absences from regular rehearsals may result in the student being removed from an upcoming performance. Regular rehearsals are scheduled practices outside of the normal school day such as mornings or afternoons.
* An unexcused absence from a ***dress rehearsal*** or ***clinic*** will result in a daily grade of zero and possible removal from the upcoming performance at the discretion of the director. Dress rehearsals are the final rehearsal prior to a performance. Clinics are extended rehearsals that usually involve a guest conductor and are held in the afternoon or on a Saturday.
* An ***unexcused*** absence from a ***performance*** will result in a test grade of zero and a possible change in the student’s orchestra class at the discretion of the director. Students with an ***unexcused*** absence may become ineligible for field trips and other ensemble privileges.

If an absence occurs from a rehearsal or performance that has not been pre-arranged, it is the responsibility of the student and parent to submit a ***written excuse*** to the director within ***48 hours*** of the student’s return to school or the absence will be considered ***unexcused***.

*Class Materials*

1. Instrument – A limited number of instruments are available to rent from the school. If you are interested in purchasing an instrument, please contact me for recommendations.
2. Rosin – Every student must purchase their own rosin.
3. Pencil
4. Extra set of strings in your case (except for cello/bass players)
5. Violin/Viola Players – Shoulder rest
6. Cello/Bass Players – Rock stop or strap
7. Hard Working Attitude!
8. Soft cleaning cloth
9. Metronomes/tuners and folding music stands for home practice sessions

*Orchestra Class Procedures*

Beginning of Class:

1. Come into class on time, quickly and quietly.
2. Set up your chair and stand if nec
3. Get your instrument and music folder
4. Unpack your instrument and place the empty case back on the storage racks
5. Rosin your bow
6. Silently practice the material covered in the last class until the instructor is ready to begin

End of Class:

1. Wipe of the stick of the bow and your strings with the cleaning cloth
2. Loosen the bow and put it in the case
3. Place the instrument securely in the case
4. Fold the cleaning cloth and place it over the strings (Vln./Vla.)
5. Close the case and latch it
6. Put the music binder, instrument and stand away
7. Wait to be dismissed by the instructor

*Orchestra Rules/Expectations*

1. Come to class prepared and on time. Instrument, music, pencil and accessories (rosin, soft cloth, shoulder rest, rock stop) must be in class every day.
2. Please show the utmost respect for the podium. Whenever anyone is on the podium, your attention is required. There should be NO talking. Failure to show respect will result in disciplinary consequences.
3. Follow directions the FIRST time they are given.
4. If it does not belong to you, don’t touch it! This includes all instruments including the piano.
5. NO gum, food, candy or drinks in the Orchestra room.
6. Keep up with your music. Each student will receive a copy of all music to be rehearsed. Please be sure to put your name on each piece of music, and place it in your binder.
7. Follow all school rules.
8. Please give your parents all correspondence that is sent home.

*Consequences*

1. Verbal warning.
2. Note in agenda, to be signed by parent and returned to teacher.
3. Call to parent.
4. Teacher detention.
5. Office referral

*Care of Instrument*

String instruments are delicate and subject to such influences as temperature, humidity, and careless handling. The following suggestions are offered for their care:

1. Never touch the bow hair with your hands. There should also be limited touching of the main body of the instrument. The oil from your fingers can ruin these parts. If fingerprints do get on the wood of the instrument, “shine” them off with a very soft cloth.
2. Keep the rosin wiped clean from the top of the instrument and strings with a soft cloth.
3. Always be sure the instrument is clean before putting it away.
4. Always loosen the bow after use. Tighten the bow the same number of turns when preparing to play.
5. The soundpost inside your instrument may fall down. If this happens, please let me know immediately or take it to a string repairman.
6. Check the bridge weekly to make sure it is standing straight and not “leaning.”
7. Check the fine tuners weekly to make sure they are not digging into the wood.
8. The instrument and bow should be kept in the case and away from “curious hands” when not in use.
9. Do not leave the instrument in the car. Extreme hot temperatures will blister the varnish and cause the glue to fail.
10. Do not glue any part of the instrument for any reason.
11. Please do not attempt any home repairs.
12. Long fingernails not only make the instrument impossible to play well, but can put permanent scratches in the wood. Please keep your fingernails SHORT.

*Instrument Repairs*

Never attempt home repairs! Stringed instruments contain many delicate parts that can be easily damaged. If a problem occurs, bring the instrument to me and I will evaluate it for you. Many seemingly MAJOR problems are not difficult for a qualified person to repair. Some of the issues I can fix for you are:

1. A broken string – please keep an extra set of strings in the case and I will teach you how to change the string.
2. A fallen bridge – the bridge is a small wooden piece that holds the bridge up. It is NOT glued in place.
3. Broken tailpiece adjuster – buy a replacement for the correct size of the instrument and I will install it.
4. Broken fine tuner

NEVER try to fix a stringed instrument with glue you have in your home or workshop. The glue used in stringed instrument construction is intended to “break away” under stress so the wood is not damaged, keeping the repair relatively minor. Using the wrong glue will greatly increase repair bills. If you have a school-owned instrument, it MUST be returned to school to be repaired by a district selected repairman. In all cases, please call me if you have any questions about what to do, and I will be happy to assist you.

*Orchestra Field Trips*

In accordance with county policy, orchestra field trips are considered a ***privilege***. Therefore, students may be excluded from participation as outlined in the school and county handbooks. In addition, students who choose to misbehave in orchestra class or at orchestral events may become ineligible. Since performing is an integral part of orchestra, all students should remain eligible. If a student becomes ineligible for field trips, placement in an advanced class or performing group may not be possible. The director will decide whether or not a student regains admission into an advanced class or performing group if eligibility is lost due to reasons of discipline.

***Fund Raising***

With every successful music program, fund raising is a necessity. In order to minimize the number of fundraisers needed, every orchestra member is expected to participate through either participation or donation. Details for each fundraising activity will be distributed at a later date.

*Uniforms*

The uniform(s) required for orchestra is described below. The parts of the uniform that are included in the *Activity Fee* include the following:

* BMMS Polo Shirt (ALL students)
* BMMS Formal Uniform (7th and 8th ONLY; rented from the school).

***Explanation of Fees***

Each student will be expected to pay for the known expenses that will be incurred during the school year. While this fee will not cover all of the costs associated with the BMMS Orchestra for the entire school year, it will cover the majority. Items included are:

* **Binder**: **($5.00)**

Students will be issued a binder, sheet protectors and pencils to use for orchestra. This enables the orchestra to look uniform while providing your child with adequate storage for their music and method book. The official binder **must** be used and must remain ***free of*** ***decorations, writings, damage, etc***. Lost or defaced binders must be replaced (cost of $5.00). Only the official binder may be used.

* **Formal Uniform Rental Fee**: **($15.00)**

7/8th Grade Students ONLY

* **Orchestra Polo Shirt**: **($15.00)**

**All students will need a Polo shirt**. If a student has the BMMS orchestra polo already, they do not need to pay this fee.

**School Instrument Usage**

The annual rental usage fee for school instruments is **$50**, and goes to defer some of the cost of repairs/upkeep on the instruments. Any student who uses a school instrument will be responsible for this fee (cello and bass players). This is a **school district policy**. In the past, the rental fee has been included in the total cost, so this may seem different to some of you.

In addition, the school has a **limited** number of violins and violas for students to rent. These instruments are reserved for students who have financial difficulties in renting and/or purchasing instruments from music stores. Annual rental fee and usage contract must be filled out and on file before an instrument is assigned to a student.

***Payment of Fees***

The orchestra will accept cash, checks or money orders (made out to BMMS). All payments should be sealed in an envelope with the students’ first/last names clearly written on the envelope. All payments should be given to Mrs. Davis. Due to bank charges, there will be a $25.00 penalty for all returned checks. Re-payment for returned checks and the penalty charges will need to be made by money order or cash. If a person has more than one check returned, we will no longer be able to accept their checks.

*Orchestra Class Change Policy*

Orchestra is a year long course. Schedule changes will only be permitted according to the following policy and must have the approval of the *assistant principal.*

* Teacher request for orchestra schedule change for reasons such as disruption, destruction, or lack of work.
* Parent requests for a orchestra schedule change

***The parent should contact the* orchestradirector *to discuss the reasons for the change***. This may be done in writing or by phone call. The director will then contact the office to make any changes agreed upon. *P****arents and students need to be aware that if a student drops out, they will not be put back into orchestra without orchestra director’s approval***.