

University High School Orchestra Handbook 2008-2009

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Welcome to the University High School Orchestra! We are glad you are joining us this year. Below you will find a supply list and information about what you can expect in orchestra this year.

First of all, please make sure your instrument is in good shape when you come to orchestra. It is your responsibility to keep it repaired and adjusted so you can sound your best. Over time it is common for an instrument to go out of adjustment or to need minor repairs. A badly adjusted instrument is more difficult to play and interferes with the pleasure of making music. If your instrument has a crack or any damage that is beyond superficial in nature or it just doesn't play "right," it is important to get it repaired. General maintenance requirements:

- Replace strings at least once a year. Have spare strings on hand. Strings can be stale or "false" without being visibly broken. Tone and intonation can be ruined by false strings.
- Be sure bow hairs are clean and full. If not, get your bow re-haired. If they are dirty, worn out, or too sparse they will not grab the string well no matter how much rosin you use.
- If you need a second opinion on a repair or a purchase, or just have questions about the orchestra program. Please don't hesitate to call me.

Required Supplies for Class:

- Rosin
- Mute
- Spare strings
- Fine Tuners on all strings where practical. (Not all strings work well with fine tuners, but most do, and life (tuning) is easier with this inexpensive addition.)
- "*Essentials for Strings*", by Anderson. This is a scale book we use in class. **You need your own copy.**

Recommended Additional Supplies, Etc.:

- Fine Tuners on all strings where practical. Not all strings work well with fine tuners, but most do, and tuning, on which you are occasionally graded, is easier with this inexpensive addition.
- A Tuner and metronome- an electronic tuner combined with a metronome is a very valuable tool for musicians. The price is widely variable, but you should be able to find one for under \$30.00. I give assignments with metronome measured tempo requirements, so it is important to have one.
- A Case humidifier- this is a simple device that fits inside the case, and can help maintain the humidity level when the instrument is in its case. This is very important for the upkeep of the instrument, particularly in the winter, when the air gets very dry and tends to cause string breakage and instrument cracks.
- Homeowner's insurance policy that includes special coverage for the instrument. This is typically inexpensive and will cover major accidental damage.

All students are invited to pick up a copy of the audition music for the Illinois Music Educator's Association (IMEA) District Festival this fall. Auditions are October 13th. Get started practicing the music now, if you haven't already. Also required for IMEA auditions are 3 octave scales. The selection this year is the last movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony #4. I have parts and scale sheets available for interested students. If you are not working on the music with a private teacher, you need to schedule lessons with me if you want to audition.

All Music Parents: We will have a Music Department **informational meeting for music parents at U-High on August 25th at 7pm.** We will discuss policies, trips (we go to Toronto this year), and other relevant information at that time. Please plan to attend. I look forward to meeting parents, and working with students in orchestra.

Orchestra Schedule for School Year 2008-2009

August 21	Pizza Sale Fundraiser starts
August 25 - 7pm	Music Parent Meeting- Stroud Auditorium
August 28	Signed parental <i>Contact Info/Volunteer Form</i> from Orchestra Handbook due.
Sept 4	Pizza Orders Due. No late orders.
Sept 22	Pizzas Delivered. Pick up orders by 4pm
Sept. 28	String Music Education Day sponsored by ISU
Sept 30 - 7pm	Fall Concert (Orchestra and Chorus), <u>Call Time TBA.</u>
Oct. 1	IMEA Music Audition <u>workshop</u> at Milliken, 9am-4pm.
Oct. 3	Last day to petition for non-performing Community Service assignment.
October TBA	Madrigal Strings: rehearsal times determined by participants' schedules. Community Service credit offered. Participation is optional.
October 13, 8am-noon	IMEA District Festival auditions at BHS
Nov. 9	ISU Viola Day at ISU- all violists and interested violinists
Nov. TBA	Butter Braid fundraiser begins
Nov 22 - 8am-6pm	IMEA District Festival (ISU) (auditions 10/13/08)
Nov. 29 - 9am-1pm	Madrigal Strings Dress Rehearsal at UHS(approx. times)
Nov. 30 -11:30am-9pm)	Madrigal Performances at The Chateau. (There will be two performances that day. Times are approximate.)
Dec. 1 - 4:00 pm	Madrigal call time at The Chateau for pictures and evening performance.
Dec. 3	Butter Braid orders due- no late orders.
December 11 - 7pm	Holiday Concert Orchestra/Band (only) <u>Call time TBA.</u>
December, TBA	Butter Braid Delivery (to be picked up by 4pm)
December 18	Orchestra Final Exam (in class)
January 29-31	All-State Festival and Conference/Peoria (Auditions 10/13)
Feb (early) TBA	Musical rehearsals start, schedule TBA
February 19 - 7pm	Winter Concert, <u>Call Time TBA.</u>
March 7, 8am-noon	IHSA Solo and Ensemble Festival' Please note, if you plan to travel, that the festival falls on the first day of UHS Spring Break. Participation is optional.
March 31- April 5	Orchestra/Chorus trip to Toronto
April 20	Tech Week starts for Spring Musical, Times TBA
April 24, 25 - 7pm	Spring Musical Performances (Call Times 6-10pm)
April 26-2pm	Last Spring Musical performance and tear down.
May 5 - 7pm	Orchestra Concert, <u>Call Time 5pm.</u>
May 20	Orchestra Chamber Ensembles Performance Final (in class.)

Grading Policy:

The biggest portion of your final grade in orchestra is your “Daily Grade.” This encompasses all the behaviors that are compatible with creating a *positive* and *productive* learning environment for the most students.

Daily Grade of 3 points.*

- Be on time to class. **Class starts at 2. You need to be in the classroom at that time.** Be in your seats and already pre-tuned when the A is given by the Concertmaster of the orchestra.
- Bring your own orchestra folder and supplies: music, rosin, pencil, instrument homework as required.
- Maintain your instrument and bow in good working order. This includes changing strings when they are bad (or broken), replacing dirty or worn-out bow hair, replacing warped bridges, and being sure the instrument is comfortably playable.
- Come prepared and ready to learn. You are responsible for the material, as rehearsed, in class. You need to *mark* and *remember* what we’ve practiced.
- *Learn to discern* when socializing or discussing the music is appropriate versus when it is interfering with the rehearsal. I try to run a fast paced rehearsal. If your talking is distracting me or interfering with the pace I will notice and you will lose 1 to 3 of your daily points. I *try* to be fair in what I notice, but frankly, the way it works is, if you distract me, I will take points, if you don’t, I won’t.
- Do not use your cell phone for anything during class.
- Keep your finger nails short. String instruments can not be played properly with long nails. Those interested in artificial nails need to be particularly aware of this policy. If you can’t play with good position, intonation and vibrato due to nails, you will be referred to Mr. Wilder and you will have to get them removed. Soccer players can’t wear high heels in a game, and string players can’t have long nails.
- Be a good leader and/or section player. Each position in the orchestra has attached responsibilities. Inside players are responsible for page turns, and marking music. Outside players put stands away, and help notice what markings need to be made.
- Cooperate with your stand partner, set a good example, start and stop on cue, listen well, and our rehearsals can be fun and productive.
- Keep a good attitude. You have the power to improve or ruin someone’s day. Take responsibility for the attitude you bring to class. We’re in this together.
- If, for some reason, legit or not, you are late to class, quietly hand me your pass and join the rehearsal as inconspicuously as possible. The point is to interfere as little as possible with the learning of others.
- Store your music folder in the rack except when you take it home to practice. If you are absent from school, we still need the folder for your stand.
- If you have a question that regards your personal circumstances or an issue that is unlikely to involve others, *or*, if you need replacement music or handouts, save that question or request for the end of class or see me outside class time, *if possible* (Obviously you need to have the music being rehearsed.) Issues that are personal are best addressed after class or during office hours when my attention and energy can be given to you fully.

****IMPORTANT:*** If you are absent for any reason, you will be given a maximum of 2 out of 3 Daily Grade points for that day. (If you have an unexcused absence, you will get 0 points that day.) This means you need to do something to *earn* your points if you miss class for any reason.

To earn points, you have several options. See “Extra credit.” *Your options are negotiable.* For example, you can schedule a lesson with Ms. Ehrlich, do theory homework, perform, tutor with a classmate on your music, volunteer for classroom service, etc. There are many ways to get your points. But if you miss all or even part of a rehearsal, be aware that you will have 0 to 2 points for that day. *It will be your responsibility to be sure to earn the points you need to maintain the grade you want if your absences have created a problem. Be sure to discuss how you will do that with me to be sure I will give credit.*

The rest of your grade comes from concerts, playing tests, assignments, Community Service, and auditions. **All orchestra performances are required.** They are our major exams, in orchestra, and our major rewards as well. There is a possible two letter deduction in the grade for any unexcused absence from a performance. Absences must be requested and approved in advance. Birthdays, work, homework, and out of town parents, are examples of **unacceptable** excuses. Please be sure to validate any excuse with Ms Ehrlich *in advance*. A two-letter grade deduction may seem severe, but we rely on each player in orchestra. Unanticipated absences hurt everyone.

Community Service Requirement: Students who share their music making gain greater satisfaction, motivation, and appreciation of their musical skills. One time per semester students will be required to be involved in one performance related, volunteer *community service* event. **Extra curricular school events are included**, such as Madrigals, coached chamber music ensembles, and the school musical. Please note that regular concerts are not included in this requirement although you could perform the same music elsewhere.) *This does not include* playing in the living room for Grandma- although that is a wonderful thing to do! *It would include* going to a Senior Citizen event or location and performing Christmas Carols, for example. The medical facilities in town, Westminster Village, your church, the Farmer’s Market, Barnes and Noble, nursing homes, preschools, etc, are all possible venues. I welcome your suggestions. Be sure that your performance is cleared for credit with Ms Ehrlich *in advance*. You are encouraged to perform with your classmates but you are *not* required to perform with U-High students. If students do more than one CS performance per semester, they may earn extra credit. *IF Community Service seems really scary to you, a few people may opt to do community service for the orchestra. You may petition to arrange this with Ms Ehrlich by Oct. 3rd. Together, we, or I will need to come up with a way for you to contribute to the orchestra in a service capacity beyond performing.*

Concert Attire: For most concerts we will wear “**Concert Black**” Uniformity of look is part of the beauty and tradition of an orchestra. I try not to be too stodgy about this, but the visual effect is very special when there is relative uniformity. This translates into longer black slacks or skirts- well over the knee when seated, especially for cellists, black top/shirt for boys, black tie (optional,) or black jacket with white shirt and black tie, black

blouses for girls. NO bare midriffs, please. Black or dark socks, and black shoes are required. The goal is for our attention, and that of the audience, to be drawn toward the artistry of our performance and the music itself. ☺

Extra Credit and Challenging Opportunities

The following are some of the activities available to you as an orchestra member. All are worth extra credit because of the additional time commitment, challenge, and musical growth involved. You may earn **up to 10%** of your quarterly grade via extra credit.

Illinois Music Educators Association Festival, better known as **IMEA**, is a three-tiered event. The first is the audition for the District Festival on October 13th. The music is very exciting, and also very challenging. A successful audition is a real achievement. All auditions completed are worth extra credit, regardless of the outcome. It is an excellent and exciting challenge. The difficulty level of the music is quite high. Thorough preparation is required. The music is available from me now.

After a successful audition, students are given a seat and ranking in the District Festival Orchestra. Students spend a day rehearsing the music with a well-respected guest conductor, and perform that afternoon in Braden auditorium. The festival takes place on November 22 this year.

The third tier of IMEA's offerings is the **All-State Festival Jan 29-31.** It is among the top honors for high school musicians nationwide. If you are seated in the front two stands (or so- this varies a little) at the district festival, and you are at least a Sophomore in high school, you may be selected to go to All-State in Peoria at the end of January. This three-day event is paid for by the school, and includes being excused from two days of school, and being put up in a Peoria hotel! Students audition and participate in the Festival and Honor's orchestras based upon the results of their auditions. At this festival, students enjoy the opportunity to work with the most accomplished of their musical peers in the state. The conductors are always excellent. The festival culminates with a performance at the Peoria Civic Center.

Madrigal Dinners – In this annual event, all the branches of U-High's music department, vocalists, band members, and orchestra strings join together in a musical performance. These performances are festive, holiday oriented, and fun. Ensembles from orchestra and band provide background music to the madrigal singers. See the schedule for performance dates. Rehearsals start roughly 6 weeks before the event.

Solo and Ensemble Recital and Festival: This festival is an event sponsored by IHSA. Students perform solos and chamber music for judges, and compete for ratings. Preparation for this event and helpful comments from the judges make this a strong learning experience for students. We provide an opportunity for students to be prepared to their best ability by offering a recital performance at UHS a few days prior to the contest. If planning to participate, please note that it falls on the first day of our Spring Break this year.

Pit Orchestra- Each year, UHS puts on a school musical. This is another wonderful collaborative project for students to be involved in. The Pit orchestra is a big part of this event. Rehearsals start about 8 weeks before the performances. The week of the

performances is called **Tech Week**, and students need to plan to be at UHS for rehearsals from Sunday to Sunday for evening rehearsals and performances running roughly from 5:30 to possibly 10pm except for the afternoon performance on the final Sunday. There are 3 performances.

Youth Symphonies- Students at U-High are highly encouraged to be involved in a community orchestra. We have had many students play in the Bloomington Normal Youth Symphony (BNYS,) which rehearses Monday nights right in our own classroom, in the Central Illinois Symphony (CIYS,) which rehearses in Morton, and even in the Chicago Youth Symphonies (CYS). I have more information about these special orchestras if you are interested. These orchestras all provide additional musical challenges and rewards to young musicians. Check these websites to learn more: www.bnys.com, and: www.ciys.org. BNYS is especially interested in recruiting more violinists. Contact conductor, Deanne Bryant, to arrange for an audition in her home at: 452-9509

Private Lessons: Weekly private lessons are an undeniable advantage for all students. As a former studio teacher myself, I personally consider them necessary for a balanced musical education. Large class instruction has strengths and limitations. Private lessons can fill the gaps and inspire musical and technical development that just can't be adequately addressed in a large class setting. Tutoring of this kind gives your child an advantage, and helps the overall level of the orchestra tremendously. There is a significant correlation between the quality of any orchestra and the number of students that study privately. At U-High we understand not everyone can or wants to study privately, but it is highly encouraged.

Outside Performances- you will get extra credit for any performance on your string instrument done outside of class. I just need written verification of your performance.

Seat Rotation: We rotate seating in orchestra in an attempt to encourage the development of both leadership and section playing skills in *all* students. All students will be sitting in the front and the back stands on a regular basis. If you are in the front stand, you have additional fun, but also additional responsibilities. We will discuss this in class further. Be as prepared as you can be, be a good leader, and don't try to evade your turn up front. Be the best leader you can be. We all are working on our leadership skills all the time. The best way to learn is by doing, so don't be afraid. We learn together.

Program Notes and Program Design: For students looking for a different way to earn extra credit, there is the option to submit program notes and cover designs for our concerts. Are you artistic, or especially interested in history? See me, and we can discuss a way for you to have something included in the concert programs.

Sorry for the length of this document. I know it's a lot of information and *my* tendency as a parent would be to just skim it...but I ask *especially* that you be sure to read and understand the grading portion. I will go over this entire document with your student in class, but I find it helps if parents know the expectations clearly too. Thank you for your time! **Please fill out and return the form included on the next page.** I hope I have covered most concerns and questions. I really look forward to the year working together with students. Questions or comments? Feel free to contact me at mehrli@ilstu.edu, or 438-7342.

Margot Ehrlich

P.S. Reminder: The form is worth credit. It is due, signed, by August 29th.
Thank you.

Parent and Student Contact Info/Volunteers for the UHS Orchestra

Student Name: _____ Student E-mail: _____
Student Birthdate: _____ dd/mm/yy
Parent Names: _____
Best phone# for Parent A: _____ Best times to call: _____
E-mail: _____
Best phone# for Parent B: _____ Best time to call: _____ E-mail: _____

_____ We (student and parent) have read and understand the Orchestra Policies put forth in the attached handbook.

Volunteers:

We need and thrive on parental involvement at U-High. Are you wondering "How can I help?, Here are just some of the ways☺ Please fill out and return the following form with your student. Boosters need these.

Please check any activities that you are able to help with. Please check as many as possible, keeping in mind that this does not commit you to the activity. It simply tells us you are available. We will call to confirm volunteers and will try to use as many different parents as possible! Thank you for sharing your time and energy!

_____ Take student pictures for Booster Buttons. (Digital camera provided.) 2pm ,during class time, in September, on a date that works for you.

_____ Help manage or organize student Community Service performances.

(I encourage students to perform in our community. By doing this they learn how others value their skills, and they also give something to the community. Can you help find places students would enjoy playing? This job requires following through with inquiries, and reminding students of upcoming performances, follow-up, etc. I will help too!)

Help with reception after concert Dec. 11:

_____ Contribute food _____ Serve
_____ Set-up _____ Clean-up

Help with reception after concert May 5:

- Contribute food Serve
 Set-up Clean-up

Help with Fund-raisers:

Pizza Sale:

- Tally orders September 4, 2pm
 Distribute orders for student pick-up (Sept. 22, 2pm)

Butter Braids:

- Tally orders (November TBA, 2pm)
 Divide and distribute delivery for student pick-up (Dec TBA time: 12:00-4:30) You don't need to come for the whole time.

_____ (List times you would be available.)

Bedding Plants (exact dates TBA)

- Tally orders (March/April, weekday at 2pm)
 Unload and Distribute orders (May, weekday, 12-4:30 pm)

_____ Help telephone parent volunteers (to organize fundraising help, receptions, performances, treat bags)

_____ Piano accompanist for IHSA Solo and Ensemble contest on March 7.

_____ Piano accompanist for concerts

_____ Video or digital taping of concerts

_____ Administration heads up (support team.) We need to be proactive in our support and promotion of the Arts.

_____ Other (Please elaborate) Are you a refined banjo player? Are there any harpists out there, or a closet accordion player? Any other way you can help? _____

_____ Chaperone our trip to Toronto April 1-5 (Sorry, but chaperones pay full fare.)

Signature of Parent : _____

Student Signature: _____

Thank you!