



Jenison Junior High School Orchestra Handbook 2011-2012

Carol Johnson, Dan Scott, Directors
Joe Oprea, Assistant to the Directors
Steven Brook, Artist-In-Residence



Dear Junior High Orchestra Students and Parents,

Hello and welcome to another exciting year with the Jenison Orchestras! This year promises to be another outstanding one with all **128** of our wonderful Junior High Orchestra students! We are looking forward to a great year of learning, fun, and fantastic performances!

This handbook gives you all the information you will need for the school year. Read through it and make sure you contact Mrs. Johnson with any questions you may have. Please pay special attention to the year's schedule of events in this handbook. It contains all of the year's orchestra events for all JH Orchestra students. We suggest that you find a safe place to keep this handbook at your home, so you can refer to it throughout the year. For your convenience, this handbook is now also posted online on our new website (www.JenisonOrchestras.org). Please bookmark the site and check back often, as there will be up-to-date announcements and reminders posted often.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please don't hesitate to contact any of us, and we will return your message as soon as possible. If it is convenient for you, all directors are also available by email. We are very excited that you are joining us for another great year!

Sincerely,

Carol Johnson
(616) 667-3266
cjohnson@jpsonline.org

Dan Scott
(616) 667-3504
dscott@jpsonline.org

General Expectations in Orchestra Class

Be Prompt - Be in the classroom by the time the bell rings, and in your seat one minute after the bell rings. When the director steps on the podium, it is time for the rehearsal to start. At this time, you should be fully prepared to begin the day's rehearsal. (Instrument assembled, bow rosined, music out, pencil out, etc.)

Be Prepared - Have everything you need with you at every rehearsal. (Instrument, rosin, music, pencil, cloth, etc.)

Be Neat - Keep the room picked up, keep your instrument maintained, and have your music marked correctly in pencil.

Be Alert - Check the board at the beginning of class for any announcements. Pay attention to what is happening in class at all times, even if you are not playing. Also, be aware of any deadlines that may be approaching (practice records, permission slips, order forms, playing tests, etc.)

Be Flexible - Things will not always go as planned, so be willing to compromise for the good of the group.

Be Responsible - Set goals for yourself and work toward those goals. Do what you are expected to do, and help everyone else to do the same.

Be Willing to Work - In order to have a successful orchestra, every member must make individual efforts and be self-motivated. It is important that each member of the orchestra practice and learn their own parts, so that the group can reach its full potential.

Use Time Wisely - Plan to come directly to the orchestra room so you will be ready to play when class begins. If the director is rehearsing another section of the orchestra, quietly use that time to check fingerings, rhythms, or listen carefully. Never waste time.

Be Respectful - Treat the organization, the facilities, the music, and the people you are around as you would wish you and your property to be treated. To earn respect for yourself, it is important to be respectful of others, such as teachers, substitutes, chaperones, and your fellow classmates.

Practice Guidelines for Orchestra

Practicing individually at home is an important and necessary way to improve at playing an instrument. However, some students (and parents) are unsure exactly what should happen during that practice time. Here are some helpful suggestions from Mrs. Johnson to make sure practice time is useful and productive at your house!

1. Set up a designated place to practice in your house.

A room with a door works well for practicing, both for sound-dampening reasons, and for getting rid of distractions while practicing. It's best if a student has a music stand to use, but pinning the music to a bulletin board (or taping it to a door or wall) will work too! (Folding music stands are available at local music stores, or from Mrs. Johnson for around \$15, if you'd like to purchase one.)

2. Try to spread out your practice sessions.

The current practice requirement for full credit is 120 minutes per week. (Obviously, fewer minutes per week is worth partial credit.) It's up to you when you get those minutes done, but it's more effective (and less painful) to spread out the time. You will learn more and be a better player if you practice for 20 minutes on six different days, than if you cram in two hours on Sunday night. ☺

3. Make sure you're always using correct posture when practicing.

Sit or stand up tall, hold the instrument up correctly, and maintain a good bow hold ALWAYS! You've heard the phrase "Practice makes perfect," right? Well, it's a lie. The truth is that "Practice makes permanent." If you always practice with bad posture, then you won't be able to play with good posture, and your musical potential will suffer. If it helps, put a small stuffed animal next to you or on your stand while you practice, and pretend he's your teacher. Whenever you look at that stuffed animal, pretend that he's reminding you to check your posture and bow hand!

4. Don't just play straight through the music.

It's ok to play through each piece once or twice when you practice, but your main job is to break it down into smaller parts. Think about which sections we've been working on in class, and work on being able to play those sections perfectly. You should be practicing the challenging spots more than the easy spots. This is the only way to improve, and be a better orchestra team member. The best plan is to break down the music into smaller, more manageable 'chunks' to practice over and over, until they're perfect. Once you can play one chunk perfectly, work on another small chunk. Then, start to put the chunks together. Keep in mind that faster isn't always better. It's best to start slowly, in order to make sure every single note is accurate and perfect. When you can play something perfectly at a slow tempo, then you can start to speed it up. Using a metronome is a great way to keep a steady tempo. (Metronomes are available for purchase starting at around \$20, if you're interested.)

5. Figure out ways to make your notes sound even better.

Are there any markings in the music you should be paying attention to? Be a good detective and find all of the dynamics, bow lifts, slurs, low or high fingerings, accidentals, tempo markings, etc. in your music. Also remind yourself about things that should be happening that aren't written on the page such as vibrato, playing in tune, and keeping a steady tempo.

6. You can play other music, too!

If your school music is going well, feel free to spend some of your practice minutes playing other music. If you take private lessons, play in a youth orchestra, or play at church, you'll want to make sure you keep practicing that music too. Practicing scales and etudes are also a great way to improve your technique. If you'd like extra music to play, there are MANY books for violin/viola/cello/bass available through Mrs. Johnson, online, or local music stores. Mrs. Johnson has posted a list of appropriate level books for strings on the website under "Want More Music?" Many students really enjoy having these books that include movie themes, fiddle tunes, praise songs, Disney music, etc.

7. Have fun!

Find ways to make practicing more exciting and enjoyable for you! If there's a recording available of your music, play along to the CD or online sound file. Get together with friends and play music with each other. When you're ready, give informal "concerts" to your family and friends, to show off what you can do. Make sure you're enjoying being a musician, since you've worked so hard to have these skills on your instrument! That's what making music is all about!

Jr. High Orchestra Dates 2011-2012

*These are the REQUIRED activities for this year for Junior High Orchestra members.

Oct 19-20	3-4:15pm	Volunteer JH Orch Students	Holiday Strings Auditions	JH Orch Room
*Oct 25	6:30/8pm	6th-8th/HS Orchestras	Fall Concert	Fair Haven Min.
Oct 27&29	TBA	Volunteer JH/HS Orch/Band	MSBOA All-State Auditions	E. Kentwood HS
Nov 12-13	all day	8th Grade Orchestra	Detroit trip	Out-of-district
*Dec 8	6:30pm	JH Bands and Orchestras	Christmas Concert	Fair Haven Min.
Dec 13	TBA	Any groups	Snow Date for Christmas Concerts	JH Gym
Dec 16	7:00am	JH Holiday Strings	Holiday Hang-Out	JH Media Center
Dec 17	2:30-8pm	JH Holiday Strings	GRSO Holiday Pops	DeVos Hall
Jan 21	TBA	Accepted JH/HS Orch/Band	MSBOA All-State Performances	DeVos Place
*Feb 13	6:30/8:00pm	JH/HS Orchestras	Pre-Festival Concerts	Fair Haven Min.
*Feb 23or24	TBA	JH and HS Orchestras	MSBOA Festival	Out-of-district
Mar 22	5-7pm	JH Orch/Band/Choir	Student Showcase	JH Cafeteria
Mar 26	during class	All Orchestras	Cookie Dough fliers handed out!	In Class
Apr 14	all day	Volunteer JH Orch/Band	Solo and Ensemble Festival	Out-of-district
Apr 17	during class	All Orchestras	Cookie Dough Orders Due	In Class
May 10	3-6pm	All Orch Families (that sold)	Cookie Dough Pick-Up	JH Cafeteria
*May 24	7:30pm	6th, JH, and HS Conc Orch's	Spring Concert	Fair Haven Min.



Tunes for Tuesday!!!

Stringed instruments show up in pop music, rock & roll, movie themes, TV shows, and all kinds of other places. Once per week, the students will be listening to many different styles of music to learn about how stringed instruments are used outside of junior high orchestra. Mrs. Johnson has selected all of the songs that your child will listen to in class to ensure that they are appropriate for use in the junior high classroom. However, a few of the groups that perform these songs may also perform other songs that may not necessarily be as appropriate for young listeners. We won't listen to any of those songs in class. Parents: If your student would like to listen to other songs on their own, I encourage you to preview the music and have a discussion with your student about music that may or may not be appropriate for them to listen to. If you have any questions or concerns about this, please feel free to contact Mrs. Johnson at cjohnson@jpsonline.org or 667-3266.

Junior High Orchestra Grading Policy

The marking period grade of each Junior High student will be a compilation of several categories. Each category will represent a percent of the student's final grade. The percentages are as follows:

25% - Concert Attendance

Maximum credit can be earned in this category by attending the full length of every concert, arriving on time, being fully prepared, dressing correctly, and behaving appropriately.

25% - Practice Records

Each student is required to record his or her at-home practice in the front of his or her assignment notebook. This will be checked during the first class of each week. Maximum credit can be earned in this category by properly filling out the weekly practice records, including parent signature. Weekly practice will be averaged and graded on the following scale:

<u>Weekly minutes</u>		<u>Weekly Grade</u>		<u>Marking Period Average</u>
120 minutes	=	100%	=	25% (out of maximum 25% of M.P. grade)
108 minutes	=	90%	=	
96 minutes	=	80%	=	20% (out of maximum 25% of M.P. grade)
84 minutes	=	70%	=	
72 minutes	=	60%	=	15% (out of maximum 25% of M.P. grade)
60 minutes	=	50%	=	
48 minutes	=	40%	=	10% (out of maximum 25% of M.P. grade)

If a student fails to turn in any practice records during a marking period, that student will not be able to receive any grade higher than a C in orchestra.

30% - Daily Attendance, Preparation, Participation, and Attitude

Maximum credit can be earned in this category by arriving to each class on time, by avoiding any unexcused absences, by being fully prepared for every class (with instrument, music, pencil, and any assignments), and by consistently contributing to class in an effective, appropriate, and positive manner. In addition, you must remember that food, drink, gum, talking out of turn, and playing after the director stops all distract from the rehearsal and cannot be allowed. Failure to follow any or all of these guidelines will result in the loss of your three daily points.

20% - Quizzes, Playing Tests, and Improvement

Maximum credit can be earned in this category by preparing fully for each playing test and (occasional) written quiz, and by showing steady improvement in one's playing ability. Playing tests are a chance for Mrs. Johnson to listen to you individually and offer suggestions. They are usually done by video tape during class time and you will receive written comments after a few days. Each playing test sheet should be signed by a parent and returned to Mrs. Johnson within a few days for an additional five points. Some playing tests will also determine chair placement. It will be announced in class whether each playing test counts for chairs or not.

***Extra credit opportunities are offered throughout the year and can include:**

- Attendance at concerts that include live musicians. Bring in a program or parent note.
- Extra student performances that are not already getting a grade in school.
- Reports, Papers, or Projects to be determined by the director.
- Specific opportunities that will be announced throughout each marking period.

**** Concert Attendance ****

Every member of this orchestra is an invaluable contributor to the final musical product. As you read previously, concert attendance is required, and it is a very big part of your grade in orchestra class. Plan ahead so that work, vacations, sports, and other activities do not conflict with our concerts. If a conflict cannot be resolved and you must miss a concert, I must be notified by a parent in writing AT LEAST TWO WEEKS before the concert. This is imperative for the orchestra's sake and no late letters will be accepted. We will then work out an assignment that will allow you to make up the concert points.

As always, I understand that emergencies and illnesses will occur. In this case, a simple phone call from a parent within 24 hours of the concert will be needed in order for the student to be allowed to make up the points. If a student simply does not show up for a concert, they will lose all concert points, and will not have an opportunity to make them up.



Junior High Orchestra Uniform Guidelines

The look of our orchestra is just as important as our sound. It is the first impression our group makes on an audience and it distinguishes us as mature musicians. All orchestra students at the Junior High will wear a specific uniform for all concerts and festivals throughout the year. Unless otherwise noted, all students should arrive at each activity already in their uniform. Do not expect to have time to change between arriving at the concert and performing. The uniform pieces will be checked out to each orchestra student after Mrs. Johnson receives the student's rental deposit, and it will need to be returned at the end of the school year. You are expected to take VERY good care of your uniform throughout the year. (Don't leave it wadded up in the bottom of your closet between concerts... We want to keep them looking nice!) If there are financial problems, the Jenison Orchestra Parent's Association can assist in getting an appropriate concert uniform. The uniform regulations are as follows:

For the ladies:

You will rent a pair of black "flowy" pants and green vest from JOPA at a cost of \$15 for the year. (This includes the cost of pants hemming to fit each girl.) You will provide your own white long-sleeve button-up dressy blouse, black nylons, and black flat dressy shoes. (Yes, choir girls can wear their ballet slippers, if they wish.)

For the gentlemen:

You will rent a green vest from JOPA at a cost of \$10 for the year. You will provide your own BLACK dress pants, BLACK shoes (not sneakers), BLACK socks, and white long-sleeve button-up dress shirt.

Be sure to check out the Jenison Orchestras Website!!!

www.JenisonOrchestras.org

We've included lots of stuff that should be really helpful to you, like: Calendars, Handbooks, Announcements, Concert Reminders, Practice Tips, Links to Tuning Notes, Rental Store Contact Info, JOPA info, Student Accounts, Photos, Uniform Info, Private Lesson Info, Step-Up Instrument Info, Director Contact Info, and much more! **Please bookmark us, and visit often for the most up-to-date orchestra information!!!**

Jenison Orchestra Parent's Association - JOPA

The Jenison Orchestras are enthusiastically supported by the Jenison Orchestra Parents Association. This "booster" group provides scholarships, parent support, uniform maintenance, and other extras to our orchestras. They are funded by two main fundraisers during the year. The Jenison Orchestra "Smart Card" is our community discount card that is good at many area businesses. The card is sold in the fall and is an annual hit. JOPA also sponsors a spring Cookie Dough sale.

A portion of the profits from the JOPA fundraisers is kept in orchestra student accounts. Students can use the money in their accounts to purchase music-related materials throughout the year. Strings, shoulder-rests, rosin, music, trips, medals, and fees are just some of the things students use their accounts to pay for. All money in students' accounts must be spent on music materials by graduation. The accounts do carry over from year to year.

Scholarships - JOPA provides scholarships for music study throughout the summer. If a student is interested in attending music camp opportunities, JOPA will provide a 25% scholarship. The scholarships are available to any student who gives a written request for a scholarship to either of the orchestra directors.

Private lesson and youth orchestra scholarships are also available over the summer. Information about summer lessons will be given out as summer approaches.

JOPA holds meetings every other month in the Jenison Junior High Media Center. Please plan to attend as many meetings as you can as we discover new ways to show off our students' hard work.

JOPA Meetings: (JJHS Media Center)

Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2011, 7:30pm

Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2011, 7:30pm

Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2012, 7:30pm

Tuesday, Apr. 17, 2012, 7:30pm



JOPA appreciates having any and all of you on board for another wonderful year of the Jenison Orchestras!

--- Please detach and return this whole page to Mrs. Johnson at our next class meeting. ---

Dear Parents of the 2011-2012 Jenison Junior High Orchestra Program,

The Jenison Orchestra program depends largely on parental support for our success. Not only do we need your help in supporting your student at home, but we need your help at school, too. Please put a check mark by any of the following activities that you could assist us with. Any help you can offer is needed and appreciated!!!

Parent Name	Student Name	Student Grade	Phone #(s)
-------------	--------------	---------------	------------

- I could chaperone orchestra events during the week.
- I could chaperone orchestra events on weekends.
- I could help with the sizing/distribution of uniforms (early Sept – one class period)
- I could help with the collecting and sorting of uniforms in the spring. (Late May)
- I would be willing to videotape during concerts. (The Orchestra will provide the camera.)
- I could help sell orchestra items during concerts.
- I could assist with Cookie Dough fundraising pick-up. (May 10, anytime 1pm-7pm)
- I could assist with set-up and/or tear-down for the spring concert reception. (May 22 or 24)
- I could help in another way by _____

Please read and sign the following:

- I have read the Orchestra Handbook for the 2011-2012 school year and understand its contents. I have included the orchestra dates on our family calendar, and I will let Mrs. Johnson know immediately of any conflicts. I understand the concert attendance policy.
- I have completed the volunteer form above.
- I am enclosing the uniform fee for my child. (Girls: \$15, Boys: \$10)
- I would like to rent a lock for my violin or viola locker. (Optional \$5)
(8th Graders: If you had one last year, you'll get the same one back this year at no cost.)

Student Signature	Parent Signature	Date
-------------------	------------------	------

*Announcements, Concert Reminders, and other important information will be shared by email this year. Please give us your email address(es) so that we can keep you up to date on Orchestra Information:

Parent email address: _____ (PLEASE PRINT
Second email address (optional): _____ LEGIBLY!!!)

***** Make checks payable to JOPA *****

--- Please return this whole page to Mrs. Johnson at our next class meeting. Thanks! ---