



# Jenison Junior High School Orchestra Handbook 2023 - 2024



**Carol Johnson & Josh Zallar, Junior High Directors**  
**Dan Scott & Joe Harmsen, High School Directors**

Dear Junior High Orchestra Students and Parents,

Hello and welcome to another exciting year with the Jenison Orchestras! We know this will be an outstanding year with all three of our wonderful Junior High Orchestras! Mrs. Johnson and Mr. Zallar are excited to see our students and get started with making wonderful music!

This handbook attempts to provide as much information as possible for our upcoming school year. Please read through this packet and make sure you contact Mrs. Johnson or Mr. Zallar with any questions you may have. For your convenience, this handbook is also posted online on our website [www.JenisonOrchestras.org](http://www.JenisonOrchestras.org). Please bookmark the site and check back frequently, as there will be up-to-date announcements and reminders posted as often as possible.

Again this year, we are continuing to use the "CHARMS" website to handle all of our program's technical needs. Charms will be the place where you can check your student's account balance, make payments online, and much more. It is a very helpful tool for parents and students! More info on this will be coming later in the year.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are very excited that you are joining us for another great year!

Sincerely,

Carol Johnson  
cjohnson@jpsonline.org

Josh Zallar  
jzallar@jpsonline.org

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We've included lots of information 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!!!**

# 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 screen 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 productive for you!

## 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 the school 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 90 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 15-20 minutes on several different days, than if you cram it all in 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, reminding you to check 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, or there are MANY free metronome apps available online and for your devices.)

## 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 the school, 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!

# Junior High Orchestra Grading Policy

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

**25% - Concert Attendance** - Orchestra students earn their 100 concert points in five ways:

- 20 Arrive in the warm-up room at or before the scheduled time
- 20 Bring all required materials/supplies
- 20 Wear all required uniform pieces
- 20 Meet behavioral expectations
- 20 Meet musical expectations

**25% - Practice Records**

Junior High instrumental students are required to practice at home for 90 minutes per week for full credit. Each student is required to record practice minutes in the back 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. (Entries without parent signature will not be accepted for credit.) Total weekly practice minutes will be averaged at the end of each marking period. Any student can make up for weeks with fewer practice minutes (due to illness, vacation, etc.) by practicing MORE in other weeks. 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.

**Practice records that are turned in more than two weeks late will receive zero credit.**

**30% - Daily Rehearsal Skills and Technique**

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 active, 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 Assignments and Tests, and Improvement**

Maximum credit can be earned in this category by preparing fully for each playing assignment and test and (occasional) written quiz, and by showing steady improvement in one's playing ability. Playing tests are a chance for each student to play individually and receive specific feedback. Playing assignments and tests are usually assigned in Google Classroom, to be completed at home. Some playing tests will also determine concert 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 extremely valuable 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. Music department policy is that if a conflict cannot be resolved and a student must miss a concert, a parent must notify a director in writing AT LEAST TWO WEEKS before the concert. This is imperative for the orchestra's sake and no late letters or emails will be accepted. If the absence is excused, we will then work out an assignment that will allow you to make up the concert points.

As always, we understand that emergencies and illnesses will occur. In this case, a simple phone call or email from a parent before 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. Please ask your director if you have questions.



## **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 the directors receive the student's rental deposit, and it will need to be returned at the end of the school year (or replacement fee paid). 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!) The uniform regulations are as follows:

### **Option 1 (for the ladies):**

You will rent a pair of black "flowy" pants and green vest from JOPA at a cost of \$10 for the year. (This includes the cost of pants hemming and/or vest alterations.) You will provide your own white long-sleeve button-up dressy blouse, black tall socks or tights/nylons, and black flat dressy shoes.

### **Option 2 (for the gentlemen):**

You will rent a green vest from JOPA at a cost of \$5 for the year. (This includes any necessary vest alterations.) You will provide your own black dress pants, solid black dress shoes (not sneakers), tall black socks, and white long-sleeve button-up dress shirt.

*- If there are financial concerns, the Jenison Orchestra Parent's Association would be happy to assist your family in getting appropriate concert uniform items. Ask sooner, rather than later, please!*

*- If you have questions about these two options for your student, just let Mrs. Johnson know!*

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Step-Up Instrument Info, Director Contact Info, and much more!

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## **Orchestra Books**

Each orchestra class will be using method books in class to advance our technique and musical skills. These books will be checked out to students for use in class and at home. It is expected that students will take care of their book and return it in excellent condition before the end of the year. Any student that loses their book or returns it in an unusable condition will be charged a replacement fee of \$10.

## **Jenison Orchestra Parent's Association - JOPA**

The Jenison Orchestras are enthusiastically supported by the Jenison Orchestra Parent's Association. This "booster" group provides scholarships, parent support, uniform maintenance, and other extras to our orchestras. They are funded by three main fundraisers during the year. There will be a coffee fundraiser in the fall. The Jenison Orchestra "Smart Card" is our community discount card that is good at many area businesses. The card is sold just before Christmas and is an annual hit. JOPA also sponsors a spring Century Resources sale. Ongoing fundraisers are available for those who wish to participate, including Van Andel concession work and SCRIP card use. Just ask a director if you are interested in getting involved!

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

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, Sep 5, 2023, 7:30pm

Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023, 7:30pm

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, 7:30pm

Tuesday, Apr. 9, 2024, 7:30pm



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

# Jenison Jr. High Orchestra Dates 2023-2024

## REQUIRED FOR ALL 7th & 8th ORCHESTRA STUDENTS:

Oct 18	6:30pm	JH Orchestras (with 6th Grade)	Fall Concert	JCA
Dec 8	8:00pm	JH Orchestras (JH Bands@6:30)	Christmas Concert	JCA
Feb 21	7:30pm	JH Orchestras	Pre-Festival Concert	JCA
Feb 28	daytime	JH (and HS) Orchestras	MSBOA Festival	JCA
May 16	7:30pm	JH Orchestras (with 6th Grade)	Spring Concert	JCA

## ALSO REQUIRED FOR CADENCE (2nd hour) STUDENTS:

Apr 26	daytime	Cadence/Encore (+8th Gr Band)	Elem Demo Concerts	JCA
May 1	7:00pm	Cadence/Encore (+5th +HS Sym)	String Spectacular!	JCA

## ALSO REQUIRED FOR ENCORE (6th hour) STUDENTS:

Dec 2	Time TBA	JH Encore Strings	GRSO Lobby Concert	DeVos Hall
Apr 20	daytime	JH Orch/Band (Encore Required)	Solo and Ensemble Fest	Northpoint Chr.
Apr 26	daytime	Cadence/Encore (+8th Gr Band)	Elem Demo Concerts	JCA
May 1	7:00pm	Cadence/Encore (+5th +HS Sym)	String Spectacular!	JCA

## OPTIONAL / EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES: *(more info given in class as the events get closer...)*

Jan 12	6-11pm	JH Band/Orch	Fun Night!	Out-of-district
Mar 23	9a-3p	Selected JH Orch members	MSBOA Honors Orchestra	Rockford HS
Apr 20	daytime	JH Orch/Band (Encore Required)	Solo and Ensemble Fest	Northpoint Chr.

## JOPA (Orchestra Parent Association) MEETINGS: *(All parents welcome!)*

Sep 5	7:30pm	Orchestra Boosters (JOPA)	JOPA Meeting	JH Media Cntr
Nov 7	7:30pm	Orchestra Boosters (JOPA)	JOPA Meeting	JH Media Cntr
Feb 13	7:30pm	Orchestra Boosters (JOPA)	JOPA Meeting	JH Media Cntr
Apr 9	7:30pm	Orchestra Boosters (JOPA)	JOPA Meeting	JH Media Cntr



# JENISON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

## MUSIC CLASS SCHEDULING REMINDERS

From the counseling office and the music department.



**Music classes are a FULL YEAR elective. When you sign up for a music class, you are committing to participate in the ensemble for the WHOLE YEAR.**

The roster for each music class is set up at the beginning of the year to be balanced and musically appropriate. Changes to the ensemble mid-year can hurt the success of the ensemble and should be avoided as much as possible. Your ensemble "team" depends on all of its members to be successful throughout the year. Additionally, the other elective course offerings in the building are balanced based on music enrollment and cannot easily accommodate many mid-year additions.

It is very normal to feel less motivated and less excited about your music ensemble class (or about anything) at certain points during the year, particularly during the long winter months. The newness and excitement of the beginning of the year has worn off, some of the music gets pretty challenging, and the end of the year excitement and accomplishment hasn't been realized yet. Hang in there, it won't always feel like this! Any time you work towards learning a new skill, there will always be a progression of ups and downs, easy and hard tasks, tricky and rewarding feelings. Your music class is designed to be a year-long experience, with some of the most fun and motivating activities happening towards the end of the year!

**Any mid-year schedule change requests are required to go through the following process:**

1. Student must have a face-to-face conversation with their music teacher stating the reasons for their request.
2. Student must have a face-to-face conversation with their counselor stating the reasons their request.
3. Request will be discussed between teacher and counselor.
4. Request will be either approved or denied. **Most mid-year requests will be denied,** unless there are extenuating circumstances to consider.

Please remember that if you are experiencing a problem or frustrating situation, you should talk to your music teacher. Your teachers don't want you to be frustrated with your music class, and would love to help brainstorm possible solutions to help you! All you have to do is ask!



- - - Please detach and return this whole page to your director at our next class meeting. - - -

**Parents: Please read and initial the following statements:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read through the Orchestra Handbook for this school year and understand its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have included the orchestra dates on our family calendar, and I will let a director know immediately of any conflicts. I understand the concert attendance policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that each music class is intended to be a full-year class, and will help my child to fulfill that commitment.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am enclosing the uniform rental fee for my child. (Girls: \$10, Guys: \$5)

\_\_\_\_\_ For cello and bass students only: In order to be able to use a school-owned cello or bass in class this year, I have filled out the back side of this page, and have included the \$30 maintenance fee with this slip. (If you already rent a bass from the school, you don't need to do this. A bass will be provided for you at school.)

Total Enclosed in Cash or Check: \$\_\_\_\_\_ OR Please take this amount from my child's account: \$\_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\* Checks should be made payable to JOPA. Cash or accounts are also fine. \*\*\***  
**(If you would like assistance with finances or need to wait to pay the fees, just let Mrs. Johnson know!)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name    Student Signature    Grade

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Phone    Parent Signature    Date

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

**(PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY!!!)**

Parent name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Parent (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

- - - Please return this whole page to your director at our next class meeting. Thanks! - - -

2023-2024

# School-Owned Cello/Bass Use Contract

Dear Family of Cello or Bass Student,

We are excited to have your student participating in the Jenison Orchestra Program! You are receiving this letter because your student has the opportunity to use a school-owned instrument during class this year. In order to be assigned a school-owned instrument to use in class, a small maintenance fee is necessary. **(If you are already renting a bass from the school, then you may disregard this form.)**

Due to the large number of low-string students in the program and the needs of our inventory, a \$30 fee will be assessed to cover some of the yearly maintenance needs of these stringed instruments. All of the money generated by this maintenance fee is used for the care and repair of the instruments. Typical yearly maintenance may include string replacement (\$10-\$30 per string), bow repairs (\$50 per bow), open seam or crack repair (\$25 per seam), as well as other annual cleaning and replacement needs. The \$30 maintenance fee will not come close to covering the district's expense in maintaining these instruments, but it will help to ensure these instruments can be used by future students in the orchestra program.

The school-owned instruments must be well cared for by the students. Jenison Public Schools will cover the costs of repairs resulting from students' ordinary, reasonable handling and use of the instrument. Any damage from neglect, carelessness, or intentional misuse will result in additional financial responsibility on the part of your family.

Occasionally, there might be a reason a family wishes for their student to play their home instrument in class. If you would prefer for your student not to use a school-owned instrument during class, he or she will be expected to transport his or her home instrument back and forth to school each day. Please let Mrs. Johnson know if you are interested in this option.

**If you agree to all of the above conditions, and would like to use a school-owned cello or bass during class, please complete the information below and return it with the \$30. Your signature indicates your understanding that you will be responsible for any damage that occurs to the instrument beyond the normal "wear and tear" of daily use.**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Circle Instrument:    Cello    Bass

Student Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_