

# VMS ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK



## VANDEVENTER ORCHESTRA

Dear Orchestra Parents and Students:

Welcome to the Vandeventer Middle School Orchestra program! We are going to have an awesome year filled with fantastic music, new friendships, and incredible experiences! I'm so glad that you have chosen to be a member of the Award-Winning Vandeventer Orchestra!

One of your most valuable resources as a Vandeventer Orchestra parent or member is [www.vandeventerorchestra.com](http://www.vandeventerorchestra.com). Information regarding the calendar, handouts, private lessons, All-Region, summer camps, the VMS orchestras, directors, booster club, music stores, and much more can be found here.

The Orchestra handbook is full of important information to make your year in Orchestra a success. This includes rules, procedures, expectations, grading procedures, and much more! Please thoroughly review the information in this handbook and feel free to email a director with any questions you might have.

Please spend a little time with your student there so everyone is aware of the many resources and information.

Additionally, please review the **VMS Orchestra Calendar** and notify an orchestra director of any concert conflicts by the end of the first six weeks of school.

Thank you,

Mr. Jonathan Roane & Mr. Paul Schmaus  
Directors

Megan Li  
Harp Instructor

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## THE GOALS OF THE ORCHESTRA PROGRAM

- Develop a sense of the importance of music in the life of each student.
- Develop self-confidence and self-discipline in each student through positive interaction with teachers and peers.
- Develop the musical potential of each student to the fullest.
- Develop student understanding of stylistic traits of different periods of music.
- Develop self-expression and creativity through practice and performance.
- Develop the highest possible standards of performance for each student in the program.
- Develop the ability to work in a group as a team for a common goal.
- Develop an appreciation for music from different cultures and styles.
- Represent our school and community in a positive manner.

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## Orchestra General Information

### FISD MUSICAL INSTRUMENT USAGE AGREEMENT (for students renting a school instrument)

Cello/Bass/Harp students will need access to two instruments. Please rent one instrument for home usage. Cello/Bass students may rent from Dallas Strings. This rental instrument will be brought at the beginning of the year as we check the instrument setups, quality, and teach you the proper handling of instruments. It will then be taken home for daily home practice.

The second instrument will be an FISD instrument that remains at school. You are not renting the instrument, just paying the district a fee for usage during the school day. These are high-quality instruments.

All students who use school instruments (primarily cello, bass, and harp) are required to pay a non-refundable instrument usage/maintenance annual fee of \$100.00 (\$50.00 per semester) paid through **OnlineSchoolFees:**  
<https://www.friscoisd.org/about/resources-and-information/online-payment-systems>

This agreement and contract will be sent home with more information as soon as students are assigned school instruments. **This can take several weeks before the fee will be available online, please wait until you hear from an orchestra director to try to pay this fee.**

### CHAPERONES/VOLUNTEERISM

FISD Board Policy requires that each volunteer and chaperone undergo a background check. **The goal:** We want to keep students safe and this process helps to do so!  
**Details regarding this process can be found on the District website.**

They will need to create a VOLY account by visiting <https://friscoisd.voly.org>.

You will be prompted to complete the background check during your VOLY account creation process. Keep an eye on your inbox for your background check approval (the process can take up to 3-5 business days). VOLY will send you customized e-mails with opportunities that may interest you for volunteering.

Family and community members must complete a background check once every year starting in July.

Thank you in advance for your help!

### DAILY PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS

Practice every day. Consistency matters.

- Beginners practice around 30-45 minutes a day. At the beginning of the year, beginner students should be playing for 15 minutes with a small break and another 15 minutes as their muscles adjust to a new activity. Towards the end of the year, beginners should be practicing 45-60 minutes a day.
- Philharmonic should practice around 45-60 minutes a day
- Symphonic and Chamber players should practice 60 or more minutes a day

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## INSTRUMENT STORAGE AND LOCKERS

VMSO will assign lockers/other locations for instrument storage in the orchestra room. There are locks on each of the lockers, but we will only issue combinations if necessary. Lockers and the orchestra room are ONLY used for orchestra materials (instrument, orchestra binder, supplies, etc.) Under no circumstances should food or other school binders, etc. be stored in the orchestra lockers. VMS Orchestra is not liable for lost or stolen instruments, supplies, etc.

## MORNING INSTRUMENT DROP-OFF

In the mornings, students should place their orchestra binder and instrument in their assigned location BEFORE heading to tutorials or class. The orchestra room is open for morning tutorials and instrument drop-off starting at 7:55 am. If students have athletics practice, they should take their instruments with them and afterward, drop off items before school starts.

## AFTERNOON INSTRUMENT PICK-UP

Orchestra doors will be locked and closed at the end of every school day. Students need to pick up their instruments immediately following the bell at 3:45 pm each day. Instruments should be picked up BEFORE attending tutorials or athletics practice. Students should communicate with coaches about the best location for their instruments to be stored. The orchestra room will be locked by 4:05 pm and instruments left will be unavailable for pick up.

## SOCIAL EVENT LATE POLICY

Parents are expected to pick up their child from VMSO Events **no later than twenty minutes** after the event has been dismissed. Students will be instructed by the Directors, Parent Volunteers, and assisting FISD/Region Staff (as it applies) to call their parents to remind them to pick them up before the event is over. **A Vandeventer Administrator will be contacted if you are more than 20 minutes late picking up your child.**

The Directors understand that emergencies and delays beyond anyone's control sometimes occur. Please notify your child in a timely manner so they may inform an adult at the event. Parents who pick up their child late from VMSO events may result in their child not being allowed to attend additional VMSO social events.

Contact in case of emergency and unable to pick up the child on time:

Mr. Roane [roanej@friscoisd.org](mailto:roanej@friscoisd.org)

Mr. Schmaus [schmausp@friscoisd.org](mailto:schmausp@friscoisd.org)

## FINE ARTS DISCIPLINE PLAN FOR FINE ARTS SOCIALS

If a student receives a Thursday Night Reflections / ISS/ OSS within the three weeks leading up to a social event, they will not be permitted to attend.

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## CLASSROOM POLICIES/EXPECTATIONS

1. You will be considered tardy if you are not inside the orchestra room when the tardy bell sounds. Be in your seat with your instrument and music and be ready to tune within one minute after the tardy bell. Tardies will result in escalated consequences, according to the VMS Tardy Policy.
2. It is YOUR responsibility to see that YOUR instrument (whether you own it or it is a loan-out to you from the school) is kept cleaned and well maintained; i.e., no rosin dust, good strings, well-haired bow, clean case, cleaning cloth. If you are using a school-owned instrument you will be required to pay for necessary repairs or damage that are in excess of "normal usage." The Directors retain the right to make that determination.
3. To play a stringed instrument well, one must have short fingernails; therefore, it is required that fingernails be regularly trimmed short and neat, not extending out further than the finger. This is applicable to every musician in the orchestra. Due to an inability to play a string instrument effectively with long fingernails, the grade of a student who chooses not to keep their nails trimmed may be affected. **If you have long fingernails during class, you will be asked to cut them at that time. Please purchase your own fingernail clippers to keep in your binder pencil bag for ease of access. Artificial nails are NOT permitted**

## CONCERT AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AND ETIQUETTE

Your student will work for months to prepare music so they can be proud of their performance. The number of skills needed to play music together is staggering. These policies are to respect their hard work and teach them how to properly act in a concert setting.

When you attend a concert, please do not distract from the performance. Here are just five general things to keep in mind:

1. Talking is distracting. Auditoriums are designed to intensify sound, so even soft talking will be heard in the auditorium and on stage.
2. Waving or calling out to a performer on stage is distracting to the musicians and other audience members.
3. Cell phones and flash photography are distracting. Please silence your phone and don't text or talk on the phone during a concert.
4. Video recording from the middle aisle or at the front of the stage is distracting. The performance can be recorded from the back of the room.
5. Being out of your seat is distracting. Wait until the music stops to move to and from your seat. Unless it is an emergency! If you arrive late to the concert, please wait to move until in between pieces.
6. Restless children should be held at the back and removed from the performance if they become a distraction and/or are making noise.

## AUDITIONS, RE-AUDITIONS, ORCHESTRA PLACEMENT, AND SCHEDULE CONFLICTS

For orchestra placement, an audition may be required to assess a student's technical and musical ability on an instrument. This will be judged by a Director(s) to determine which level of musical proficiency has been obtained and which group will be best suited for the student auditioning. By participating and being a part of Vandeventer Middle School Orchestra, you understand and accept the professional judgment and decision of the Director(s) regarding orchestra placement, even if auditions are not held and placement is determined by Director's knowledge and experience in the classroom.

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Students audition for placement at the end of the school year. **Vandevert Middle School Orchestra does not hold re-auditions.** This is our policy to provide equity. Audition preparation is an ongoing process as we continue to build musical and instrumental proficiency. This is another reason why private lessons are a year-long commitment. Members of VMS Orchestra should expect to audition at the end of the school year regardless of previous year processes and their orchestra placement.

**Students must be active in weekly lessons to be considered for Chamber in the future.**

Scheduling is a complicated process and occasionally there are conflicts with the orchestra that a student is placed in. While the Directors have no issue with students being involved in multiple co-curricular activities, VMS orchestra policy is that students will not be allowed to move to a higher orchestra placement due to scheduling conflicts. Students wanting to continue in the orchestra will need to choose their current orchestra placement over the other class, move to a lower orchestra, or choose another elective.

Every orchestra player is an important team member! All students will rotate seating during preparation for a concert. Students should expect to change seating throughout the course of the year. Concert seating will be at the discretion of the directors based on the needs of the group.

**Where a player sits does not determine their personal worth.**

## **PRIVATE LESSON INFORMATION**

**We recommend all students to sign up for private instruction during the school day or outside of school. Students in Chamber Orchestra are required to take private lessons as a commitment to being involved with our varsity ensemble.**

One lesson per week can be scheduled at Vandeventer before school, during class, or after school. Students will be offered information regarding private instructors towards the beginning of the year for instructors at Vandeventer. This is a first come, first served arrangement and is a **year-long commitment.** Private lesson teachers are responsible for scheduling, communicating, and collecting payment. Vandeventer Staff and VMS Orchestra Directors are not responsible for missed lessons, scheduling conflicts/errors, payment issues, etc. Additionally, late or missing payments may result in late fees. If you wait until September or later, private teachers at school may not have available time slots!

Vandeventer Middle School and Vandeventer's Orchestra Directors are not liable for issues or conflicts regarding the private lesson staff. Private lesson staff members go through a district background check.

Outside of school private lessons are also a great option. Your student will receive longer lessons and the instruction is in addition to class rehearsal instead of during. Any recommendations given by Vandeventer Directors are done in good faith and to support the potential growth of students. Outside-of-school lessons place the responsibility on parents/guardians to attend lessons and communicate with these individuals to ensure their foundation of professionalism and ethics. By signing this handbook, you acknowledge your responsibility and that private lesson recommendations were given in good faith.

If interested, please review the following about private lessons:

- [Orchestra Website Private Lesson Information Page](#)

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## Orchestra Classroom Expectations

### I. Performance & Conduct

- A. Enter and leave the classroom in a timely and orderly manner.
- B. There is no food or gum allowed in the orchestra room. Water is permitted.
- C. Show self-discipline during rehearsals, and respect themselves, other students, the Directors, and all other adults at orchestra activities.
- D. Take care of all equipment: your instrument (loosen bow, wipe off rosin, etc.), and school equipment such as chairs and stands, etc. Do not touch an instrument that isn't yours.

### II. Organization

- A. Have all supplies and materials for each class (specified on the supply list): instrument, shoulder rest, rosin, cloth to clean instrument, notebook, pencil, music, identification on case, binder, and method book; AND short fingernails. Students who do not come to class prepared with these items will have points deducted for missing items.
- B. Lockers are expected to be clean at all times. There should be no food, trash, or paper that is out of a binder in orchestra lockers.

### III. Daily Schedule/Expectations/Procedure/Rehearsal Technique

- A. Enter the classroom quietly and with purpose, place non-orchestra materials on shelves.
- B. Go to the locker quietly, get the instrument, and unpack – **always have the instrument** unless specifically notified otherwise. Place the case underneath the seat when finished unpacking.
- C. Sit silently and shadow bow, air bow, or air pizzicato until the director indicates that it is time to tune.
- D. Go to the restroom before class if needed ask the director permission to go to the restroom. Students should be in their seats and shadow-bowing within one minute following the bell.
- E. Tune as a group.  
Tuning procedure – Tuner should be on the instrument throughout the entire tuning procedure
- F. Technique, scale work, and playing position/posture will be assessed for a grade.
- G. Repertoire time and/or other projects.
- H. Packing up needs to be done quickly. If students are having a hard time making it to their next class, students need to assess their organization and packing up at home using a timer.  
Students need to remain seated with their belongings until the bell rings.

### IV. Sectionals

Orchestras may have required sectionals (before or after school rehearsals). Attendance is required and graded. Tardiness will result in a reduction of two points per minute. Additional dates may also be added if a director deems it necessary.

### V. Playing Tests, Recordings, Written Assignments, and Quizzes

Grades are determined by intonation, rhythm, hand position, posture, tone, bowing, etc. Tests covering music theory, musical terms, music history, etc. will be given. A rubric will be provided

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## Dress Rehearsals and Concerts

Each student is required to attend all dress rehearsals and concerts. Please reference the VMS Orchestra Calendar. Only students in proper concert uniform will be allowed to participate in concerts. Students not in proper uniform will be considered unexcused.

**\*\*Dates are subject to change for unseen circumstances. Additional dates may also be added if a director deems it necessary. Directors will do their best to update the Calendar on the Vandeventer Orchestra website, and notify Parents as information becomes available. \*\***

### **ABSENCE POLICY:**

*Remember: Orchestra is a team event, and all students are important to the success of the group.*

- A. Written/Email notice, received in advance, from a parent/guardian is required for any absence from a rehearsal or concert. Students with an excused absence will have the opportunity to make up this grade with an alternate assignment. Unexcused absences from concerts will count as a zero on a major grade.
- B. Verbal or written excuses from students are not accepted. Parent contact is required.
- C. Excused absences include:
  1. Personal illness
  2. Family emergency
  3. Other extenuating circumstances. In cases of legitimate prior commitments, the instructor must be notified NO LATER than the sixth week of school. Religious obligations are excused if a parent e-mails/writes a note to the teacher at least 2 weeks in advance.
  4. Extra-curricular and school club events will never take precedence/priority over a co-curricular event such as UIL Concert and Sight-Reading and concerts. Additionally, babysitting, tutorials, doctor's appointments with no prior notice, and transportation issues do not justify an absence and will result in an unexcused absence.
  5. If you have an athletic conflict, please contact your orchestra director and your coach at the beginning of the season. As orchestra is a co-curricular subject and a grade on students' report cards, we ask students to attend concerts (test grades) before sports practices. If our concerts conflict with a game (we do our best to avoid this), we expect students and parents to communicate weeks in advance before the conflict. If the student chooses to attend their game instead of the concert, they will be expected to complete an alternate assignment within 2 weeks of the absence to make up for missing the concert.
  6. The director reserves the right to remove a student from performing at a contest if that student has accumulated 2 or more missed rehearsals.
  7. \*Please Note: during the weeks leading up to a concert or contest, orchestra directors may ask students to attend extra rehearsals before or after school.

### **When absences occur:**

*Excused Absences: These are absences that are unable to be avoided (ex. personal illness, family emergency). For these situations, an alternative assignment will be given for full credit. Please communicate with the orchestra director as early as possible so that arrangements/adjustments can be made.*

*Unexcused Absences: These are absences that could have been avoided with careful planning, communication and/or effort. (ex. forgetting, not having a ride, losing uniform). For these situations, an alternative assignment will be given for a reduced grade and consequence assigned such as Thursday Night Reflection (TNR).*



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## Orchestra Competitions and UIL Events

In order to participate in UIL Concert and Sight-Reading, Music Festival, Solo and Ensemble, and All-Region auditions, certain criteria must be met:

1. Pass *all* classes for the nine weeks with a minimum grade of 70
2. Attend all rehearsals and sectionals required of students.
3. Demonstrate competency in the music (bowing, intonation, rhythms, dynamics, etc.).
4. Demonstrate appropriate behavior in class daily and follow handbook expectations.
5. Demonstrate teamwork, a good attitude, and a willingness to improve every day.

## Orchestra Attire for Performances

### **ALL STUDENTS - Concert FORMAL All-Black Attire:**

Black dress shoes, black dress socks, black dress pants (no jeans, leggings, or dresses), black belt (if wearing one), black dress shirt/top that has sleeves and can be tucked in. Accessories should be minimal.

### **If you are unsure, ASK a director at least two weeks in advance of the concert or event.**

Wearing unacceptable attire of any kind to a concert could result in being denied the opportunity to perform, lowering the student's grade, or both.

## Membership and Finances

### **Vandevanter Middle School Mission Statement:**

Our mission is to positively impact and advance each student every day!

### **Vandevanter Orchestra Booster Mission Statement:**

The purpose of the Vandevanter Orchestra Booster Club is to maintain and strengthen a keen interest in the various parts of the Orchestra Department for the students, staff, and parents. It will strive to lend all possible support, both moral and financial, which will help promote the general activities of the Orchestra Department at VMS.

Orchestra members will pay annual dues (non-refundable). Traditionally, this has been \$100-110.00 per year. We may or may not do an annual fundraiser depending on the year and budget needs.

### **Orchestra Registration Dues pay for:**

- VMS Orchestra T-shirt
- VMS Beginner Solo Contest (Beginner Orchestra students only)
- Food and Refreshments such as Ice Cream, Pizza & Drinks at Socials
- Professional Clinician and Guest Conductor Compensation
- Replacement Instrument upkeep, Strings, Tuners, and Batteries
- School Instrument Repairs
- Classroom Supplies, Technology, and Accessories
- Music and Curriculum
- End-of-Year Trophy Engraving

### **Orchestra Registration Fee does NOT pay for:**

- Main Event Social ~ \$30
- All-Region Audition Entry Fees ~ \$15
- FISD Solo & Ensemble Entry Fee (non-beginner competition) - \$10-15
- Any other extra trips that we may take during the year