

GWINNETT SCHOOL OF MATH, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY BAND & ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK



2007 - 2008

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Introduction

Dear Students and Parents:

Greetings and Welcome to the 2007-2008 school year. For those for you I have not had the pleasure of meeting I am Dr. Richardson, the band & orchestra director. I hope you are as excited about this year as I am. I have already scheduled most of this year's activities and look forward to our programs' growth and progress this year.

Please read the Band & Orchestra Handbook carefully, for some expectations may differ from that of your previous schools. Be sure to complete, sign, and return the last several pages of the handbook.

Parents, I would like to encourage your participation and have an active Booster Club, but this cannot happen unless you become involved. Our band and orchestra program is dependent on the aid and support of our parents to be successful.

If you have any questions or concerns feel free to call the school to set up an appointment. I look forward to working with you all!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. David Richardson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W. David Richardson
Music Director

Band and Orchestra Rules

1. Remember Richardson's one Rule – **RESPECT!** Respect your neighbors, teacher, facilities, and equipment, but most importantly respect yourself! You and your classmates have a right to learn and the teacher has a right to teach. Disruptive behavior of any kind prevents learning and teaching. It will not be tolerated. We must all work together to make a positive and productive learning environment.
2. Bathroom and drink passes should be obtained from Dr. Richardson – don't just go on your own and assume it was ok to run late to class.
3. Be sure to check the board for the day's activities/pieces to be rehearsed. Have them ready in order on your stand. If there's nothing there, be ready to play.
4. Entry into the classroom late must be done quietly, give the teacher your pass.
5. The TEACHER will dismiss the class when the period is over, NOT the bell.
6. Band and Orchestra are a group efforts. Everyone is important to the group. When you are not playing, you will either be listening for direction or studying your music while Dr. Richardson works with another section. Talking is NOT an option. You must stay actively involved in the music at all times during class.
7. NO GUM, NO FOOD, and NO DRINKS!!! It is not possible to chew and play your instrument at the same time. (bottled, capped water is acceptable after teacher permission is received)
8. Fingernails must be kept short on the left hand for orchestra students. It is not possible to play with the proper left-hand position if the nails extend beyond the tip of the finger. See the grading policy for more information.
9. Daily start up procedures included:
 - Storing all books, bags, large instrument cases, and materials not needed for orchestra out of the concert setup
 - Folders with your music, pencil, and other materials belong on the stand. This must be done within the first two minutes of class. Our rehearsal time is precious. Let's not waste any of it.
 - There will typically be time given to put away equipment at the end of class.
10. All county and school rules apply.

Any flagrant or continual disregard of the rules above may result in consequences including orchestra detention, discipline referrals, and possible removal from the band or orchestra.

Rehearsal Space Access Policy

Daily Band and Orchestra rehearsals will usually take place in the Rehearsal Room (8.211), but may also take place elsewhere. Access to the Rehearsal Room will be available every morning. The room will also be open in the afternoon so instruments can be taken home for personal practice. No student is allowed to be in any rehearsal space unless a teacher is present. If the instrument rooms are locked and Dr. Richardson is not available, you may ask another teacher to gain access to the room. Be aware that items left in the instrument rooms and the rehearsal spaces are not secure and the school does not insure private property. A personal insurance policy for each student's instrument is encouraged. Dr. Richardson, the school, or county cannot be held liable for missing personal equipment or property.

Practice

As part of an ensemble it is the responsibility of each student to prepare music outside of class. Consider at home practice a standing homework assignment. If you are not practicing, it will be readily evident through the periodic playing tests. Failure to be prepared could result in not being allowed to participate in a concert, and another significant assignment would be given in its place. The amount of time and effort you put into your private practice will affect the sound and attitude of the whole class. Do yourself and your ensemble a big favor...PRACTICE!

Equipment

The following list of items are **required** daily for class:

STRINGS

1. Instrument and bow in good condition
2. Shoulder-rest or pad (violins and violas) or rockstop (celli and basses)
3. Cleaning Cloth (a soft rag or t-shirt works)
4. Rosin
5. One set of extra strings
6. Pencil (never a pen) EVERYDAY!
7. Black 3-ring binder for home practice copies of music (optional)

WINDS AND PERCUSSION

1. Instrument and mouthpiece (winds) or sticks (percussion)
2. Reeds (woodwinds – at least 1 **NEW** backup) or valve/key oil (brass)
3. Cleaning rags, brushes, and/or tuning rod
4. Pencil
5. Black 3-ring binder for home practice copies of music (optional)

Caring for Your Instrument

STRINGS

1. ALWAYS loosen your bow after use (cellos and basses, put in the end pin)
2. Wipe your instrument off to prevent accumulation of rosin.
3. NEVER leave your instrument in a car (be careful of extreme temperature changes)
4. Periodically check that the bridge is perpendicular to the deck of the instrument.
5. Clean your instrument with cleaner and polish (only when needed).
6. Strings should be changed every 6 months and bows re-haired once a year.

WINDS AND PERCUSSION

Woodwinds

1. Remove your reed from your mouthpiece after playing
2. Wipe out your instrument to remove moisture
3. Handle the instrument carefully so as not to bend rods
4. Use cork grease sparingly

Brass

1. Oil valves through the bottom valve cap or through the slides
2. Put mouthpiece in the instrument and turn ¼-turn only. Don't hit or tap on the mouthpiece.

Percussion

1. Look at board to determine music for the day and set out percussion needed for rehearsal
2. Never handle timpani by the rims, only by the side rails.
3. Tightening drum heads should be done slowly and carefully so as not to over-tighten the drumhead or break it.
4. Only use yarn or rubber mallets on wooden bars of mallet instruments – never hard vinyl or plastic.
5. Always put ALL equipment away at the end of a rehearsal.

Playing Tests and Seating

Performing is a very important part of band and orchestra. Each student will learn to perform as part of a group and on an individual basis. For this reason, periodic playing tests will be given in class. Tests can be administered in groups or individually, “one on one” with the director or in front of the class. Playing tests will be judged on tone quality, intonation, rhythmic accuracy, bowing/articulation, musicality, and the observance of stylistic markings (dynamics, phrasing, accentuation, etc.). **Be prepared and you have nothing to fear (in other words PRACTICE!).**

Rotating Seating

Seating will not always be according to a student's independent development, and “Rotating Seating” may be used. Because this is a learning experience, students may be mixed together regardless of ability level from time to time. This will give the ensemble a

chance to learn from within itself giving the ensemble a more balanced sound. When using this format, seating will rotate in class while we prepare for performances giving each student an opportunity to lead the section (and Dr. Richardson a chance to hear you individually). Final performance seating will be determined at least two weeks before the concert date and will stop rotating at that time. Remember, just because you are in the back or end of a section does not lessen your importance to the group; you are there because that is where you will do the most for your ensemble.

Fixed Seating

“Fixed Seating” or chair placement tests may be used as an incentive to inspire students to excel. Should this seating be employed, students may challenge to move to a higher chair within a section until a two weeks prior to a concert. Procedures and schedules for requesting chair challenges will be given in class.

Grading System

Grading for band and orchestra will be based on the following information. Participation, preparation, and a good attitude will be beneficial to you as you endeavor for high musical achievement.

A = 100 – 90 • B = 89 – 80 • C = 79 – 74 • D = 73 – 70 • F = 69 – 0

10% - Projects/Written Tests	A project focusing on music history, theory, or careers will be assigned and written tests will be given as needed.
10% - Daily Grade – Preparation & Participation	Be prepared for class. If you do not play for ANY reason on a given day (except a medical reason accompanied by a doctor’s note) 5 points will be deducted from this portion of your grade. This same rule applies if you are UNPREPARED for ANY reason (no replacement strings, no pencil, no music, etc.). Ladies, please make sure the fingernails of your left hand do not inhibit your playing ability - that is being unprepared for class. Two “free” days will be given to cover emergencies. If there is a “long term” problem (broken bone, etc.), the “Project” percentage will be increased to 30%, and a revised project will be assigned. The director will <i>consider</i> exceptions on an individual basis.
30% - Pass-offs	Pass-off excerpts consisting of scales, rhythms, and playing exercises will be required per semester. Each failure to pass THREE excerpts will lower <i>this portion</i> of your grade 10 points. See Syllabus for details.
30% - Performances/Rehearsals	See the Absence Policy in the Orchestra Handbook
20% - EOOST	Semester test covering all material for semester

Rehearsals and Performances

ABSENCE POLICY: ALL AFTER SCHOOL REHEARSALS AND CONCERTS ARE CLASS REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GSMST BAND AND ORCHESTRA AND ARE GRADED ACTIVITIES. These events are the culmination of your work in and out of the classroom. **If an absence is necessary, ADVANCED WRITTEN NOTICE FROM A PARENT/GUARDIAN IS REQUIRED (at least one week).** If the conflicting activity is a school-sponsored event, advanced notice *from the parent or activity sponsor* is still required. The director will work with the sponsor of that activity to coordinate arrangements so both activities can be attended. An Excused Absence includes:

- Illness/Medical accompanied by a doctor's note after the visit
- Government Order/GA Page with written verification
- Religious Holiday
- Hazardous Conditions
- Death/Serious Family Illness

Just because you inform Dr. Richardson of a conflict does not mean it will be excused unless it is for one of the reasons listed above. If the conflicting event is not above and you decide to miss a rehearsal or performance (regardless of whether you've informed Dr. Richardson of the problem), the absence WILL NOT be excused.

If advanced notification is not possible (family emergency, unexpected car trouble, etc.) you **MUST** call Dr. Richardson's office immediately (678.542.2392) for the absence to be considered as Excused. If no one is available to take the call, you **MUST** leave a message with the exact date and time of call. If an attempt to contact the director is not made, the absence will be considered unexcused unless documentation of the emergency situation can be produced.

An Unexcused Absence from a rehearsal will result in 10 points being deducted from your Performance/Rehearsal grade. An Unexcused Absence from a performance will result in a "0" for your Performance/Rehearsal grade. Should you wish to make up an unexcused absence, an assignment equal to the weight of the absence will be given (usually a large research paper for missed performances and essays for rehearsals).

I will make every effort to inform students and parents of important dates as early as possible. **IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM PARENTS OF SUCH DATES AND ARRANGE FOR TRANSPORTATION IF NECESSARY.**

Please don't assume, "It's not gonna matter if I'm not there!"

EVERYONE MATTERS!! Just like a baseball team can't succeed if they were missing their pitcher, shortstop or catcher, we can't succeed if we're missing any cellist, violinist, or violist. Every effort should be made to schedule doctor's appointments, private lessons, sports practices, and other activities at times that do not overlap with rehearsal

and performance times. If your instrument is severely broken, try to get a loaner from a music store. Parents may call for additional suggestions on how to borrow an instrument.

A Word About Concert Uniforms...

No student will be penalized for an inability to purchase or provide fees for concert uniforms. Requests for assistance may be made in writing to the GSMST Care Team or Dr. Richardson via regular mail or email.

Concert Dress

During GSMST's first year, there will be many new additions to the school. One will be the addition of formal concert uniforms. When these uniforms are obtained, procedures for the use, care, and check-in/out of all parts will be distributed to students. In the meantime, each student will be responsible for obtaining personal clothing which will double as our uniform.

This band and orchestra uniform exists to give our orchestra a great, contemporary look to accompany our great sound! **Students not properly dressed for a concert will NOT play and the resulting absence will be considered unexcused.**

Gentlemen: SOLID BLACK dress pants (not jeans or corduroy pants), long-sleeve black dress shirt without embroidery/stitching of any kind, long black neck-tie (not a bow-tie), black belt (no large buckles), black dress shoes (no sneakers), and black socks.

Ladies: SOLID BLACK at least mid-calf length dress, or black blouse (with at least $\frac{3}{4}$ -length sleeves) and black dress pants/skirt (skirts must be at least mid-calf length, no capri pants). No jean, corduroy, see-through, or other casual material is appropriate. No dresses with spaghetti straps, plunging necklines, sleeveless/off the shoulder, or low cut in the back.

A date will be set prior to our first performance for students to bring in their uniforms to assure they meet the above requirements.

Casual Uniform

Not all performances require formal uniforms, so the GSMST band and orchestra will utilize a casual uniform from time to time. The casual uniform will consist of a sports shirt embroidered with the GSMST Music logo (\$15-\$18, TBA), full-length khaki pants of the student's choosing, and casual shoes.

- Students will need to purchase shirts through the school and pants on their own
- Khaki pants are preferred (instead of colors like taupe, stone, sand, beige, tan, etc)
- If belt loops are present students should wear a complimentary colored belt.
- Capri pants for ladies are acceptable but should not be tight fitting
- Students with shirts untucked will be considered out of uniform.
- The style of footwear is optional but should not draw excessive attention.

The casual uniform shirt will remain consistent from year to year, so students who take care of their casual uniform shirt could potentially use it for all four years of high school.

Fundraising

It is essential that all orchestra members participate in fund-raising activities in order to raise funds for:

1. Student Awards
2. Field Trips
3. Performance trips
4. Spring Banquet

The entire orchestra has general needs that must be met. Please help improve the quality of our program by participating in fund-raisers. Parents, if you are willing to aid with fund-raisers please let Dr. Richardson know.

Honor Orchestras

The below listed orchestras require student auditions for membership and have varied sponsorship. Interested students must inform Dr. Richardson as soon as possible in order that certain deadlines are met. Check the calendar at the end of the handbook for specific dates.

1. Gwinnett County Kendall Orchestra (9th grade only)
2. Gwinnett County Youth Symphony (10th – 12th grades)
3. Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra
4. Metropolitan Youth Symphony Orchestra
5. Governor's Honors Program (by nomination)

There are many other opportunities to perform with honor orchestras that will be presented throughout the school year. Students are encouraged to participate in a variety of other musical experiences.

Private Lessons

Though not required, private lessons are highly recommended. They can be a wonderful experience for musical growth with minimal time commitment (a 30-minute instruction period once a week is standard). Detailed individual programming for each student is simply not practical in the classroom. Though every attempt will be made to serve each student's needs in class, students who apply themselves in private instruction have a better chance for auditions in advanced and state orchestras.

Though most music stores have private teachers, a list of private instructors is available upon request.

Spring Trip

Tentatively, there are plans for the band and orchestra to take an extended trip during the Spring. More details will follow soon.

Awards Program

In order for students to be eligible for any awards including LETTER, BAR(s), or STAR they must meet the following qualifications:

1. Enrollment in Wind Symphony or String Symphony class.
2. Try out for District/All-State
3. Perform in ALL Concerts and Festivals
4. Perform at Solo and Ensemble
5. Earn a grade of no less than a B for first and second semester

- **LETTER** – Awarded after the first year all of the above requirements are met.
- **BAR** – Awarded after the second year all of the above requirements are met.
- **STAR** – Awarded after all requirements are met your Senior year.

An outstanding performance medal can also be given out to students. To receive this medal a student must meet the above requirements. In addition, they must be selected for District or All-State, and must also make a Superior at Solo and Ensemble Festival.

Band & Orchestra Calendar

The band and orchestra calendar will be distributed to students once dates are finalized for our first year of activity.

FYI...

Most important dates are listed in the student agenda. All dates and times are subject to change, and additions are VERY possible. THERE WILL BE ADDITIONAL DATES ADDED to the calendar that is distributed!! Every effort will be made to let parents and students know at least 2 weeks prior for changes and additional activities. All rehearsals and concerts are mandatory and graded. Please remember to put important dates on your personal calendar when they are announced.