



HANDBOOK

2021-2022

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Welcome!

Welcome to the Central Bucks High School West Orchestra program; where we are committed to building and fostering musical excellence, social-emotional wellness, and community. I am so happy to work with you this year and look forward to making great music together. Now more than ever, we need connection and expression, cornerstones of any music ensemble. Whatever this school year brings, I am confident that we will adapt and thrive together. Please read through the handbook to learn more about what to expect this year.

PERFORMING GROUPS

Co-Curricular

CB West Orchestra

Orchestra class is offered to students that perform violin, viola, cello, or double bass. It is an ensemble that is dedicated to the performance of quality string orchestra literature. The class meets all year, every other school day for a 90-minute block and receives 1 credit. Students will be required to perform in both small and large group performances and rehearsals both during and after the normal school day. Membership in Orchestra class is a prerequisite for membership in ALL other orchestra related activities including Chamber Strings, the Quartet, PMEA events, BCMEA events, and pit orchestra.

CB West Chamber Strings (Chamber Orchestra)

Chamber Strings is a smaller select group who performs advanced music for a variety of school functions as well as community events and adjudications. The class meets all year, every other school day for a 90-minute block and receives 1 credit. Members of this advanced will learn advanced repertoire as well as Orchestra class repertoire. Please see Mrs. Tosti if you have questions about this. Chamber Strings membership is chosen by the director by audition each February. While the bulk of our rehearsing will be during class time, after school rehearsals will be scheduled as needed (TBA).

Extra-Curricular

CB West String Quartet

Membership in the Quartet is by invitation of students from Chamber Strings. The Quartet performs at many school and community functions and is one of the faces of our Orchestra program. Rehearsals will mostly be within the existing Chamber Orchestra class time. Quartet personnel is by invitation and varies based on student availability.

Pit Orchestra (Harlequin Club Spring Musical)

Limited numbers of string students may be needed to perform in the pit orchestra for the spring musical. Membership is dependent on the instrumental needs for the show. A limited number of spots are available per instrument. Students may need to audition to be eligible for the Pit Orchestra which will occur in early January. Frequent rehearsals outside of the school day are mandatory for this ensemble.

BCMEA County Orchestra (*registration fee associated)

County Orchestra is an Honors Orchestra that features many talented students from all of Bucks County. Students are accepted by audition only, and are required to perform a solo, scales, and sight reading. **You must have an original copy of the solo to audition with.** Selected students perform in the honors orchestra during a three-day music festival. This event is sponsored by the Bucks County Music Educators Association. Please be aware that should you make the ensemble students are responsible for any registration payments. **Audition information is available now on Mrs. Tosti’s teacher site.**

PMEA District II, Region 6, and All-State Orchestra (*registration fees associated)

PMEA District, Region, and All State Festivals are honors ensembles of the highest level. Students are accepted into District Orchestra by audition which includes performing a required solo, scales, and sight reading. **You must have an original copy of the solo to audition.** Selected students for District II Orchestra are top music students in Bucks and Montgomery Counties. The musicians from District Orchestra then move to Region 6 Orchestra, are then selected for All-State Orchestra. Please be aware that should you make the ensemble students are responsible for any registration payments. **Audition information is available now on Mrs. Tosti’s teacher site.**

Rehearsals and Performances

Our Orchestra performs several times throughout the year. Please mark these dates on your calendar right away as all dates in **bold** are part of your grade. Due to the necessity of full group rehearsals and performances, absences for work, appointments, other in-school or out of school rehearsals, etc. cannot be considered. Please plan ahead to avoid any conflicts and last-minute schedule stress. Let me know if you have any questions and thank you in advance.

Tuesday, October 26- Dress Rehearsal	Chamber Strings: 6:00- 7:00 PM Full Group Rehearsal: 7:15-9:00 PM
Thursday, October 28- Halloween Pops Concert (with the Lenape & Tohickon Ninth Grade Orchestras)	Arrival Time: TBA Rehearsal: TBA Concert: 7:00 PM
Tuesday, February 1- Dress Rehearsal	Chamber Strings Rehearsal 6:00-7:00 PM Full Group Rehearsal: 7:15- 9:00 PM
Thursday, February 3- Winter Orchestra Concert	Arrival Time: 6:00 PM Concert: 7:00 PM
Thursday-Saturday, March 25-27 Spring Musical	Pit Orchestra Rehearsal schedule: TBA
Thursday, April 28-Sunday, May 1	CBW Music Dept. Trip (pending board approval)
Tuesday, May 10- Dress Rehearsal	Chamber Strings Rehearsal: 6:00-7:00 PM Full Group Rehearsal: 7:00-9:00 PM
Thursday, May 12- Spring Orchestra Concert	Arrival Time: 6:00 PM Concert: 7:00 PM

ORCHESTRA CLASS EXPECTATIONS

We make every effort to teach students more than just the vocational skills they will need to work. In orchestra, students are expected to learn and demonstrate a strong work ethic, professional and respectful conduct, and good communication skills that are required in every workplace. With that in mind, my expectations are to:

1. Be on time to class, rehearsals, and performances.
2. Come to class with the materials and attitude you need to perform your best.
 - If you have forgotten your instrument, you may use a loaner if there is one available, however you will lose your point for the day for preparation.
3. Be sensitive to the learning process.
 - Do not distract others.
 - Ridiculing of other individuals or other instrument sections is not tolerated.
4. Students are expected to practice outside of class time to get the most out of playing, to progress, and to reinforce skills learned in class.
 - It is your responsibility to be prepared for Orchestra class. Do not use our class time to prepare for another class. An ensemble sounds its best when all members are present, prepared, invested, and engaged.
5. Conduct themselves with a respectful, responsible, and positive demeanor towards themselves, each other, their teachers, parents, and community members. Our Orchestra is a supportive environment in which EVERYONE should feel safe.
6. Treat the Orchestra Room and Locker Room with respect.
 - The orchestra room is NOT your locker!
 - No food or drink other than water in the Orchestra Room.
7. All students must have all of their music and a pencil for every rehearsal.
 - If you are sharing music, make sure that all of the music is there, or you will lose participation point for the day. You will lose your point for the day for not being prepared as we mark in lots of bowings, articulations and dynamics.
8. Cell-phone use is prohibited during class, unless allowed by director. I want us to connect with each other and have Orchestra class be a time to unplug from technology. I also feel strongly that we ALL need to be present during our time together. Checking grades, social media, etc. can be done at another time. Let's have fun and make music!
9. Do your best! No one is asking you to be perfect, however you must also put forth the effort to be the best you can be on your instrument. No one else can do that for you but help is never far away! You can always ask me, your section leader, an Orchestra officer, or whomever for help!

COMMUNICATION

Canvas will be our main hub for communication, assignments, calendars, etc. However, we will also use the Remind App as a quick and easy way communicate with our students and parents. The app allows us to send out a text message without our personal phone number being attached. Canvas will still be our main information hub, but I will use Remind for reminders and information that I need to push out to you quickly. And of course, you can email me at jtosti@cbsd.org with questions.

Follow the steps below to receive the orchestra reminders:

Download the Remind App (can be accessed via their website if you prefer).

- All students are asked to join the CB West Orchestra Group, by texting the message @cbwesto to 81010.
- Once Chamber Strings members should also join the CB West Chamber Strings Group, by texting the message @cbwestch to 81010.

INSTRUMENTS

A quality orchestra program is dependent on students playing on quality instruments. While it is not essential for every student to immediately upgrade their instrument, many high school students continue to play on beginner model instruments that hinder the student's development towards more advanced playing skills and styles. An assortment of options can be provided to you if you are interested in upgrading the quality of your current instrument. **All instruments used in Orchestra MUST be in proper playing condition.** Strings should be changed every 6-12 months for the best sound. Please consult with me and/or your private teacher (if applicable) before upgrading your instrument or bow.

INSTRUMENT STORAGE

The school will provide storage units for instruments to be kept during the school day. Instruments are expected to go to/from school so that students have them for class and to practice at home with. Any instrument left unlocked or left overnight is done at the risk of the student. The school is not responsible for student instruments. Students are responsible for cleaning out all lockers and may be asked to clean them out periodically throughout the year. Any loaner instruments that are used **MUST** be put back in the correct place after every block. Cellists & bassists will be assigned a school-owned cello/bass to use for class but folders should come back and forth to school.

ORCHESTRA UNIFORMS

In order for our ensembles to look more uniform and to alleviate having to search for concert attire, we will be ordering specific Orchestra uniforms this year. Ordering information will be forthcoming. We will also run a CB West Orchestra spirit-wear sale in the fall.

SEATING

All seating decisions are at the discretion of the director and may change throughout the year. Each student has something unique and special to offer and you will be paired with someone you can help as well as learn from throughout the year. Your seat for the concert may not be the same as the seat you have in class so be prepared to move around throughout the year. It is important that you learn to play from every part of the section as well as work with different people. The exception to seats moving will be the section leader. At

the beginning of the year each student will perform an ungraded excerpt for Mrs. Tosti to help determine who will be the section leaders and aid in how you will be seated in class.

Section Leaders in the orchestra will be the first chair in your section in your block. Section leaders oversee bowings and making sure everyone has all of the markings. It is the job of the section leader to be able to perform ALL selected music at 100% accuracy, and to be able to lead their section in rehearsing and learning their music. Section leaders are also responsible for running sectionals and should be aware of parts of the music their section has trouble playing.

Orchestra Officers will be elected each year. Duties would include creating social events, fundraising, etc. This year's officers are Ethan Hardis, Ainsley Massey, Tyler Morrow, & Katie Shields.

GRADING POLICY

You will have a variety of required teacher assigned projects, rehearsals, performances, etc. that will each have assigned point values and are considered mandatory for the course. In addition to these teacher - assigned grades, there will be an additional category of grade where the STUDENT will choose from a selection of assignment possibilities to earn the remaining points that are available in the marking period. By giving you choice as to which assignments (and how many assignments) you complete, it is my hope that you can choose the options which best fit with your personal strengths and weaknesses as a musician and potentially fit into your personal schedules with greater ease for you.

Every marking period will have 150 possible points. The student choice portion will be out of 30 points. The students will choose which assignments (and how many assignments) they will need to complete to earn as many of the 30 points as they need to earn their marking period grade of choice. Earning the top grade of an 'A' in Orchestra should not be difficult for most orchestra students.

Purpose:

1. This grading system is designed as a framework for the student to develop their skills as a musician, without regard to their current ability level. It is designed in a way that allows students to choose and personalize a portion of the grading path which they are going to follow to make that progress. In other words, I have created choices of assignments which will allow the basic, proficient, and advanced orchestra student to challenge themselves towards personal improvement.
2. This grading system is designed to better align the grading systems and evaluations in Orchestra with what students are typically seeing and using in other academic courses. Please consider the student choice assignments in a similar way to how other courses require homework and projects which are intended to occur outside of the school day. In some cases, it will only require 2 or 3 SCG (student choice grade) assignments to earn enough points to reach the exceptional grade of an "A" in Orchestra. Others may choose to do 4-5 smaller assignments to earn the same grade. The path you choose to follow is up to you but allows ALL students to earn the grade they wish to receive.

Teacher Assigned Grades

120 possible points: typical breakdown

- Orchestra Concert or Assigned Graded Performance: 40 points
- Required Dress Rehearsal: (one per marking period) 25 points
- Assigned Whitesheet: 20 points

- In Class Assignment: 10 points
- Classroom Engagement Grade: (including preparation & participation) 25 Pts (1 point per class)

Student Choice Grades

30 possible points: Students will select the assignments they wish to complete in this section to earn points for this grade category each marking period.

ETUDE: (requires a minimum of one week of practice time) Student will learn an assigned section of an etude or a piece of music designed to enhance student techniques. The teacher will select/approve the excerpt. Student will work on the excerpt in their own time and submit performance using FlipGrid.

- Grade: 10 points (*Grade depends on performance quality/effort towards successful performance*)
- Limit: Max. of 2 per Marking Period

EXCERPTS: Each marking period, the teacher will post excerpts from the performance music. These excerpts would be practiced on your own and then recorded and submitted by audio or video recording. Excerpts can only be submitted BEFORE the date of the assigned concert that marking period.

- Grade: up to 10 points (*Grade depends on performance quality/effort towards successful performance*)
- Limit: 1 submission per MP/Concert

AFTER SCHOOL PRACTICE SESSION: Work on the *Classroom Orchestra Music* or music for private lessons after school. There is no performance requirement for this session. These sessions may only be completed between the time of 2:30-3:15 PM (students practice for 30 minutes during this time). Only 1 session can be completed on the same date (i.e. you may not stay twice as long for more points on a single day).

- Grade: 10 points for a 45-minute session (generally 2:45-3:30)

STUDENT CHOICE REHEARSAL: (easiest way to earn points) Attend an after-school Orchestra rehearsal scheduled by the director.

- Grade: 15 Points (*Graded on attendance of a 60- minute rehearsal. Points are at director's discretion for attendance of less than the complete rehearsal time*).
- Limit: Only available when a group rehearsal is scheduled.

"WHAT DID YOU LEARN?" WHITESHEET: Submit via email or handwritten, an additional whitesheet on a topic or subject matter different than the assigned whitesheet. The topic of this type of whitesheet is to be a reflection on something which you learned because of your orchestra studies.

The purpose should be a reflection on how something you have learned (connected to music, orchestra, or something related) has impacted on your life and made you experience something in a new way. The Whitesheet should demonstrate adequate thought and reflection on the chosen topic to receive credit.

- Grade: 5 Points
- LIMIT: 1 extra whitesheet per Marking Period (you may still submit a whitesheet whenever you'd like if you have important things to ask or share).

ONLINE THEORY QUIZ: In your time at home or study hall, complete an online Music/Orchestra quiz or challenge scoring an acceptable minimum score. Visit musictheory.net or another theory site.

- Grade: 5 Points
- Limit: Only as many as are offered each Marking Period.

DESIGN-YOUR-OWN ORCHESTRA SERVICE/PERFORMANCE GRADE: This category will require a student to come up with a proposal which is approved by the director in ADVANCE. Approval will be given on a case-by-case basis. The student must adequately complete the approved task in the agreed upon manner and timeframe.

- Grade: Point value to be determined by director.

FUNDRAISERS

I am seeking a parent fundraising committee to help organize, publicize, and run a few events throughout the year. I am asking for one parent volunteer per grade level so that I can have a team of parents to turn to for input and suggestions, and to take the lead on fundraising so that I can concentrate on being the music director for our ensembles. This would not be a big time commitment and would help our Orchestra out tremendously. Existing Fundraisers include our Tabora Farms Thanksgiving Pie Sale, a Spring Flower Sale, and others that likely won't run this year due to COVID. Please email me at jtosti@cbsd.org to volunteer. Thank you in advance for your help!

PRIVATE LESSONS

While it is not required that students take private lessons, I do encourage you to consider doing so as there is no better way to get the individual attention and technique training to quickly improve. Most students who take private lessons find the instrument more enjoyable and rewarding as they attain increased ability. A list of local private teachers can be provided upon request.