

Beginner Orchestra Handbook 2011-2012



Lucas Darger Director of Orchestras nathanael.darger@hcisd.org 956-427-3000 x4514 Dear Parents,

Welcome to the award-winning Coakley Middle School Orchestra program! Orchestra students develop responsibility, self-discipline, social skills, confidence, leadership, and dependability. Being in orchestra will give students a sense of accomplishment, pride and also an opportunity to develop musical skills that will enrich their lives. Your child's success will be directly related to the amount of practice and effort on their part. This is where parental support and encouragement are so important. I am very interested in the success of your child, so please do not hesitate to stop in or give me a call.

Please make sure you plan on coming in on Wednesday, August 24th between 5:00 and 7:00pm for the instrument drive! At this event local music stores will be there and I will be able to meet you and help explain the instruments and your options, and answer any questions you may have. Also, Please sign, fill out, and have your child return the Handbook Acknowledgement Form, Permission Slip and Medical Form.

Sincerely,

Lucas Darger Director of Orchestras Coakley Middle School

About Coakley Orchestras

There are three orchestras at Coakley, as well as four beginning orchestra classes. Seventh and eighth grade students will be evaluated and placed in the appropriate group based on their performance during the previous year. Any student new to our school will audition to be placed in an orchestra. Beginning orchestra is offered to 6th grade students with no previous experience, and beginners are placed in the appropriate class according to what instrument they requested in 5th grade.

Rehearsal Procedure

Be in the Orchestra Room when the bell rings and in your seat ready to work 1 minute after the bell rings. When the director steps onto the podium, students should sit up on the front part of their chairs with their instrument in ready position, stop all talking, and wait for instruction. When the director raises his/her arms to conduct, students should immediately move to playing position. No gum, candy, food or beverage will be allowed during rehearsals.

Cougar Beginner Orchestra Calendar

2011-2012

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Place</u>
8/24	5-7	CMS Instrument Drive	CMS Band Hall
8/31	6-8pm	HCISD District-wide Instrument Drive	Gutierrez MS
9/19-10/3		Fall Fundraiser	
12/7	3:45-5:30	Dress Rehearsal	Coakley
12/13	6pm	Winter Orchestra Concert	MMA
5/11	All Day	Schlitterbahn Competition and Trip	SPI
5/16	3:45-5:30	Dress Rehearsal	Coakley
5/17	6pm	Spring Orchestra Concert	MMA

Bold indicates the event is required.

Highlighting indicates the event is a concert open to the public/parents

^{*}Additional After-School Rehearsals will be announced prior to each concert. All Dates and Times are subject to change.

This handbook is for parents and students. Please read the handbook carefully and then sign and return the forms portion to the orchestra director. Retain the information portion of the handbook for future reference.

I. Qualifications

- 1. **Eligibility** is a crucial factor for participation in extracurricular events! Students should remain eligible in order to stay in good standing in the organization.
- 2. **Attendance** at all rehearsals, performances, and sectionals is required. A student will only be excused for serious medical or family emergencies. Please check the schedule and plan with these dates in mind. Excess absences may result in dismissal at the discretion of the director.
- 3. **Discipline problems will not be tolerated**. Multiple visits to OCS or one assignment to BAC may result in dismissal from the program. Being in the CMS Orchestra program is a privilege. If you have trouble following instructions, showing proper respect towards fellow students, taking care of school property, or maintaining a positive attitude, then orchestra may not be the class for you. Anyone unable to follow these guidelines may be removed at the director's discretion

II. Responsibilities of the Student

- 1. **Practice Daily.** The single most important factor determining success on an instrument is consistency. Students should practice a minimum of 30 minutes each day, 6 days per week. Whenever possible, students should increase that time as much as they can. Remember that practicing for 60 minutes one day is not the same as practicing for 30 minutes on two days!
- 2. **Come Prepared.** Students should have their instrument and materials out and be in their seats ready to tune when the bell rings.
- 3. **Attend All Required Sectionals, Concerts, and Events.** Students will be notified well in advance of concert dates and other required events. Many of these are listed below.
- 4. **Attend Two Additional Concerts.** Students will be required to attend two orchestra concerts that they are not participating in, and to write a response. The concerts must be high school level or above (university, community, or professional). The first response will be due December 4th, and the second May 8th. A program must be turned in along with the response. The All-Region Concert counts as one of these concerts, even for participants.
- 5. **Maintain Your Grades.** As with other school activities, orchestra is "no pass, no play." Students who do not maintain passing grades will not be allowed on certain field trips and competitions. Please get help and notify me if you are getting behind in another class BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

III. Parent/Guardian Suggestions

- 1. Please be sure to pick up your student after orchestra events. Often there will be bus transportation to concerts, but not returning. This will be indicated on the information given to you in advance.
- 2. You are encouraged to inquire about your child's practice and to attend your child's performances.
- 3. Arrange a regular time and place for practice. Your child **ALWAYS** has music to practice. At least 30 minutes of daily undisturbed practice is needed for musical growth.
- 4. Give your child a safe place to keep his/her instrument. Avoid extremely hot or cold temperatures (never leave it in an unattended vehicle!). Review the "How to Care for Your Instrument" handout that will be given when your child gets his/her instrument.

- 5. Do not attempt to repair the instrument yourself. Seek help from the director or a qualified repair shop.
- 6. Take an active role in your child's music education. Many opportunities exist to assist. These include chaperoning trips, monitoring students at concerts, fundraising and publicity.
- 7. Take time to talk to the teacher. Discuss any concerns you may have with your child's music education with the director.
- 8. Time is precious. Insist that your child be on time for lessons, rehearsals, and performances.
- 9. Whenever possible, it is always beneficial and highly encouraged to enroll your student in private lessons.

IV. Concert Attire

Formal Concerts (Winter, Spring): "Sunday best" -- **Girls** will wear a nice blouse and dress slacks/skirt or a nice dress, and dress shoes. **Boys** will wear a nice collared button-up dress shirt, dress slacks, dress shoes and black socks. Ties are allowed but not required. Attire should conform to school dress code.

Casual Concerts (Schlitterbahn): Blue Jeans (no shorts) & Orchestra T-shirt or similarly colored shirt.

V. Supplies

Required at class daily:

- 1. Instrument
- 2. Everest or Kun Shoulder Rest for violin and viola; rock stop for cello and bass
- 3. 1" 3-ring binder
- 4. Music
- 5. Pencil (NOT a pen)
- 6. Soft, clean cloth
- 7. Rosin

For Home practice:

- 8. Music stand
- 9. Tuner/Metronome (optional but highly recommended)

VI. Music Folder

Students must purchase a 1" three-ring binder for music and handouts. The binder should be divided into three sections: Handouts and Announcements; Concert Music; and Musical Handouts. All music issued to students should be kept in their orchestra binder and maintained in good condition. Music should not be loose and/or folded, and should never be marked on with Pen except for the Student's name. Students will be issued ONE COPY of music, and should immediately put their name at the top. If you lose or destroy your music you will need to submit a request for a replacement using the Copy Request Form. You are responsible to have your music at class and will lose a portion of your participation grade for that day if you do not have music at class.

Music/folder checks will be held regularly during the year to see if students have the correct music in their folder, and to see if students are marking (only in pencil!) the music according to the instructions given in class.

VII. Lockers

Each student will be assigned a locker and a lock combination for that locker during the first week of school. Students may not trade lockers, switch locks, or borrow supplies from another locker without asking. Students MUST keep their lockers locked at ALL TIMES (even during class). If a student loses a lock they must pay a \$5 fee to replace the lock. A stolen lock is the result of not following the rules and will be categorized as being "lost". There will be a zero-tolerance policy for horseplay around the lockers. Students found playing in or on the instrument lockers will be given a referral.

VIII. Grooming

Students must keep their fingernails trimmed short in order to play in the orchestra. Long nails will damage strings, affect posture and intonation, and possibly cause injury. If a student decides to get fake nails for a special occasion, they must be removed by the following Monday. Fingernail clippers will be provided to a student immediately if seen with long fingernails. A parent note will be needed if fake nails must stay on after Monday.

IX. Concert Attendance

Orchestra is a team in which each member is integral. All students are REQUIRED to attend ALL performances. Concerts are extensions of the classroom and are the highlight of the learning process. An unexcused absence from a performance will result in a failing grade and possible dismissal from the program. Excusal from concerts will only be granted in the event of extreme illness, major family emergency, recognized religious holidays, or other extenuating circumstances with the director's permission. A note from the parent and/or physician is required to be given an excused absence, and students having excused absences will be given the opportunity to complete a suitable assignment to recover lost points. Unexcused absences may not be made up.

X. Orchestra Officers

Orchestra officers are an elected leadership council. The purpose of this council is to provide assistance to the director and leadership in the orchestra program. The council will meet as necessary to discuss special needs in the orchestra and provide ideas for social events. Nominations for 7th & 8th grade orchestra officers are held in May for the following year. 6th grade elections will be held in mid-September. Elections are done by secret ballot and only members of the orchestra can participate. Students may run for only one office. Positions include:

President & Vice President (7th & 8th Grade Only) Librarian (JV & Varsity Only) 6th Grade Representatives (1 low string, 1 high string)

XI. Fundraising

The Orchestra will hold up to two fundraisers during the school year to give students the opportunity to cover their expenses: one in the fall, and one in the spring. Funds go into the orchestra's activities account to pay for trips and other activities, such as the year-end Schlitterbahn Trip and food for concerts. All students are expected to fundraise, and profits they

earn will be applied towards their year-end trip fees first. Students who do not raise enough to cover their portion of the activities will need to pay their own way in order to participate.

XII. Parent Volunteers

Parent volunteers are needed often throughout the year for chaperones on field trips and concerts, preparing materials, etc. Please check the list at the end of this handbook for the things that you are interested in helping out on. I generally contact parents by email to ask for volunteers, and take them on a first come, first served basis. Parents must have a current background check completed by the district for the current school year in order to volunteer, so please fill out the attached background check if you intend to volunteer.

XIII. Private Lessons

Private lessons are an essential part of the success of any student. Private lessons are the most effective way to learn advanced techniques, and they are highly recommended. You may obtain a list of qualified instructors in the area by contacting the Orchestra Director.

XIV. Grading

10% Preparation (Home Practice)

10% After-School Sectionals

20% Performance Quizzes (Chair Tests) and Written Quizzes

35% Daily Classroom Participation

25% Concert Performances.

XV. Instrument Care

Students will be given a handout regarding instrument care. Keep in mind:

- 1. Instruments are fragile. Handle with care!
- 2. Never drag an instrument on the floor (in or out of its case)
- 3. Loosen the bow before putting your instrument away.
- 4. Wipe any dust or prints of the instrument daily before putting it away.
- 5. The instrument should be kept in the case when not in use.
- 6. Protect your instrument from extreme temperatures. Never leave it in the car!

XVI. Resources

Following are some helpful resources for string players:

Instrument rental & purchase, accessories, supplies:

Shar -- www.sharmusic.com

Southwest Strings – <u>www.swstrings.com</u>

Charles Liu Violins – www.finestringinstruments.com

Antonio Strad Violins – 687-9788

Melhart Music Center – 682-6147

Other resources:

Free online metronome – www.metronomeonline.com

Free online tuner -- www.get-tuned.com/online tuners.php

Other resources -- www.violinstudent.com

The following Section should be filled out and returned to the Orchestra Director by August 25th, 2011

Orchestra Handbook Signature Form

I HAVE READ THE HANDBOOK, UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS, AND I WILL ABIDE BY IT TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY:

Signed:		
	Coakley Orchestra Member	Date
Print Name: _		
Signed:		
<u> </u>	Parent / Guardian	Date
Print Name:		

Contact / Emergency Information Form

Note: It is critical that I have current contact information so that I can relay information effectively, communicate with parents as necessary, and especially to be able to contact a student in the event of absence or emergency during or prior to a field trip or rehearsal. Please inform me if this information changes so that I may keep my records up to date. This information will not be sold or used for solicitation in any way.

Student Name:							
Zip							
Preferred e	email :						
Mom's Cel	l Phone						
Mom's Wo	ork Phone						
cident Policy? Yes	_ No						
Pho	ne Number						
	s your student has:						
incase parents are unreachable	e):						
Relation:	Phone						
propriate item or items below e up I send out an email to tho round check on the next page. haperone an orchestra activity r students and/or pass out pro- with fundraising activities.	y, e.g., a party or bus trip.						
	ZipPreferred eMom's CelMom's Wood cident Policy? YesPho ical and health issues or allergiePho ical and health issues or allergie						

RELEASE FORM FOR THE ELECTRONIC AND MEDIA DISPLAY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Student's Name _				
Grade	Id #			
	on for personally identically or otherwise) and		oout my child or a photogrict, or the media.	_ graph of my child to be
□ I DO NOT giv	ve my permission to dis	splay personal, identi	fiable information of my	child.
Signature of stude Date	ent's parent or guardian	1		