

CONROE HIGH SCHOOL

HANDBOOK FOR ORCHESTRA

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WELCOME TO THE CONROE HIGH SCHOOL TIGER ORCHESTRA

Dear students, parents, and guardians,

My name is Grady Lai, and I am excited to become the Head Orchestra Director at Conroe High School! I am a new teacher and am looking forward to starting a new chapter in the history of the Conroe High School orchestra program this school year! All orchestra students will be part of a musical organization whose music and traditions will encompass five centuries yet reflect the musical trends of today.

The Conroe High School orchestra program will challenge students on all levels of musical achievement. Three aspects of instrumental music will be encouraged as a regular part of curricular and extracurricular activities. **Orchestra** will dominate our classroom activities as we prepare for a wide variety of concert performances. The aspects of **Small Ensemble (Chamber Music)** and **Solo Performances** will also have a significant place in our curriculum and schedule.

Another important goal is providing the students with a **wholesome, active, and fun organization** that they can belong to and take pride in. Hopefully, they will develop long-term friendships that make high school an exciting and positive experience.

This is going to be a great year! I am looking forward to getting to know you and working with you, and I always appreciate your help and support. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time with your concerns or questions.

Sincerely,
Grady Lai
Head Orchestra Director
Conroe High School

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Chamber Orchestra

This competitive orchestra is the most advanced orchestra and is considered the Varsity Orchestra. This orchestra is for students who have auditioned and been selected for this ensemble. Students in this class will have the opportunity to continue their development at the most advanced level. Students are expected to maintain the highest level of responsibilities and musical preparation, and are REQUIRED to perform with the String Orchestra, as well as UIL Contests (both Solo/Ensemble and Concert/Sight-reading) Students are strongly encouraged to audition for Region and All-State Orchestra. Attendance at ALL rehearsals, sectionals, clinics, masterclasses, and performances is REQUIRED.

Symphonic Orchestra

This competitive orchestra is an advanced orchestra and is considered the Junior Varsity Orchestra. This orchestra is for students who have auditioned and been selected for this ensemble. Students in this class will have the opportunity to continue their development at an advanced level. Students are encouraged to perform at UIL Contests (both Solo/Ensemble and Concert/Sight-reading) and Region Orchestra. Attendance at ALL rehearsals, sectionals, clinics, masterclasses, and performances is REQUIRED.

Instrumental Ensemble

This orchestra is a preparatory orchestra designed to prepare students for success in higher levels of orchestra. Students in this orchestra will be very focused on building technique and playing ability. Students are encouraged to perform at the UIL Solo/Ensemble Contest. Attendance at ALL rehearsals and performances is REQUIRED.

9th Grade Chamber Orchestra

This orchestra is a 9th grade preparatory orchestra designed to prepare students for success in higher levels of orchestra. This orchestra is for students who have auditioned and been selected for this ensemble. Students in this orchestra will be very focused on building technique and playing ability at an accelerated pace. Students are strongly encouraged to perform at the UIL Solo/Ensemble Contest and CISD Honor Orchestra. Attendance at ALL rehearsals, sectionals, clinics, masterclasses, and performances is for this 9th grade orchestra is REQUIRED.

9th Grade Orchestra

This orchestra is a 9th grade preparatory orchestra designed to prepare students for success in higher levels of orchestra. Students in this orchestra will be very focused on building technique and playing ability. Students are encouraged to perform at the UIL Solo/Ensemble Contest. Attendance at ALL rehearsals and performances for this 9th grade orchestra is REQUIRED.

Mariachi

This ensemble is for all 10th -12th grade students who have an interest in learning and performing cultural music. Enrollment in other orchestra or music classes is not required. Students should be able to play one or more of the following instruments: guitar, violin, trumpet, or be able to sing. Activity fees are required. Attendance at ALL rehearsals, sectionals, clinics, masterclasses, and performances is for this ensemble is REQUIRED.

ORCHESTRA PLACEMENT

Placement into one of the High School competitive orchestras (Chamber, Symphonic or Chamber 9 Orchestra) is by audition only and based on one or more of the following musical components: orchestra excerpts, etudes, scales, prepared pieces, and sight-reading. Conduct, effort, and academic success will also be important factors in the final decision.

Because of the high standard of excellence expected from members of the Orchestra, students who fail one or more classes during the year for a nine-week grading period are not guaranteed returning positions in a competitive orchestra the following year.

Also, the Director may find it necessary upon occasion to alter the orchestra's seating and instrumentation to achieve the best, most balanced sound for that particular event. All Director decisions are final.

GRADING POLICIES

Grades will be earned based on the following:

Daily: 30%

These grades will include items such as daily participation, binder checks, equipment and supply checks, pop quizzes, minor "spot-check" playing tests, sectionals, and written assignments.

Major: 70%

These grades will include items such as Formal announced Playing tests, After-School Rehearsals, Dress Rehearsals, Concert Participation, Concert Performance Uniform, and Contests/Competitions.

Eligibility:

Students who participate in orchestra will be expected to maintain passing grades in **ALL** subjects. This is extremely important to the ensemble. Activities such as UIL contest and **competitions at amusement parks/festivals** are considered extracurricular. A student **cannot participate** unless he/she has passed all classes.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

These items need to be purchased and brought to class **no later than the second full week of school.**

1. Shoulder Rest (violins and violas)
2. Xeros Rock Stop (cellos and basses)
3. Wire Music Stand (for use at home)
4. Cleaning Cloth (a washcloth or bandana also works)
5. 3' Stool (for bass players to use at home)
6. 1" Black Binder
7. Dividers for Binder (at least 5 tabs)
8. Sharpened Pencil
9. Rosin
10. Hole-punched spiral or composition notebook

CLASS MATERIALS

The following items must be in class **EVERY** day. This is part of your Daily grade. You will receive 100 points if you have everything at your seat once class begins. You will lose **10 points** off your grade for each item missing. The Orchestra daily supplies will consist of the following items:

1. 1" Black Orchestra Binder
2. Instrument & Bow

3. Shoulder Rest
4. Rosin
5. Music and Spiral or Composition book
6. Fingernails that are short and neatly trimmed

The Orchestra Binder will consist of the following items:

1. Pencil that is sharpened and ready to use
2. 5-tab Dividers labeled as follows:
 - Concert Pieces
 - Scales/Warm-up sheets
 - Etudes/Region Audition Music/Solo piece
 - Theory papers
 - Written Test/Quiz papers
3. One photocopy of each piece currently being played. If the sheet music is lost, additional copies will be provided at a replacement charge of \$1.00 per piece. This is to encourage student responsibility. Students without music are unable to rehearse, and this results in the loss of a daily grade.

The student will provide music for UIL Solos with an original part and score that is numbered.

Supply checks will be unannounced.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES AND BEHAVIOR

The orchestra classroom/rehearsal is the same as any other classroom concerning intent and application. Rules that pertain to student behavior are few and reasonable and can be applied to any other appropriate classroom situation.

- Students are expected to enter the classroom, gather their music binder, supplies, and instrument, go to their seat, and unpack before the bell rings.
- Attention and a quiet atmosphere will be maintained during the class period and at all rehearsals. Any disruptive behavior is unacceptable. In particular, talking while the Director is giving instruction and talking about topics unrelated to class content are not permitted.
- Respect the rights of other students and adults by being polite, patient, and courteous.
- Students will not be allowed to chew gum, eat, or drink in the Orchestra Room.
- Students will treat school instruments, uniforms, and other equipment with respect.
- Concert Etiquette will be taught and strictly enforced at all Concerts and Events.

SECTIONALS

Being an Orchestra Member in Chamber Orchestra, Symphonic Orchestra and 9th grade Chamber Orchestra requires regular participation in Sectionals. Weekly sectional rehearsals are the best way to get into the detailed work for the student's specific instrument and part and are vital to both individual advancement and to the overall success of the orchestra.

Outside jobs, extracurricular activities or homework, routine appointments, and driver education do not qualify as excuses for missed sectionals.

Sectionals begin August 22 and end after the Christmas Concert. The Spring Semester Sectional Schedule will be the same as Fall and will begin January 9.

The Sectional Schedule is posted on the Events Board and is **SUBJECT TO CHANGE!**

PERFORMANCE DRESS

Our appearance reflects the pride we have in our performance. Students will be expected to follow Concert Dress guidelines **strictly**. **If a student loses any portion of their uniform, they will be required to replace it!**

REMEMBER: Appropriate concert dress is a **Major grade!** If students do not follow uniform requirements for concerts, they will **NOT** be allowed to perform at these events, and it will severely affect their grade.

For all onstage Formal Concert Performances, please dress as follows:

Formal Uniform

Men:

White Tuxedo Shirt and Coat

Bow tie

Black Tuxedo Pants

Black **Knee-High Dress Socks and Shoes**

Women:

Black Formal Dress

Black Socks or Stockings

Black **Dress Shoes** (no casual shoes or heels higher than 1")

Informal Uniform

All:

CHS Orchestra Polo

Black Dress Pants

Black **Knee-High Dress Socks** or Stockings

Black **Dress Shoes** (no casual shoes or heels higher than 1")

Mariachi

Formal Uniform

Men:

Traje Jacket

White Button Down Shirt

Mariachi Mono

Traje Pants

Black Boots

Women:

Traje Jacket

White Button Down Shirt

Mariachi Mono

Traje Skirt

Black Boots

Mariachi Informal Uniform

All:

Black Button Down Shirt

Black Pants

Black Dress Shoes (or Boots)

Ladies (Black Dress)

CONCERT POLICY

The success of our orchestra depends on ALL students attending each and every performance. By enrolling in orchestra, students and their parents are committing to attending All Orchestra Concerts and other similar Events during the year.

Each concert performance is worth 200 points toward the Major grade. 100 Grade points will be for punctuality/participation at the rehearsal/ concert, and **100 Grade points** will be for having the correct uniform, with 25 points taken off for each item missing.

As parents and educators, we are keenly aware of the numerous demands placed upon student's schedules. While it is understood that emergencies and illness arise, **it is expected that students and their families will plan ahead to be in attendance for all required events.** All Concert and Event dates are given as soon as possible so families have adequate time to plan their schedules.

Students with emergency circumstances are REQUIRED to contact the director via telephone or email PRIOR to the performance "call time". Like sports, the music we make is a "team effort," and we cannot do our best without ALL members of the team present. Concert Make-Up for excused absences will be at the **discretion of the Director.**

Communication is the biggest single factor in resolving these conflicts, so informing the Director at the **earliest knowledge of a problem** usually eliminates problems and resentment. **Please do not hesitate** to let the Director help work problems out.

CONCERT AND CONTEST BEHAVIOR

- Conroe High School students represent our school district, our department, their families, and themselves. A student's best behavior is always expected.
- All CHS school rules are always in effect on and off campus.
- Smoking or use of controlled substances will not be tolerated in any situation and will result in a lower concert grade and dismissal from the concert.
- Students must treat others with respect and avoid the use of profanity or suggestive language.
- Students must not speak negatively about other school groups, performers, or directors. Even educational comments/opinions at a concert can be misinterpreted by people within earshot.
- No talking or public displays of affection during a concert.

COMPETITION ORCHESTRAS AND ENSEMBLES

Chamber, Jr. Varsity and Chamber 9 are orchestras that compete at UIL. Other ensembles may be formed in order to compete for Trip Orchestras or as quartets or medium ensembles. To compete at our best at these events, each student MUST perform all of their competition music as a playing test in order to compete with the orchestra or ensemble. **Also, if a student misses more than 3 sectionals in the Spring Semester and those sectionals are unexcused, the student will not be able to compete.**

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

Success of each student and the orchestra depends on individual hard work. **Daily practice is ESSENTIAL.** Always playing through songs is not good practice. Good practice involves playing a passage in tune, playing correct rhythms, playing with a clear tone, and playing a phrase musically. This can be accomplished by slowly working through a passage until it is perfect, and then speeding it up to tempo. Listening to professional recordings of the music the student is working on is extremely helpful as well. **Thirty minutes of practice per day on school music is required, and an hour total per day is suggested.**

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Rehearsal and performance times are stated, and all students are expected to be picked up within thirty (30) minutes of the end of a rehearsal/concert or upon returning from a performance. There are some instances when arrival times are not exactly known but are estimated. These estimated times are generally very accurate and should be adhered to. If time of arrival does vary, student will be

instructed to call from the bus or applicable mode of transportation. Please be prompt and pick up your students.

ISS/DAEP/OSS POLICY

In School Suspension:

Students who receive ISS two times in a single academic year will not be allowed to compete in any TMEA Region/All-State or **ANY** UIL events and will not be allowed to travel with the orchestra for any other events. This includes annual trips.

DAEP and Out of School Suspension:

Students who receive OSS are subject to removal from the orchestra program.

CELL PHONE POLICY

Students are to come into the orchestra room ready to rehearse. Therefore, all cell phones, ear buds, headphones etc. are to be put in the student's backpack and left there until the end of class, or unless the teacher specifically asks the students to get out their cell phones for use with music related apps such as Remind and Charms. There are stations around the orchestra classroom where students may recharge their phones. However, **THE STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN CELL PHONE!** If a student's phone is lost or damaged due to their choice to recharge their phone, the orchestra teachers, Conroe High School, and Conroe ISD **ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE** for any loss, damage, theft etc.

PRIVATE LESSON INFORMATION

CISD has an approved list of teachers. Students can study privately with the teachers on this list at a low cost to the student. These lessons are not mandatory but **are strongly encouraged**. Taking private lessons is an outstanding way for each student to become more proficient technically and musically. The lessons can also help with all-region auditions, state auditions, solo/ensemble contest, concert music, and generally improve the musicianship and skill level of the student. Private lessons play an invaluable role in the development of each individual and leads to significant improvement in the overall quality of the orchestra.

INSTRUMENT STORAGE

Each student is required to have an instrument that is the appropriate size. There are cages and racks in the orchestra room for all instruments. Students will respect their instrument and the instruments of other students. Students may not use another student's instrument. The Director is not responsible for misplaced or misused instruments.

FACILITY CARE

The primary function of the orchestra room is to serve as a teaching space for on-campus curricular courses as well as for off-campus guest ensemble. Its condition and appearance must remain orderly and safe. The following guidelines will be strictly enforced to ensure the safety and care of our facility.

1. All stands, chairs, A/V components, computers, music folios, instruments and other items in the orchestra room are to be treated properly and with respect.
2. Only students enrolled in Orchestra are allowed in the orchestra room. Friends are asked to wait outside while orchestra students retrieve instruments or conduct classroom business.

- Books, backpacks, athletic equipment, and projects may not be left in any part of the orchestra room during the day without the expressed consent of the Director.

ORCHESTRA LETTER JACKET REQUIREMENTS

There are 4 ways to earn a Letter Jacket for Orchestra.

- Make a “I” rating at the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest
- Make All-State Orchestra for 1 year
- Make Region and/or District Honor Orchestra for 2 years (does not need to be consecutive years)
- Participate in Orchestra for Four Years

MARIACHI LETTER JACKET REQUIREMENTS

There are 4 ways to earn a Letter Jacket for Mariachi.

- Make a “I” rating at the UIL State Mariachi Festival
- Make All-State Mariachi for 1 year
- Make Region Mariachi for 2 years (does not need to be consecutive years)
- Participate in Mariachi for 4 years

CISD ORCHESTRA MAINTENANCE FEE

All CISD students using a school instrument at school or at home are required to pay an instrument maintenance fee of \$75. This is a District Policy. This fee covers repairs, parts, strings etc. for the school instruments. Students who qualify for free or reduced lunch do not pay the fee. The fee may be paid in two installments of \$32.50.

Some students have instruments at home that are purchased or rented. Students may bring those instruments back and forth to school every day and will not have to pay the maintenance fee. However, the school and the Director are not liable or responsible in any way for personal instruments left at the school. Please remember that the bigger instruments (cello and bass) do not fit on school buses and are not allowed on the bus. If there is a financial problem or if you are on free or reduced lunch, please contact the Director as soon as possible.

ORCHESTRA ACTIVITY FEE

Like all Fine Arts Electives, the CHS Orchestra requires an activity fee from all students in order to provide a high-quality competitive program. The Conroe Orchestra will collect an **activity fee of \$85** for each orchestra student. A FEE SCHEDULE is outlined below to allow semesterly payments so that the fee does not produce financial hardship. **This fee does not include any Field Trips, Travel Trips, Socials, Spirit shirts, or Spirit items.** Please make checks out as shown below and turn in to the Conroe High School Financial Secretary.

Required Fees:

\$85 Activity/Materials Fee-Made payable to **CHS Orchestra**. Due either up front or in two semesterly payments as follows:

\$50.00 Due September 26, 2022

\$35.00 Due February 6, 2023

\$75 CISD Instrument Usage Fee-Made payable to **CISD**. Due either up front or in two semesterly payments as follows:

\$32.50 Due September 26, 2022

\$32.50 Due February 6, 2023