Orchestra Handbook

Dear Orchestra Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Brandeis High School Orchestra! I hope you have had a restful and enjoyable summer. I look forward to a very exciting, successful, and rewarding school year. Our orchestra program, the director, students, and parents have an opportunity to create a strong and positive foundation that will be long lasting and far reaching. The improvement and success of every student is what we look to create every day through positive communication and development.

Included in this handbook are the grading policies, attendance requirements, and student expectations for the school year and much more. Additionally, parents and students are expected to keep track of the orchestra calendar attached to the handbook & on our website and keep up to date with the bandapp.

The information found in this handbook will also help you to understand your role in the orchestra program. In this class students will have an opportunity to gain pride and ownership through daily rehearsals, concerts and activities as well as obtain experiences and skills that will remain with them forever. I look forward to a wonderful year.

Sincerely,

Ms. De Leon
Brandeis High School Orchestra Director
olga-1.deleon@nisd.net

Orchestra Classes

- **Prep B (4th Period)** Also known as Sub Non Orchestra Orchestra is composed primarily of students who are experienced musicians who have achieved and will work to solidify their instrumental technique and prepare them for more advanced technique and repertoire. These students should have some shifting experience and have demonstrated vibrato. These students will participate in the UIL Concert & Sightreading Contest and are highly encouraged to participate in UIL Solo & Ensemble.

- **Prep A (3rd Period)** Also known as JV STRING Orchestra is composed primarily of students who are experienced musicians who have achieved and will work to solidify their instrumental technique and prepare them for more advanced technique and repertoire. These students should have some shifting experience and have demonstrated vibrato. These students will participate in the UIL Concert & Sightreading Contest and are highly encouraged to participate in UIL Solo & Ensemble.

- **Concert/JV (2nd Period)** Also known as the Philharmonic orchestra is composed primarily of students who are experienced musicians who have achieved and will work to solidify their instrumental technique and prepare them for more advanced technique and repertoire. These students should be able to comfortably play in positions 1-4 and have demonstrated vibrato. These students are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances, participate in the UIL Concert & Sightreading Contest, and in the UIL Solo & Ensemble Contest. They are highly encouraged to audition for the TMEA All Region orchestra.

- **Symphony (Varsity) Orchestra (1st Period)** also known as Symphony Orchestra is composed of students who continue to work at mastering instrumental technique, work toward a higher level of proficiency, demonstrate their commitment to the organization and to learning, and consistently model proper orchestral etiquette and behavior. Chamber Orchestra students are required to have passing semester grades in all courses. Students who do not maintain these standards may be transferred to a different orchestra the next year. These students should be able to comfortably play in positions 1-7 and have demonstrated mature musical expression. These students are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances, audition for and make TMEA All Region orchestra, audition for All-State, participate in the UIL Concert & Sightreading Contest, and in UIL Solo & Ensemble Contest.

Placement Auditions

For students currently enrolled at Brandeis HS and its feeder schools, auditions for the following school year will be held in May of the current school year.

Audition Material for Varsity Orchestra

- Students will need to play 2-3 minutes of a concerto or solo work and scale
- Solo should be a UIL Class I found on the https://www.uiltexas.org/pml/
- 3 Octave Scale (Violin, Viola, Cello) 2 Octave for String Bass
- Participation in UIL Solo & Ensemble, UIL Concert & Sightreading, & TMEA All Region

Audition Material for Junior Varsity Orchestra (Philharmonic)

- Students will need to play 2-3 minutes of a concerto or solo work and scale
- Solo should be a UIL Class I or II solo found/listed on the UIL PML - https://www.uiltexas.org/pml/
- 2 Octave Scale

Audition Material for Junior Varsity Orchestra (STRING)

- Students will need to play 2-3 minutes of a concerto or solo work and scale
- Solo should be a UIL Class I or II solo found/listed on the UIL PML - https://www.uiltexas.org/pml/
- 2 Octave Scale

Students who do not participate in the required competitions will have to re-audition. Placement in an orchestra will also be determined by a student's overall performance and attitude during the current school year.

Grading Policy

- 50% Tests/Performance tests (Concerts are counted as two test grades)
- 20% Pass-Offs/Practice Card
- 20% Sectionals/Rehearsals
    - *Students who miss before or after school rehearsals may lose the privilege of performing in concerts with the orchestra. In that case, students will be given an alternate assignment.*
- 10% Daily Performance Grade/Materials/Theory & History Quizzes

Tests (Performance)

Each Concert/Performance counts as two test grades. No final grade lower than 50 shall be given for any nine weeks. However, Progress Reports, given to students not passing at the three-week mark, will reflect the actual grade. If a student misses a test due to absence, the test must be made up by the 8th Friday of the nine weeks. If a student misses a concert due to a medical/family emergency, an alternative assignment will be available.

The "No-Pass-No-Play" rule affects all Fine Arts classes, including orchestra. If you fail another course in any given nine weeks you will NOT be eligible to participate in any orchestral activities for the next three (3) weeks. These participation-type activities include: Region/All-State auditions and/or performances and Music Festivals (Trip). KEEP UP YOUR GRADES. Daily orchestra rehearsals in class and local concerts at school are exempt from the "No-Pass-No-Play" rule because they are considered to be an "extension of the classroom activity." Maintaining a high grade in an elective course such as orchestra is very important. If you are in the Chamber or Concert orchestra and your grades begin to drop, consideration for a change of placement into a lower orchestra may be discussed. Parents, if your child is making below a 90 in orchestra, he or she is not practicing enough to be successful. Anything below a 90 in orchestra should be seen as a letter grade of a "D" or lower.
technical exercises, and method books. Pass-offs occur during class unless otherwise specified. Students will have a pass-off approximately every 2-3 weeks. Orchestra students will perform individually.

Pass-offs (Playing Tests)

Pass-offs are evaluations over excerpts from the assigned music,

- **Prep/Sub Non** Orchestras a grade of 90 or above is required in order for an assignment to be "passed-off."

- **Varsity & JV/JV STRING,** a grade of 95 or above is required in order for an assignment to be considered "passed-off" Pass-offs will be due on the Thursday of the week the assignment is due. A student who did not get a 90 or above has until the next pass-off to retake.

Concert Attendance

- **Concert attendance is mandatory.** Should a student become ill or not able to attend, he/she should try to email Ms. De Leon prior to the performance, if possible. The student is then responsible for making an appointment with Ms. De Leon to take the concert test. Excessive tardiness and/or absences may result in limited student participation in the concert. Concert and rehearsal attendance is a major factor when considering student placement in future Brandeis Orchestra ensembles.

	Music Performance	At Home Practice
1st nine Weeks	Fall Concert (R)	150-220 minutes per week
2nd nine Weeks	Region Auditions** (Q, E)	150-220 minutes per week
2nd nine Weeks	Winter Concert (R)	150-220 minutes per week
Semester Exam	Region Audition Performance** or Individual Public Performance during the first semester.	
3rd nine Weeks	Pre-UIL Concert (Q)	150-220 minutes per week
3rd nine Weeks	UIL Concert (Q), S&E **Contest (E), Spring Trip (E)	150-220 minutes per week
4th nine Weeks	Spring Concert (R), TSSEC (Q)	150-220 minutes per week
2nd Semester Exam	Solo & Ensemble Performance** or Individual Public Performance during the second semester.	

Please see attached calendar for complete details.

R-Required
Q-Must Qualify
O-Optional
E-Extra-curricular

Private Lessons

With the growth and excellence of the Brandeis HS Orchestra, it is impossible for the conductor to meet the individual needs of each student. With private lessons, participating students can have the luxury of extra help on a one-to-one basis. If you are interested in private lessons, please turn in the private lesson form attached to this handbook. I highly recommend private study. Your growth as a player will be significantly affected by individual study with a specialist on your particular instrument.

Principal Players

Students who earn top chairs in any section will be considered principal players. In order for a student to maintain principal chairs, the will also be considered section leaders:

- Organize and lead **sectional rehearsals**
- Take **careful note of details in rehearsal**, so that exact details can be communicated to members.
- Be willing to **take initiative** in the absence of the director (e.g. lead a warm-up).
- Track section attendance at rehearsals outside of class rehearsal
- You are responsible for music. Weekly checks of music or notes on music
- **Determine Bowings and Articulation:** Decide how string players move their bows or how wind/brass players articulate and phrase notes to ensure uniform sound.
- **Lead by Example:** Demonstrate phrasing, rhythm, and style through precise, confident playing and physical body language.

Daily Performance (Weekly Grade)
Grade/Materials/Quizzes

The daily performance grade should be the easiest 100 for students. Students receive a 100 for satisfying the following expectations:

1. Follow class rules: be appropriate, punctual, prepared.
2. Be in your seat 1 minute before rehearsal time with your required materials READY and ACCESSIBLE. Student tuning is an essential skill. Thus, students not tuning during the designated tuning time more than once during the week will be deducted 10 points on their weekly grade.
3. Observe proper posture and instrumental position & technique.

Students' daily performance grade will lowered by one letter grade for:
1. Consistently forgetting one's instrument or orchestra materials (music/pencil)
2. Refusal to play.
3. Consistent Unacceptable fingernail length. (one warning will be given)
4. Unacceptable classroom/rehearsal behavior

Semester Exams (More details will be provided closer to the exam)

Fall Semester Exam	Spring Semester Exam
Option 1 Individual student solo performance (recital/masterclass/concerto competition) or Student Solo performance/participation in the TMEA region auditions. Acceptance not required.	**Option 1** Individual student solo performance (recital/masterclass/concerto competition) or Student Solo performance/participation in UIL Solo & Ensemble. Must receive a 1st division/2nd division rating
Option 2 Student Performance of Solo during scheduled Midterm Exam date. Must perform 50 % of Solo. Formal Attire Required.	**Option 2** Student Performance of Solo during scheduled Midterm Exam date. Must perform 100 % of Solo. Formal Attire Required.

Sectionals/Rehearsals

Students will have some sectionals and/or rehearsals in preparation for concerts or contests/competitions. Attendance at sectionals/rehearsals is mandatory. Students who miss before or after school rehearsals may lose the privilege of performing in concerts with the orchestra. Students will receive information during the year regarding sectional and rehearsal dates and times. Any student holding a principal position must attend rehearsals/sectionals. Any student holding a principal position who does not attend a rehearsal/sectional is subject to losing his or her placement in the orchestra and/or participation in the performance.

Morning & Evening Rehearsals

Brandeis Symphony Orchestra combines members of the orchestra and band, thus it is necessary to have some before and after school rehearsals. These rehearsals are the only time where we can rehearse as a full group in order to prepare for concerts of SHS Symphony when applicable. Rehearsals will occur before or after school. We will decide which day at the onset of school. Students need to review our online annual calendar

with concert/activity dates telling them about the rehearsal schedule for that particular month or semester. To make last minute adjustments and preparations for concerts, the orchestra schedules dress rehearsals. While it is not necessary to wear uniforms to these rehearsals, a final run-through and final polishing of the music will be the purpose of these rehearsals. Again, these are required functions.

Eligibility

It is very important that each student maintains passing grades in all classes in addition to orchestra. Most orchestra activities are curricular. However, any student that is not passing any class may not participate in any extra-curricular activity of the orchestra during that grading period. If you are having trouble passing a class, please notify your conductor. We expect each member of the Brandeis Orchestra to do all the work necessary to pass all his or her classes. *A reminder - your grades in all of your classes help determine your placement in orchestra.*

Rehearsal Rules

1. Be on Time
2. ***Rehearse Appropriately***
    a. -perform with proper posture and technique
    b. -be polite
    c. -address the teacher properly
    d. -follow instructions the first time
    e. -do not talk excessively
    f. -do not speak or make noise on your instrument while the teacher is speaking
    g. -raise your hand to ask a question
    h. -do not swear or use objectionable language
    i. -do not engage in horseplay
3. Refrain from eating or drinking food, or chewing gum, in the classroom
4. Bring your music and pencil to every rehearsal.
5. Bring your instrument to every rehearsal.
6. Take proper care of your instrument at all times.
7. No backpacks in the playing area, all backpacks will be place by along the walls of the orchestra room

ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM POLICIES

1. **You will be considered tardy if you are not inside the room when the tardy bell begins to sound. Be in your seat with your instrument and music, and be ready to tune within one minute after the tardy bell sounds.** A second tardy within any nine-week period will result in a lowering of your conduct grade by one letter. Excessive tardies and absences could result in a demotion or removal from the orchestra program at the discretion of the directors.
2. It is YOUR responsibility to see that your instrument is **safely locked in your locker.**
3. It is YOUR responsibility to see that YOUR instrument (whether you own it or it is loaned to you by 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 asked to replace broken strings or pay for necessary repairs that are in excess of "normal usage." The directors retain the right to make that determination.
4. To play a stringed instrument well, one must have short fingernails; therefore, it is expected that fingernails be trimmed short and neat. This is applicable to EVERYONE in the Orchestra. Noncompliance with this rule will result in a lowering of your conduct grade by one letter. You will receive one warning before the grade is lowered.
5. We take great pride in the orchestra students at Brandeis especially when it comes to personal appearance. The orchestra is a high-profile organization and, as such, it is up to each individual to maintain a positive image within the school community. Violations of the School Dress Regulations will be dealt with on an individual student basis at the director's discretion.

Be Prepared. Know your music and have your materials with you at all times. Know your role. Be Punctual. You are punctual if you are in your seat with your instrument and your materials ready and accessible when the director begins the rehearsal or performance. You are NOT punctual if you walk in right as the director starts the rehearsal or performance, even when you come in right when the bell rings.

DOORS
DO NOT OPEN SIDE DOORS FOR ANYONE AT ANY TIME! No one is allowed to exit side doors unless instructed to do so.

On time is late and early is on time!

A. Obey policies set by the district, your school, and your director.
B. Observe procedures set by your director.
C. Treat your director and classmates with respect

D. Respect the property of other individuals. Do not handle anyone else's music or instrument.
E. Observe good behavior

If You Need To Leave Your Seat

1. If you need to sharpen your pencil or throw trash in the trash bin, you do not need to ask permission, but do it quickly and quietly to avoid distracting others.
2. Restroom breaks are permitted only AFTER the tuning period. Students may not leave the classroom during the first and last 10 minutes of class. Students must ALWAYS ask permission from the director. Once permission is given, the student must take the restroom pass with him or her before leaving the room.
3. Only ONE student at a time is allowed to leave the room.
4. Students who go to the restroom before the start of class need not ask permission from the director but MUST be in his or her seat with his or her instrument by the time the tardy bell rings. If the student does not return from the restroom in time, he or she will be marked tardy.
5. You may not see your other teachers, counselors, or administrators during class unless you are called for or unless the director receives official notification in the form of a phone call, e-mail or an official pass.

Off-Limit Areas and Items include but are not limited to the following:

1. The podium and the director's stand are off-limits to students. The podium may only be used by students who are assigned leadership roles.
2. Students may not write on the whiteboard (only officers)
3. Students may not enter the director's office without permission.
4. Students may retrieve their instruments from the instrument storage room after school but may not linger in the instrument storage room. Only students who have their instruments in the storage room may enter the storage room.

Consequences
1) Warning
2) Repeated warning and/or Conference with student
3) Call home and/or Office Referral
4) Office Referral Rehearsal Rules & Classroom Policies

Grounds for removal from the orchestra program include but are not limited to the following (after consequences):
1. Blatant and habitual disrespect and insubordination towards the director.
2. Habitual disruption of class
3. Disregard and disobedience of orchestra policies

4. Frequent absenteeism and truancy from class without any valid excuse
5. Refusal to pay for district-required instrument usage fees (only applies to students who need NISD instruments)
6. More than one unexcused absence from a performance
7. Any malicious act with the intent of discrediting the director, the orchestra, and its members
8. Consistent below average performance due to lack of effort If immediate removal is not possible due to scheduling conflicts, the director has the right to refuse student enrollment for the next school year.

Uniforms

Each student will be issued a uniform. It is your responsibility to care for it and maintain it throughout the year. The orchestra fee includes the cleaning fee and will be collected from each student in the o

If there are any alterations needed to make your uniform look better, you may have them done provided that they are temporary alterations and no fabric is cut. Do not wear boots, tennis shoes, or open-toed shoes with the formal uniform.

Informal uniform: Current orchestra shirt, blue jeans, and close-toed shoes
Ladies: Black dress, black stockings/dress socks and black close-toed Shoes, no high heels
Gentlemen: Black tuxedo, bow tie and cummerbund, white tuxedo shirt, black socks, and black dress shoes

After each performance, it should be taken to the cleaners and dry-cleaned. DO NOT WASH OR TUMBLE-DRY THE GOWN or TUX

WHAT YOU ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE:
LADIES - Shoes must be ALL-BLACK, plain leather pumps with closed toes; heels should be no more than two inches in height. Earrings are not recommended, only stud earrings are acceptable. Hair ornaments are not recommended, but are acceptable only if black. No rings, bracelets or watches during performances, please.

GENTLEMEN - Shoes must be ALL-BLACK, plain leather dress shoes which may be loafer-type or standard lace-up. Black socks only must be worn; no exceptions. No rings, bracelets or watches during performances, please. Hair below the collar must be pulled back in a ponytail at all public performances. All gentlemen should wear a white undershirt with no designs.

1. The school will provide the students' formal concert attire: tuxedos for the gentlemen and formal concert dress for the ladies. The concert attire is rightful property of the school.
2. The non-refundable $15.00 cleaning fee collected at the beginning of the school year to cover the cost of dry cleaning is included in your Orchestra Fee. Uniforms will be not released until this fee is paid.
3. Report any damage to the uniform to the director. All repairs to damaged uniforms will be done professionally by an alterations shop chosen by the director.
4. Students who lose their formal concert attire or components of the concert attire will be charged the full replacement cost of the lost item.

Instrument Rental

A certain number of instruments that are owned by the district are assigned to each school. Depending on availability, the district instruments will be loaned to selected students. While a student's inability to purchase his or her own quality instrument is a consideration that the teacher makes in deciding who receives the loaned instrument, other factors are also considered (e.g. a student qualifies for solo and ensemble competition but owns a low quality instrument). Students who are loaned district instruments must be aware of and agree to the following instrument loan conditions:

1. The instrument loaned to the student remains the rightful property of the district. It must be surrendered at the end of the school year on the deadline set by the orchestra director. If the instrument is not turned in by the deadline, the director will file for a stolen item report through the NISD Police.
2. Each district-owned instrument is marked by a tag that contains the instrument's inventory number. By no means must this tag be removed.
3. Instruments will NOT be released until the student submits the signed school instrument loan agreement AND maintenance fee to the director. This maintenance fee and loan agreement must be submitted on or before the date set by the director. Students who fail to submit these requirements by the deadline will not be allowed to perform in concerts until dues are settled.
4. Parents must contact the director and submit a letter of explanation if there are any circumstances that prevent payment of the maintenance fee by the deadline.
6. Damages sustained to the instrument due to carelessness or misuse will be repaired at the student's expense through a district-approved instrument repair shop.
7. NEVER attempt to make home repairs on district-owned instruments. Minor repairs such as string replacement will be done by the orchestra director. Major repairs will be entrusted to district-approved instrument repair technicians.

8. Students may take home their instruments on the condition that proper care and maintenance guidelines set by the director will be observed while the instruments are in their possession.
9. Students must clean their instrument and loosen the bow after each use. The instrument must also be secured in its case when not in use.
10. Each student who uses a school instrument must secure their orchestra locker with a combination lock. The student is required to keep these locks secured when their instrument is stored in the school locker. Combination locks will be replaced at the student's expense if they are lost or damaged.
12. Students are obligated to immediately report any loss or damage—major or minor—to the instrument.
13. A loaned instrument may be recalled from the student if it is determined that loss or damage to the instrument was caused by misuse or carelessness

Band App