

Staley Middle School



Orchestra Handbook 2024-2025

Dr. Jose Alex Mira, Principal

Joseph Geller, Director

Staley Middle School Orchestra Handbook

“[Music] is the inexpressible in human communication. It supplants everything, and it gives us depth, raises our consciousness, and gives us hope”.

- Van Cliburn

Introduction

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Staley Middle School Orchestra family. It is my personal belief that music in the classroom serves students in three powerful categories:

1. It serves as an artistic medium for self-expression
2. It is an avenue of creating meaningful, lifelong connections
3. It is a foundational source of inspiration

At Staley Middle School, we strive for excellence. In order for our program to perform to its fullest potential, we rely on the full cooperation of our team. The students, parents, and teachers must all be committed to making our orchestra the finest musical organization that we can produce. By accepting membership in the Staley Orchestras, you agree to adhere to the guidelines outlined in this handbook. If you have any more questions or need information of any kind, please email or call. If you wish to meet during the school year please contact me to make an appointment so that I may give you my fullest attention.

Joseph Geller

Orchestra Director

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Orchestras

Students will be placed into one of three orchestras performing at Staley. First Year Orchestra (FYO), Concert Orchestra, and Symphony Orchestra. Orchestra placements are determined by audition and director's recommendation. The expectations and responsibilities are outlined below:

First Year Orchestra

- Play and read music comfortably in the range of his/her chosen instrument
- Performance of concert music as assigned by the director
- Development of individual skills and ensemble skills
- Attendance at any after school rehearsals and performances
- Preparation of audition music for orchestra placement in May

Concert Orchestra

- Performance of concert music as assigned by the director
- Development of individual skills and ensemble skills
- Preparation of All-Region music in the fall
- Students are encouraged to participate in All-Region and solo/ensemble
- Attendance at section rehearsal and/or joint rehearsals after school
- Preparation of audition music for orchestra placement in May

Symphony Orchestra

- Performance of concert music as assigned by the director
- Development of individual skills and ensemble skills
- Preparation of All-Region music in the Fall
- Students are required to audition for All-Region Orchestra
- Attendance at section rehearsal and/or joint rehearsals after school
- Attend UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Evaluation Performances
- Preparation of audition music for orchestra placement held in May

Rehearsal/Performance Schedules

Participation at sectionals, rehearsals and performances is required and will be integrated into the student's grade which is in accordance with the TEA/UIL guidelines. Regularly scheduled sectionals, rehearsals, and concerts are curricular and have no academic eligibility requirements. A schedule of activities and events will be provided to students and parents the first week of the new school year. Supplemental schedules are provided as needed to students and parents allowing a minimum of one week's notice of a new or updated activity or event.

Daily Supplies: Instrument and Supplies for your instrument

- Own Rosin
- Own Cleaning Cloth
- Shoulder rest (violin/viola) or rock stop (cellos/basses)
- 3-ring Binder to be used for ORCHESTRA ONLY
- 2-3 Pencils
- Metronome/tuner

Instruments

Personal Instruments

A quality program requires quality musical instruments. One advantage to owning an instrument of investment quality is that in contrast to “starter” instruments, which can depreciate in value, quality string instruments actually gain value as they age. If a purchase is needed, please talk to Mr. Geller or your private instructor. We would be glad to make recommendations and consult with students and parents in order to avoid an inappropriate purchase. We would also like to help you obtain the best possible price for a good instrument.

All personal and school instruments are recommended to be insured by a homeowner’s policy or private company. The school district will not assume liability for maintenance, repair or damage of personal instruments on school property.

School Owned Instruments

The school has a limited number of instruments for rent. The rental fee is \$100 per year. The student is responsible for the upkeep and care of the school issued instruments. This includes strings, bow repairs, etc. Students must provide their own personal accessories such as rosin, shoulder rest, or rock stop. The student is responsible for maintenance, damage and repair while the instrument is in his/her possession. The instrument will be inspected at the end of the year for damage and the student must pay for any repairs.

Parents and students should understand that FISS does not provide insurance coverage for damage/theft on school instruments and it is the responsibility of the parents and students for the full replacement value of the instrument should it be lost, stolen or damaged while issued to the student. It is strongly recommended that the instrument be insured through your homeowner’s or renter’s insurance company.

Attendance at Social Events

Any student who attends a social event, either on or off campus, is expected to arrive and be picked up at the end of the event ON TIME. Schedules with precise times will be shared with students and parents when the event is announced. The director cannot leave until all students have been picked up – please respect the director’s time by being on-site early so that your student can leave as soon as the event ends.

***Any student not picked up within 15 minutes of the event ending will not be welcome at any future social events without a parent chaperone present**

Conduct

Students enrolled in the orchestra program are expected to display exemplary behavior at all times. At every performance as an orchestra member, you represent your family, Staley Middle School, the FISD, and Frisco, Texas. Make sure that your actions prove that the Staley Orchestra is a class act in every way.

Class Procedures and Information

- Be in your seat with all materials when the bell rings.
- You are expected to help tune quickly and quietly. Always be respectful of others while they tune. Play open strings only.
- Do not talk or practice out loud during the tuning process. Fingering silently or shadow bowing is always encouraged.
- Keep fingernails cut to an appropriate length to allow proper position and playing habits to develop.
- Show good rehearsal etiquette by being a good team player. Study your part quietly or shadow bow while the director works with another section. Remain on task at all times; do not talk or interrupt the focus of the rehearsal. You are expected to show respect to the director and others at all times. You are also expected to show a positive and willing attitude.
- Good posture and playing positions are expected. If you look like a pro, you will sound more like a pro.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions or seek answers to questions that come up. Raise your hand and ask, or feel free to ask for a conference in the office. IF you don't tell us about something you don't understand it is hard for the directors to help you work through the situation.
- Be supportive of your classmates and try to encourage each other. We are trying to be the best orchestra that we can be. Please try and show a winning attitude in ALL that you do.
- Do your best to turn your work in on time. You are expected to practice and learn your individual part so that the entire group will benefit from your efforts in and out of class. Remember you are a part of a team that counts on each other to do a great job.
- No food, drink, candy or gum may be eaten in class
- **Disorderly behavior and abusive language will not be tolerated**

Dismissal from the organization

One or more of the following procedures will be used to discipline students who choose not to abide by the rules and guidelines set forth in this handbook:

- Student is suspended immediately from all orchestra activities, rehearsals and performances until a final decision is reached by the orchestra director, principal, and parents.
- Conference with a combination of the following present: student, director(s), principal(s), and parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Student placed on a contract.
- Student dismissal from the program

Orchestra: Your Choice

Orchestra is an elective. Students are not required to take it. Therefore, it is expected that students in orchestra want to be in the class and want to meet the expectation of the directors. Students who choose not to meet these expectations will have a student/parent conference with the teachers to reassess their goals and possibly assign a behavior modification contract. Students who continue to be unsuccessful in meeting these expectations after two conferences will be asked to choose an elective in which they can be successful.

Grades

Standards Based Grading

Students will have a minimum of 7 grades for each 9 weeks. Students will no longer receive minor and major grades however there will be a mix of “Weighted” and “Unweighted” grades in their classes.

What is Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-based grading (SBG) is an intentional way for teachers to track their students' progress and achievements while focusing on helping students learn and reach their highest potential. It is based on students showing signs of mastery or understanding various lessons and skills.

Standards your child will be evaluated on:

- Rhythmic Reading
- Pitch
- Sight-reading
- Group Singing
- Note Identification
- Concert Performance
- Concert Etiquette
- Breathing Technique

By using standards-based grading, I as the director, will be able to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of each student and can put a plan in place to strengthen weaknesses and continue to enrich strengths.

Eligibility

The orchestra adheres to all eligibility rules and regulations as stated by TEA and FISD. Any student who records a grade lower than 70 (in ANY class they are registered in) at the end of a three-weeks grading period shall be suspended from participation in extracurricular activities for at least the following three weeks. If at the conclusion of that three-week grading period, the student is passing all courses, he/she can regain their eligibility. However, if at that time the student is failing any course, the eligibility is lost for the remainder of the next three weeks. The orchestra director will firmly enforce these policies. Students who lose their eligibility are still required to attend ALL rehearsals as well as participate in curricular activities (concerts).

Booster Club

A booster club exists under each middle school orchestra. The main objective of the booster club is to support and enhance the orchestra program and to provide program communication to students and parents at all levels of participation. All parents are members of the booster club. Participation is encouraged and no dues are required to be a member. Meetings will be announced throughout the year. Attendance at all performances and meetings is encouraged.

Fundraising

Orchestra students are encouraged to participate in one or two fundraising activities each year. We fundraise for additional activities and financial support for our program. Fundraising activities allow students to share the responsibility of funding our program beyond what the district provides. Therefore, it is important for these fundraisers to be as successful as possible. These fundraising activities are group efforts that go into a group account that supports our orchestra program. These activities also nurture a spirit and unity in the group as a result of the group efforts. All information regarding the specifics of the fundraising will be communicated to students and parents at the time of the activities. Donations to the booster club in support of our program are always welcomed and appreciated.

Uniforms

Formal uniforms will be worn to UIL concert. Formal uniforms for girls: black dress pants are encouraged, the black Staley Orchestra Polo, close-toed black shoes (heels and toes should be covered). Girls may choose to wear a full-length black dress instead. Formal uniforms for boys: black dress pants and the black Staley Orchestra Polo, along with black socks and shoes.

For some performances we will wear our informal uniforms. This will consist of the school orchestra shirt and jeans. Advanced notice will be given.

Registration Fees

All Orchestra students will need to pay a yearly registration fee. This fee can be made all at once or in payments. Fee is \$50 for the entire year. Registration payment needs to be received prior to the first Orchestra Event. Make checks payable to "Staley Orchestra Booster Association" or "SOBA" and turn in to Mr. Geller. Please see Mr. Geller if you need to work out a payment schedule.

Orchestra Registration Fee pays for:

- Please refer to staleystrings.com/registration

PRINT THIS SHEET AND RETURN TO ORCHESTRA OFFICE BY FRIDAY, August 23rd

Staley Orchestra Handbook Signature Page

Signature below indicates that I have received, read, and understand the Staley Middle School Mustang Orchestra Handbook AND Calendar.

SMS Orchestra Field Trip Permission Form and Emergency Medical Release

My child, _____ (PRINT FULL NAME), is permitted to travel to ALL scheduled Orchestra functions FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR as listed on the Mustang Orchestra Calendar (contests, Field trips, performances, etc.) Transportation will be provided by Frisco ISD School buses or by an approved adult chaperone where applicable.

Frisco ISD Required Release of All Claims & Parental Permission for Educational Trip(s)

RELEASE made _____ by _____
(date) (parent/guardian's name)

In consideration of permission granted the above-named student by the Frisco Independent School District of Frisco, Texas to attend field trips to ALL LISTED STALEY MS MUSTANG ORCHESTRA EVENTS AS LISTED IN THE ORCHESTRA CALENDAR FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR hereby release and discharge the above-named District, its agents, employees, and officers, from all claims, demands, actions, judgments, and executions which I may have or which my heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns may have, or claim to have against the above named School District its successors or assigns for all personal injuries, known or unknown, and injuries to property, real or personal, caused by, or arising out of, the above described educational trip. I further hereby authorize a representative of the School District to consent to medical treatment of the above name student in the event of an emergency on the trip. I, the undersigned, have read this release and consent to medical treatment and understand all its terms. I execute it voluntarily and with full knowledge of its significance.

Medical conditions for which we should be aware (i.e., diabetes, asthma, allergies, etc.):

(Signature of parent/guardian)

(Date and year)

Parents (Home) Phone # _____ Parents (Cell) Phone # _____

Emergency Contact Name _____

Relation to Student _____

Emergency Contact Phone # _____

PLEASE PRINT NEATLY