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Welcome to the Cooper Middle School String Orchestra Program!

This handbook will provide everything you need to know to have a positive and successful experience in the Cooper Middle School Orchestra. Please use this handbook as a reference throughout the school year.

**ORCHESTRA ENSEMBLES**

**6th Grade Orchestra**

*No musical experience required!* All sixth graders are eligible to join this class. Students will be taught all skills necessary to play a string instrument. The main focus of this class is technique acquisition, music reading, and performance!

**7th Grade Orchestra**

Students will build on the techniques acquired in their sixth grade orchestra class, and will learn several pieces of music and reinforce their music reading skills. Students will also perform at the Georgia Music Educators Association Large Group Performance Evaluation (GMEA LGPE). Other potential performance opportunities include the Solo & Ensemble Festival, Cobb County Honor Orchestra, and All State Orchestra.

**8th Grade Orchestra**

Students will build on the techniques acquired in their sixth and seventh grade orchestra classes. They will also perform at the GMEA LGPE and have the opportunity to perform in the Solo & Ensemble Festival, Cobb County Honor Orchestra, and All State Orchestra. Students will master advanced techniques in preparation for high school.

**Cooper Rock Orchestra**

This is an extracurricular ensemble open to all orchestra members who wish to participate. The focus will be on pop, rock, and soundtrack music, and students may earn the opportunity to play on electric instruments. Rock Orchestra will meet twice a month and perform at the Winter and Spring Concerts. All instruments are encouraged to join!
IMPORTANT DATES

Saturday, October 13 – Solo & Ensemble @ Campbell HS
Monday, October 15, 7pm – 8th Grade Orchestra & Band Concert
Saturday, October 20 – All State District Audition @ Kell HS
Monday, October 29, 7pm – Fine Arts Night
Tuesday, October 30, 7pm – 7th Grade Orchestra Concert/6th Grade Preview Concert
Tuesday, December 11, 7pm – Winter Orchestra Concert
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Saturday, January 12 – All State Final Audition @ Westminster Academy
Tuesday, February 12, 7pm – 7th/8th Grade Pre-LGPE Concert
February 28 – March 2 – All State Orchestra – Savannah, GA
Monday, March 4, performance time TBA – 7th Grade LGPE @ Cooper MS
Tuesday, March 5, performance time TBA – 8th Grade LGPE @ Cooper MS
Tuesday, March 19, time TBA – 6th Grade String Jamboree location TBA
Tuesday, March 26 – Cobb County Honor Orchestra Audition @ Mabry MS
Friday, April 19 – Saturday, April 20 – Cobb County Honor Orchestra Rehearsals &
Concert @ Sprayberry
Tuesday, May 7, 7pm – Spring Orchestra Concert
May 16-19 – Walt Disney World Trip – Orchestra/Band/Chorus

**Dates & times subject to change as necessary. All changes will be announced in
class, via email, and on the orchestra website.**
Practice is the key to being a successful orchestra member and musician. If students wish to master their instrument, individual practice is essential. Violin and viola students are encouraged to take their instrument home throughout the week. Cello and bass students are encouraged to rent an instrument for easy home practice as it may be more difficult to transport their instruments, but will also have the option to take instruments home over the weekend. Practice tips will be posted online.

All students are encouraged to come to morning practice (8:15-8:50am).

Students may be asked to document their practice. Students will be required to perform playing exams in class, and they will have at least a two-week period in which to practice and prepare for the exam. Students are encouraged to keep an organized folder of music and exercises. Notebooks checks will be taken periodically throughout the nine weeks.

Suggested practice session:
1. Warm-ups
2. Scales
3. Challenging parts from concert music
4. Something fun!
**INSTRUMENT USE AND CARE**

**RENTING**
It is strongly recommended and encouraged that students rent an instrument. Many stores offer a “Rent-To-Own” agreement where each monthly rental fee is put towards financing the future purchase of an instrument. String instruments are investments that actually gain value with age and proper care.

**SCHOOL INSTRUMENTS**
School instruments are limited and reserved for those with difficult financial situations. There is no charge for using these instruments; however, they should be cared for exceptionally well. It is a privilege that Cooper Middle School is blessed with school string instruments. Please help me ensure that future students will have instruments that are in good working condition. If a school instrument is damaged or destroyed, fees will be applied to repair or replace the instrument. No school instrument will be distributed without a signed contract from a parent/guardian.

**INSTRUMENT USE & CARE**

**Do not attempt to do home repairs on a string instrument.** If damage occurs, the instrument must be taken to a “luthier” or a qualified string repairman. These individuals have apprenticed or studied for years in the art of making and repairing string instruments. Before taking an instrument, please inform me of the problem. I am available for very basic repairs that may occur throughout the year at absolutely no charge to you.

Here is a list of things to consider when caring for a string instrument:

1. **DO NOT PUT STICKERS ON A STRING INSTRUMENT.**
   It damages the varnish, which helps the instrument produce a good tone.

2. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR STRING INSTRUMENT IN EXTREME TEMPERATURES.**
   This is especially true with heat. The instrument glues are made in a way that allows the wood to push and pull with the changing environment. Often times, the results of extreme temperatures are cracks, the warping of wood, and the melting of adhesives. These are all very costly repairs.

   Leaving your instrument in the car also exposes you to theft.

3. **LOOSEN THE BOW HAIR AFTER PRACTICING OR PERFORMING.**
   The bows are designed with a very specific curve. If the tension of a bow is not released it can result in the loss of this curve. This is also a very costly repair

4. **WIPE OFF ROSIN RESIDUE AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK.**
   This helps the strings last longer and resonate more. Also, wipe off the rosin residue that may fall on the body of the instrument. This will help maintain the varnish.
CELLOS & DOUBLE BASSES
If you choose to rent a cello or bass, I encourage you to leave the rented instrument at home to practice on. Your child can use an instrument at the school for rehearsal each day (student’s must sign a contract for use at school). Please bring your child’s personal instrument the day of the concert to ensure all students have instruments. Please also consider that, because these instruments are larger in size, a vehicle large enough to transport them will be needed.

If you have not rented a cello or bass due to difficult financial situations, I will try to have one available for your child to take home (under contract) and one to use during class. Again, it is important that adequate transportation be procured.

VIOLINS AND VIOLAS
Students should bring their instruments to school in the morning before homeroom. Lockers will be distributed only to those students who bring their own instrument to school each day. Instruments should be taken home at the end of the day. It is the students’ responsibility to retrieve their instrument and music at the end of the day. They should do this as quickly as possible due to faculty meetings, bus departures, and other after-school engagements.

ACCESSORIES
Accessories include the following: rosin, shoulder rest, rock stop, books, music, pencils, and strings. A folding music stand is also recommended for home practice and music events outside of school. I ask that you provide the accessories needed for your child. The specific music books for each grade are listed on the class syllabus.

DAILY EQUIPMENT/NOTEBOOK CHECKS
I expect students to be prepared each day within the first two minutes of class. This gives them ample time to retrieve their instrument, set up, get seated, and begin the warm-up. I will check each day that the students come prepared with the following: instrument/bow, shoulder rest/rock stop, pencil, and music/book. This will be part of their grade.
CONCERT ATTIRE
A good performance is as much a visual performance as it is an aural one. As we strive to sound as one ensemble, so should we look as one. Students must come to concerts dressed appropriately to receive full credit for attending.

GENTLEMEN must have on black dress shoes, black socks, black dress pants, black socks, a black belt, and a white collared shirt. Shirts must be tucked in!

LADIES must have on black dress shoes, black socks, plain black pants or a skirt, and a plain white blouse or collared shirt. Only ladies performing on violin or viola may choose to wear a skirt. Skirts must fall below the knees to be considered acceptable. Ladies must also keep fingernails cut short enough to play properly.

Any student who is not dressed properly will be sent home to change. School dress code policies apply to all school events, including orchestra concerts. If proper attire is not acquired before the start of the performance, the student will not be allowed to perform.

CONCERT & ATTENDANCE POLICY
Participation by all students is crucial to the success of the orchestra as a whole. If a student misses more than ten rehearsals (two weeks of school), he/she will not be allowed to participate in concert. This is also grounds for expulsion from the program. Concert dates will be provided well in advance; it is the responsibility of the student to arrange rides to and from the performance location on these dates. If there is a family illness, death, medical emergency, or significant concern that inhibits the student’s attendance in orchestra, please do not hesitate to call or leave a signed note with a phone number at which to be reached.

Performance Make Up (Excused): In the event of a death, illness, or medical emergency in the family, an excused absence from the performance will be permitted. However, students must perform concert music for me before school within three days of their return to school. A signed note or phone call from a parent/guardian is required to be excused.

Performance Make Up (Unexcused): In any other circumstance other than that listed above, the performance absence will be unexcused. Students will be required to perform the concert music for the class the following day. They will be graded for each error made throughout the performance. It is much easier to get the full credit by showing up to the concert!
STUDENT CONDUCT

Ideally, the most efficient way to teach an orchestra would be to teach each section separately (violin, viola, cello, and bass) and then combine the entire orchestra. As this is not possible in a public school setting, positive student conduct plays a crucial role in ensuring that each individual will receive the instruction and attention needed to become successful on their given instrument.

Behaviors subject to disciplinary steps include but are not limited to: excessive talking, inappropriate use of instruments/accessories, unseated without permission, not ready to play, running/horseplay in the orchestra room, disrespectful behavior towards Cooper Middle School staff or students.

THREE STRIKES POLICY!

When asked three times to perform a specific task or to correct a behavior listed above, a student will receive an automatic detention. Class time is limited and every second of instruction is vital to the success of the student and the program. The behaviors listed above are disruptive and slow down the pace of the entire class.

GUIDELINES FOR GOOD CONDUCT

1. Respect for the musical instruments, equipment, other students, and the instructor is essential. Students will regularly perform in front of the entire class for graded assessments and also as examples of proper technique. Students who disrespect others after an individual or group performance will be reprimanded immediately and parents will be contacted.

2. Raise your hand before speaking.

3. Be prepared as quickly as possible so class can start on time.

4. No food, drinks, candy, gum, or cosmetic products will be permitted during instruction.

5. Play only on your assigned instrument and play only when instructed.
FIELD TRIP PROCEDURES

Students in the Cooper Orchestra will frequently go on field trips. Here are some very important procedures and expectations of behavior for the duration of the field trip.

1. Field trip forms must be signed by a parent or guardian at least two days prior to the event. Some events may require forms to be signed much earlier.

2. Please ensure a safe bus ride by keeping the noise level down while in transit to the event. Horseplay will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary actions when back at school (administrative referral, parental contact).

3. Stay with the group at all times. This is a safety and security concern. Any student who leaves the group will be subject to an administrative referral.

4. Please follow the instructions of any adult (teacher, chaperone, etc.) while on the field trip.

5. Parents or guardians who attend an event/performance but are not chaperones must communicate in advance that they will be checking their child out at the event/performance. This can be done through a short note on the field trip form, email, or phone call. It is important that I have this information so that I can take an accurate roll call when departing the event.

Field trips are great opportunities for students to get out of the school and share music with the community. Please review these policies and procedures carefully so we can all have fun and positive experiences on field trips!
COOPER ORCHESTRA OLYMPIANS

It is important to set goals and track our progress. Starting at the beginning of the year, students participate in the Cooper Orchestra Olympians. All students begin below the rank of Amateur and should strive to achieve the highest rank of Gold Medalist. All students must achieve at least the rank of Finalist. In order to successfully become a Gold Medalist, students must complete the following challenges listed below by the end of the year. Those students who have become Gold Medalists will participate in a pizza party at the end of the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>6th Grade Essential Elements Book 1</th>
<th>7th Grade Essential Elements Book 2</th>
<th>8th Grade Scales (from memory) &amp; additional material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Medalist</td>
<td>#193 Minuet/March</td>
<td>Sight-Reading Challenge (pg. 38)</td>
<td>Perform solo for class (must be approved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#182 Surprise Symphony Theme</td>
<td>#156 Sagebrush Overture (line A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Medalist</td>
<td>#166 Academic Festival Overture Theme</td>
<td>#132 The Hanukkah Song</td>
<td>C Major 2 octaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#155 Monday's Melody</td>
<td>#128 The Snake Charmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Medalist</td>
<td>#139 Russian Folk Tune</td>
<td>#124 May Time</td>
<td>D Major 2 octaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#125 Jingli Nona</td>
<td>#118 Row, Row, Row Your Boat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalist</td>
<td>#107 Sailor's Song</td>
<td>#107 Ayn Kaylokyaynu</td>
<td>A Major 2 octaves</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#102 This Old Man</td>
<td>#91 Tom Dooley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Finalist</td>
<td>#86 Ode to Joy</td>
<td>#83 The Mountain Climber</td>
<td>G Major 2 octaves</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#81 Michael Row The Boat Ashore</td>
<td>#78 Rhythm Etude - duet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>#76 For Pete's Sake</td>
<td>#56 A Song For Annie</td>
<td>G Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#46 Essential Creativity</td>
<td>#47 Rondeau</td>
<td>D Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>#64 The D Major Scale</td>
<td>#46 Theme from New World Symphony</td>
<td>Bb Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#27 Olympic High Jump</td>
<td>#36 Jesse James</td>
<td>F Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td>#22 Lightly Row</td>
<td>#29 Oh! Susannah</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correct bow hold &amp; instrument posture</td>
<td>#13 Chester</td>
<td>C Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenges can be played before school during morning practice or on designated pass-off days in class.
# PLAYING TEST RUBRIC

Teacher Name: Ms. Cleaton

Student Name: ___________________________ Date: __________  Class: __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Left hand technique</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates great proficiency in the following areas: (1) proper posture, (2) correct fingerings, (3) note accuracy.</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate proficiency in two of the three aspects of technique.</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate proficiency in one of the three aspects of technique.</td>
<td>Demonstrates inadequate or no proficiency in the aspects of left hand technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right hand technique</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates great proficiency in the following areas: (1) correct bow hold, (2) correct pizzicato posture, (3) correct arm movement.</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate proficiency in two of the three aspects of technique.</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate proficiency in one of the three aspects of technique.</td>
<td>Demonstrates inadequate or no proficiency in the aspects of right hand technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bowing accuracy</strong></td>
<td>Uses correct bow directions &amp; appropriate bowing styles.</td>
<td>An occasional inaccurate bowing or bowing style, but does not detract from overall performance.</td>
<td>A few inaccurate bowings or bowing style, detracting somewhat from the overall performance.</td>
<td>Consistently wrong bowings or bowing styles detract from the performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone quality</strong></td>
<td>Tone is consistently focused, clear, and centered throughout the range of the instrument. Tone has a professional quality.</td>
<td>Tone is focused, clear, and centered throughout the range of the instrument. Extremes in range sometimes cause tone to be less controlled. Tone quality typically does not detract from the overall performance.</td>
<td>Tone is somewhat focused, clear, and centered, but sometimes the tone is uncontrolled in the normal playing range. Extremes in range are usually uncontrolled. Occasionally the tone quality detracts from the overall performance.</td>
<td>The tone is often not focused, clear, or centered regardless of the range being played, significantly detracting from the overall performance.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please return completed form by ________________.

**ORCHESTRA INFORMATION SHEET**

Student Name: ____________________________

Grade: _______ Team: _______ Homeroom Teacher: ________________________

Street Address/Apt. #: __________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ Zip Code: ___________________________

Home Phone: ________________________ Cell Phone: __________________________

Would you like to receive text message reminders?    YES ______    NO ______

Parent Email: __________________________________________________________________________

Mother/Guardian Name: __________________ Work Phone: ___________________________

Father/Guardian Name: __________________ Work Phone: ___________________________

Student lives with (circle one):  Mother    Father    Mother & Father    Other

Would you consider chaperoning/volunteering?    YES ______    NO ______

***

Instrument (circle one):  violin    viola    cello    bass

Brand: _____________________________ Serial #: ___________________________

Name of music store (if renting/purchasing):
   __________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

I have read and understand the information included in the Cooper Middle School Orchestra Handbook.

Student Name: ____________________________ Parent/Guardian Name: ______________________

Student Signature: ________________________ Parent/Guardian Signature: ______________________

Date: ________________________ Date: ________________________