

Grand Oaks HS Orchestra Handbook 2026-27



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Grand Oaks Orchestra

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Orchestra Room Phone: 281-939-0318

Howdy Orchestra Parents and Students,

We're excited to welcome you to the Grand Oaks Orchestra Family! We would like to thank you for your commitment and desire to learn music together. You are now a part of something extraordinary! Over the last 4 years, our students set new standards for excellence. At our UIL contests, all 3 orchestras have consistently received superior ratings. Our full orchestra, made up of students from orchestra and band, also received sweepstakes the last 4 years. We had many students audition and qualify for the Region 9 Orchestra, and 30-40 students participate in the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest (TSSEC) each year – the highest participation in the district! We also regularly receive numerous Outstanding Performer awards at TSSEC which is an honor only given to 2% of the participants across the state.

It is an exciting time for us, and we cannot wait to share the 2026-27 school year with you!

We have updated the orchestra website, so please check it out: gohsorchestra.com. There you will find everything you need to know about the Grand Oaks Grizzly Orchestra Program. This includes details on the summer carwash, our updated handbook, a list of supplies for the upcoming year, updated calendar of events, a sectional/rehearsal schedule for Symphony and Chamber orchestras, Booster club updates, a photo gallery, and news updates. Please check the website regularly to keep current on important orchestra happenings.

During the school year, students will have 5 required concerts, including our Ensemble concert, Fall concert, Winter concert, Spring concert, and End of the Year String Fling. Contest orchestras will also have UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Contest, UIL Solo & Ensemble, TMEA Region Orchestra and more.

A successful year requires good communication between parents, students, and teachers. Please contact me with questions, as procedures and events may be different than previous years.

Please note that we will have a spring trip meeting and booster meeting on Thursday, August 20th at 6:00 pm.

We are looking forward to working with your children this year! We know that with your support, and the dedication of our students, that the Grand Oaks Orchestra will continue to thrive and soar to new heights!

Welcome to the Grizzly Orchestra!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Lea Cini & Mr. Joshua High

Grand Oaks Orchestra

Performances/Rehearsals

- Students will be required to attend rehearsals, sectionals, and concerts. Additional information will be provided and available in Canvas and on our orchestra website <https://www.gohsorchestra.com>
- **Sectionals are required for Chamber and Symphony Orchestras. A schedule will be included in the Grand Oaks Orchestra calendar.**
- It is our goal to adhere to the posted calendar as much as possible, however, all events are subject to change.
- Students will be expected to arrive at concerts fully dressed in designated concert uniforms as changing areas will not be provided. Uniform information is given below.

Financial

- The Conroe ISD **Instrument Maintenance fee of \$80** is for those students using a district owned instrument. This fee is waived for those on the free-reduced lunch program or are transporting a personal instrument to and from school.
- The **Orchestra Activity fee is \$175** for this upcoming school year. This fee covers an orchestra t-shirt and various expenses associated with running a successful program, such as guest clinicians, special events and activities, new music, new technology, etc. This fee also covers the entrance fees to all contests that students participate in, such as Solo and Ensemble Contest, Region Orchestra auditions, and UIL.
- Adjustments will be made for those in financial need. Please talk with Mrs. Cini to discuss alternatives.
- All fees can be paid through School Cash online.

Auditions/Placement

- Within the Grand Oaks Orchestra program, we currently have four performing ensembles: Chamber Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonic Orchestra, and Camerata. Chamber, Symphony, and sometimes Philharmonic and Camerata will have after school sectionals and will compete in UIL Concert/SightReading Contest.
- All placement is determined by audition.
- Considerations for placement include musical ability, self-motivation to practice, attitude, behavior, grades and campus discipline/academic history.
- Audition materials are distributed in the 2nd Semester, and students will have 3-4 weeks to prepare audition materials.
- **All audition placements are final.**

Grand Oaks Orchestra

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Personal Instrument, bow and accessories in good condition:

- Instrument cases must be labeled with name and address.
- The director is not responsible for misplaced or misused instruments.
- Instruments must be quality approved by the director. No colorful or internet instruments.
- **Bows** need to be re-haired annually by a reputable shop.
- **Strings:** Need replacing long before they break. Strings that have worn places on them will play notes that are out of tune; strings that are old and dry will not ring. This can be confusing or discouraging for any student. The cheapest strings will often wear out the quickest. The strings in italics are the minimum quality requirement. The strings in bold are preferred.
 - **Violin:** *Dominant* - **Evah Pirazzi** (Green with the gold E) - **Kaplan Vivo**
 - **Viola:** *Dominant* - **Evah Pirazzi** (Green) - **Kaplan Amo**
 - **Cello:** *Helicore* - **Jargar A/D, Spirocore G/C**
 - **Bass:** *Helicore* - **Thomastik Spirocore Weich**

Black 3 ring binder with 4 dividers and pencil bag:

- Students are expected to have this in class each day to mark performance information/changes.
- Music for each performance will be provided to all students. Students are expected to keep their music neat and orderly in their binder.
- A supply check grade will be taken periodically to ensure that students have all the required materials organized and in class.
- **Pencil Bag** should have at least 2 sharpened pencils and 1 highlighter

Method Books:

- Habits of a Successful String Musician

Other Accessories Required:

Students should own the following items for home use as needed:

- Folding Music Stand
- Metronome/Tuner (either app or handheld device)
- Shoulder Rest for Violins/Violas (Suni, Kun or other)
- End-pin stop for Cellos/Bassists
- Rosin: Pirastro, Kaplan dark, or Jade for violin/ viola/cello; Kolstein All-Weather or Pops for bass
- **Set of extra strings** (see above for list of preferred strings)

Items gladly accepted as donations for the use of the orchestra program:

- 2-3 boxes of tissues
- White and Colored copy paper
- Dry erase markers/eraser, highlighters, sharpened pencils

Grand Oaks Orchestra

MUSIC VENDORS

Music items can be purchased from any of the Houston area vendors or online from several established music stores. For your convenience, a representative from Lisle Violin Shop, Fishburn Violin Shop (now part of H&H Music), and Katy Violin Shop will make regular service visits to the Grand Oaks Campus and can easily make appointments for a pick-up/return.

For contact information and comparison-shopping, visit the following websites for renting/buying/repairing instruments, sheet music and other supplies. If you have questions about renting or are considering buying an instrument, please speak with the director.

Lisle Violin Shop*

NW 11550 Louetta Rd. Suite 1400, Houston, TX 77070
346.236.6650 www.lisleviolinshop.com

Fishburn Violin Shop/H&H Music*

1500 Research Forest Dr, #140, Shenandoah, TX 77381
832.791.5880 www.fishburnviolin.com www.hhmusic.com

Katy Violin Shop*

5131 S Fry Rd, Suite 500
Katy, Tx 77450
281.755.4169 www.katyviolinshop.com

Music & Arts Center

19075 I-45, Suite 111H
Shenandoah, Tx 77385
936.273.3602 www.musicarts.com

Amati Violin Shop

2315 University Blvd.
Houston, TX 77005
713.666.6461 www.amativiolinshop.com

Robertson & Sons Violin Shop

3201 Carlisle Blvd NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
505.889.2999 www.robertsonviolins.com
(Ships items directly to you)

***Will deliver to the school**

Grand Oaks Orchestra

ORCHESTRA ROOM CARE/STUDENT CONDUCT

Orchestra Room Care

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

- All stands, chairs, audio/visual components, computers, music folios, school instruments and other items used solely for the purpose of classroom instruction are to be treated properly.
- Only students enrolled in orchestra or music theory are allowed in the orchestra room. Friends are asked to wait outside while orchestra students retrieve instruments or conduct classroom business.
- Practice rooms are for musical practice only. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to congregate in practice rooms before or after school.

Student Conduct

A high standard of conduct is expected from students at all times as members of the Grand Oaks Orchestra Program. The respect policies set forth in this Orchestra Student Handbook will be in effect at all times on and off campus.

- Productive class rehearsals produce successful performances. Proper rehearsal etiquette and a disciplined working attitude are crucial for the success of any orchestra program.
- Food, drink and gum of any kind are PROHIBITED.
- Individual and/or group tuning should begin before the tardy bell. A student not seated ready with supplies within one minute after the bell rings will earn a tardy.
- Talking while the director is rehearsing is considered rude and inappropriate. Students must raise their hands to ask questions.
- Disruptive behavior of any kind is unacceptable and will result in the student being removed from the classroom followed by appropriate teacher/parent consequences.
- Demonstration of correct instrument and body posture are expected.
- Fingernails should not make a sound when tapping fingertips on a table.

Failure to follow these guidelines will result in teacher and/or administrative disciplinary action.

Grand Oaks Orchestra

CURRICULAR / EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

On-campus sponsored events are considered curricular, or co-curricular and attendance is required and graded. Several extra-curricular competitions sponsored by the University Scholastic League (U.I.L.) and TMEA also occur throughout the year for all students to participate. These include Solo & Ensemble and All-Region Orchestra. Clinics taught by Houston area professional performers/educators are hired to prepare for these events. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in these opportunities.

GRADING POLICY

Daily Grades

1. Student class participation.
2. Failure to practice is the primary reason for low grades in orchestra.
3. Weekly Composer/theory journals.
4. Contents and condition of music binders will be checked periodically for a grade.

Quiz Grades

1. Students are required to record playing tests of their concert music. These will be a quiz or a major grade. A list of pass offs will be given at the beginning of each concert series.
2. Students will have quizzes over their scales.

Major Grades

1. Orchestra Required Concerts and Events* as listed on the Orchestra Calendar (available on Canvas and in this handbook).
2. Playing Tests - Playing tests are given about every 3 weeks to assess individual practice, ensemble skills, and sight-reading in the contest orchestras.
3. Semester Orchestra Project.
4. Sectionals attendance/after school rehearsals – **these are primarily for contest groups, but there may be occasional after school rehearsals for other orchestra groups as needed.**

*A Performance is equivalent to a final exam, being the culmination of weeks of hard work and preparation. Attendance at Orchestra Concerts is Required! Orchestra performances are the product of a team effort. Each student is important to the overall success and sound of the group. Students will receive points toward their performance grade in the following categories: Attendance and Participation, Proper Concert Attire, and general attitude and behavior both on and off stage.

If a student has transportation issues, these can usually be resolved by early communication with the director so a solution can be found. Lack of transportation will not be considered an excused absence for any required event.

If a student misses a concert and the director considers it excused, a written make-up assignment will be given. Absence from a UIL related performance will only be excused if a student is ill (certified by a parent and/or medical document), or if the concert falls on a religious holiday, and then a make-up assignment may be given.

Any additions or corrections to the calendar will be given verbally in class and placed on the Orchestra website.

Grand Oaks Orchestra

PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS

Students in the Grand Oaks Orchestra are expected to practice every day. You only improve where you spend time dedicated to improving, and skills that are ignored will only diminish. Rather than trying to practice a specific amount of time, set specific goals to accomplish during your practice sessions in order to achieve the most success in your practicing. The Grand Oaks Weekly Practice Report (as found on Canvas) will be turned in on Canvas each Tuesday and will include space to write your goals that you are trying to reach and your reflection on if you reached your goals and how/what you tried in order to achieve your goals.

"If I don't practice one day, I know it; two days, the critics know it; three days, the public knows it." - Jascha Heifetz

"Practice until you can't play it wrong." - Dr. Kempter

"An orchestra is only as good as the members who don't practice" - Dr. Kempter

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit." - Aristotle

ELIGIBILITY

Participation in all U.I.L. sponsored events, including any Orchestra Trips, require a grade of 70 (1-100 scale) or above in all classes during the eligibility period of the scheduled event. Students in A.P. courses may obtain a waiver to participate. Participation in all on-campus events is allowed regardless of grade status.

SOLO & ENSEMBLE CONTEST

Solo & Ensemble contest is an opportunity for students to perform a solo or in a chamber music ensemble for a judge and receive a rating and medal. If students choose to play their solo at a UIL solo contest, a piano accompaniment must be used and will require an additional fee to the pianist. These fees are paid by the student and prices are set by the pianist. All students are encouraged to participate. UIL eligibility rules apply for this event.

Grand Oaks Orchestra

TMEA ALL -REGION AND ALL-STATE ORCHESTRA

TMEA All-Region and All-State Orchestras are by audition only and include the audition, two rehearsals, a workshop, and a concert. The school districts of Conroe, Klein, and Tomball are members of our region. Students audition in the fall for placement in one of two High School Orchestras: Symphony or Philharmonic. The selected audition etudes will be given out in class as soon as they are available. Dates for Region and State events are included in the Orchestra Calendar. After school practice classes will be scheduled by instruments for interested students.

U.I.L CONCERT & SIGHT-READING CONTEST

In the Spring, Grand Oaks Contest Orchestras will perform and compete at the U.I.L. Concert and Sight-Reading Contest. They will perform three selections suitable for the ensemble's performing abilities. Music will be determined on the basis of ensemble size and instrumentation. This contest expects the highest performance levels from every member of these orchestras. This is a required event that will occur during school hours.

ORCHESTRA SUMMER CAMPS

The Summer Orchestra Camp schedule will be given out in January.

Please plan your travel around these dates.

All students are expected to participate.

Grand Oaks Orchestra

CONCERT DRESS UNIFORM

Students of the orchestra will have either a black Orchestra dress or a black dress shirt and blue tie issued to them for the duration of the school year. All GO Orchestra dress shirts, dresses, and ties are the property of the GO Orchestra Program. If any alterations are needed, they must not be permanent by cutting or removing any part of the article of clothing. Highlighted items must be purchased by the student. In the event of shortages or shipping delays, students may be required to provide their own concert attire.

Formal Concert Wear—worn at all formal performances: Fall, Winter, Spring, District Assessment, UIL, All-Region, Competitions, Special events or invitations, and for Orchestra Class Photos.

- Black Orchestra Dress, Black Socks or Hose, and Black Closed-Toe Flat Dress Shoes **or**
- Black Dress Shirt, Tie, Black Dress Pants, Black dress socks, and Black Closed-Toe dress shoes.

Black dress pants must be black dress slacks. Black jeans or leggings are not appropriate for formal attire. If there is an issue acquiring the correct attire, please contact the director as soon as possible.

Tennis shoes, Toms, Converse, flip flops, sandals, or open toe shoes are not appropriate for dress shoes. **For safety, no high heels will be allowed. ALL students must wear either black socks or black hose** with their concert attire to provide a uniform look.

Informal Concert Wear—worn during a pep rally, pop concerts, feeder school trips, and field trips.

- Grand Oaks Orchestra T-Shirt (provided by director), Blue Jeans (No holes), Closed-toed shoes

PRIVATE LESSONS

The secret to success in music is practice. What and how to practice differs from student to student depending on their own abilities and limitations. While the school program has numerous musical benefits and positive aspects, individual attention is often limited due to the large number of students involved. **All students are strongly encouraged to take private lessons**, particularly if they have the desire and dedication to advance as a competitive performer. Many top ranked orchestra programs are successful, in part due to individual training through private lessons. Private instruction offers students the opportunity beyond the classroom experience to develop advanced right and left hand techniques such as vibrato, shifting, bowing, listening and music reading skills, and some assistance in preparing region auditions and solo & ensemble material.

A list of approved private lesson instructors will be posted on the orchestra website and provided to students from the director. Space is limited. Tuition rates vary and are between the instructor and the parent. Private lessons can be taken during the student's orchestra class or after school on designated days.

Grand Oaks Orchestra

LETTER JACKET POINT SYSTEM:

An academic letter may be earned in orchestra by earning a total of **100** points through volunteering, being an officer in OrchStuCo, playing with one of the TMEA Region IX Orchestras, participating in TMEA Region IX Solo & Ensemble, and other activities as approved by the director. **After lettering once**, students must reach **250** to letter a 2nd time and reach **400** to letter a third time. Students may also automatically letter (earn 100 pts) by performing with one of the TMEA All-State Orchestras or earning a rating of "I" at Texas State Solo & Ensemble. Point totals will be tracked through CutTime. Please see the following for a breakdown of possible points to be earned.

All point values listed below are per year.

Other miscellaneous volunteer activities are worth 1-2 pts each.

- 20 pts - performing in all concerts as required
- 20 pts - performing in one of the Region IX Orchestras (100 for performing in an All State Ensemble)
- 10 pts - earning a 1 at UIL Solo & Ensemble (100 for earning a medal at the state level)
- 10 pts - serving as an officer on the Orchestra Student Council
- 5 pts - serving on student council and meeting director expectations
- 5 pts - auditioning for the Region IX Orchestras or CISD Honor Orchestra
- 5 pts - performing at UIL Solo & Ensemble
- 5 pts - performing at Texas State Solo & Ensemble
- 2-5 pts - individual events (TBD on a per event basis)
- 2 pts - Spirit Nights

If you have a question about any other activities or distinctions not mentioned, please contact the directors so it may be reviewed for inclusion into the point system.

ORCHESTRA STUDENT COUNCIL:

In addition to the opportunities outside of the orchestra room (Region, Solo/Ensemble) and during class (concertmaster, section leaders), students are encouraged to volunteer to be a member of the Orchestra Student Council. This organization is a student volunteer group and service organization that helps facilitate many of the events and performances that we do. Students involved in this group are responsible for the following:

- 1) Stage/concert set-up
- 2) Concert ushering
- 3) Post-concert reception set-up and organization
- 4) Orchestra publicity (poster creation, announcements)
- 5) Library administration (organizing the orchestra music library)
- 6) Updating records on numbers of uniform items
- 7) Volunteering to perform special events (Christmas caroling, etc)
- 8) Brainstorming concert ideas, social/party ideas, etc.
- 9) Planning and attending our social events
- 10) Community volunteering as representatives of the GOHS Orchestra

And much more! Applications will be available after the first week of school and are due by August 19th. We have limited space available in the organization. Participation in this organization can contribute to lettering in orchestra!

Grand Oaks Orchestra

ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 26-27

Student Name (Last, First) _____ Orchestra: _____

Initials _____ **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK**

I have received or accessed online a copy of the Grand Oaks Orchestra handbook for the school year 2025-2026. I agree that I have read the policies and procedures of the Grand Oaks Orchestra and that I understand that ...

I am responsible for all of the information contained in this handbook. • All orchestra students are issued grades for participation in required orchestra activities (including before or after-school sectionals for contest orchestras). • Each student must maintain eligibility to participate in any extracurricular activity. • A grade is given for all required concerts and contests. • The student's parent/guardian must make transportation arrangements for the student for all required concerts and agrees to be responsible for all fees associated with required orchestra activities.

Initials _____ **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ORCHESTRA CALENDAR**

I have received or accessed in Canvas a copy of the Grand Oaks Orchestra Calendar that outlines all major activities for the GO Orchestra for the school year 2025-2026. I agree that I have read the policies and procedures of the GO Orchestra Handbook concerning this calendar and that I understand that ...

Communication of an absence must follow the guidelines outlined in the orchestra handbook for the student to receive credit. • Non-school events are not an excused conflict with the required concert dates. • I need to communicate with Mrs. Cini about any conflict with a school sponsored event as soon as I am aware of the conflict - Mrs. Cini will work with the student to resolve it.

Initials _____ **PHOTO & VIDEO RELEASE**

I give permission for my child to have his/her picture or video shared for school-related purposes, such as in the yearbook, on the GOHS Orchestra website, GOHS Orchestra Social Media, or in any program or advertisement related to GOHS Orchestra.

Initials _____ **COMMUNICATION PERMISSION STATEMENT**

I have listed below my current contact information. I agree to ensure my contact information has been updated with the school. I agree to have important orchestra notices sent to the addresses below.

Student Printed Name	Signature	Student Email
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Parent/Guardian Printed Name	Signature	Parent/Guardian Email
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