

# Hightower Trail Middle School



## 2023-2024 Orchestra Handbook

Michael R. Tompkins, Jr., Director  
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## WELCOME

Dear Orchestra Families,

Welcome to the HTMS Orchestra Program! We are very happy that you and your child have chosen to be a part of our program. Playing in the orchestra encourages creativity and helps students learn discipline and focus. Statistics have proven that students who participate in music programs are among the academically elite in their schools. Students' adult lives are filled with successes, often attributed to skills gained through the orchestra experience: self-discipline, work ethic, attention to detail, teamwork, confidence, and leadership skills. We hope each student will take advantage of the many opportunities available through the orchestra program and continue music as a lifelong pursuit.

We truly believe that music education makes us better humans. You can support your child's music education by: asking them about class; establishing a daily practice routine; establishing a routine of bringing an instrument home; saying only POSITIVE comments about their playing and involvement; seeking out [private lessons](#); and communicating with the directors if you notice frustration.

Please feel free to connect with us anytime, and check the Orchestra Website often for updates:

<https://www.htmsorchestra.org>

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## Orchestra Handbook Form

The purpose of this handbook is to provide each orchestra family with an understanding of the policies and procedures that govern the Hightower Trail Middle School Orchestra Program. These guidelines exist to ensure success for all, and to serve as a resource for students and parents. Both students and parents should take the time to thoroughly read this handbook. When finished, please complete the required Orchestra Handbook Form: [htmsorchestra.org](https://www.htmsorchestra.org)

## Conduct

*All school wide rules and expectations are in effect in the music classrooms and on any trip the students may take with the Hightower Trail Middle School Music Department.*

Each music classroom exists to educate each and every child in the fundamentals of music on his/her instrument. Respect for school/individual property and each other is expected at all times. For all students to receive such an education, the following expectations will set the classroom climate:

1. LISTEN.
2. Follow directions.
3. Show respect.
4. Be prepared.
5. Stay on task.

Students begin each grading period with an “S” (satisfactory) in conduct.

1<sup>st</sup> offense: S behavior documented; parent contacted.

2<sup>nd</sup> offense: S behavior documented; parent contacted, plan made.

3<sup>rd</sup> offense: N behavior documented; parent contacted, and intervention to be determined.

4<sup>th</sup> offense: U behavior documented and turned over to the appropriate administrator.

## Materials

### **Orchestra Instrument:**

Make sure the store’s repair shop provides loaner instruments for students in orchestra class.

### **Method Books:**

Sixth Grade – Essential Elements Interactive for Strings - Book 1

Seventh Grade – Essential Elements Interactive for Strings – Book 2

Eighth Grade – method books will be provided in class (no purchase necessary)

***Make sure you purchase the book with your instrument name!***

## **Orchestra Supplies:**

Case, well identified with name and pod.

Rosin

Soft Cloth

Shoulder rest for violins and violas (You should try with your instrument before buying)

Endpin stop (rock stop) for cellos and basses-**for concerts and home use only.**

**Black 1” hardcover 3 ring binder with pockets**

**Clear sheet protectors**

20 sheets of lined notebook paper.

**Pencil**-keep in your case, binder, or locker

Music stand for home practice/field trips (folding wire stand)

Metronome/Tuner-for home use only

## **Instrument Storage**

**Each student will be assigned a school locker. Students will receive this assignment during the first week of school. Personal instruments and school instruments must be stored in the proper place. Students will lose participation points if they fail to put away materials.**

- *Put your name on your case, book, shoulder rest, and endpin stop.*
- *Violins and violas keep a soft cloth in your case.*
- *Keep your case on the left side of your chair. Make sure it is closed!*
- *Each student is responsible for putting away his/her instrument and music at the end of class.*

### **Locker Information:**

- All students are personally responsible for their assigned orchestra lock. Should this lock be lost or stolen, the student will be charged a lock replacement fee of \$7. Keeping your orchestra locker locked at all times should avoid any loss or theft.
- Students are responsible for keeping their lockers locked at all times.
- Only items for orchestra class should be kept in the locker (including music, instrument, instrument accessories and binder).

## Personal Instruments

*Personal Instruments* are defined as instruments that belong to or are rented by an individual student's family from a community music store. These instruments are not owned or insured by Hightower Trail Middle School, Cobb County School District, or the State of Georgia. The student (and family) is responsible for maintaining the instrument in working order with the proper accessories. The orchestra directors will recommend repairs (when needed) as the student progresses through the program.

## School-Owned Instruments

*School Instruments* are defined as instruments that belong to Hightower Trail Middle School. These typically include larger instruments: Cello and String Bass. The school bears the responsibility of repair costs on these instruments. However, students are contractually obligated to treat them with special care so that needless and expensive repairs do not have to be made. Future students must be able to use these instruments. Obvious damage to school instruments will be considered vandalism and will be dealt with in the manner outlined by Cobb County Schools in the HTMS Student Handbook. To ease transportation and increase home practice, it would help your child if you could rent one of these instruments to keep at home. We encourage school instrument users to contribute to the Orchestra Fundraiser and pursue private lessons.

## Performance Attire

<b>Sixth Grade</b>	Orchestra Shirts/Blue Jeans/Casual Shoes (no sandals) (Please indicate shirt size on student info form)
<b>Seventh/Eighth</b>	Orchestra Polo Shirt (order form will be sent home at a later date) Boys: Black slacks, black belt, black socks, black dress shoes Girls: Black slacks, black hose, black ballet flats <b>No sandals, flip-flops, open-toed shoes, white sneakers, white socks or black jeans!!</b>

**Orchestra concerts are considered formal events for our students and it is very important that students look their best for each performance. Please address uniform issues long before the concert date. Students who arrive for a concert without acceptable clothing will not be allowed to participate in the event. If you have a problem obtaining an outfit, please contact us immediately so we can work together to resolve this matter.**

## Performance Attendance

**Students are expected to attend all performances** unless a director has approved an acceptable excuse *two weeks prior to the performance*. Students who do not attend the performance must submit a recording of the concert music on the next school day following the concert. Students who fail to submit a recording will have points deducted from their Playing Test grade.

Our performances are intended to showcase the orchestra students' hard work and are also designed to teach stage and audience etiquette. Therefore, students are expected to behave in a courteous and professional manner before, during, and after the performance.

Performance attendance and make-ups are required for students attending any orchestra field trips. Students who do not meet these requirements will be asked not to participate in these special events. Field trips are a reward (and not a privilege) for the hard work these students put forth throughout the year and their dedication to the orchestra program.

## National and Georgia Standards for Music Education

### Creating

- Improvise, compose, and arrange music within specified guidelines.

### Performing

- Sing alone or with others
- Perform on instruments through a varied repertoire of music, alone and with others.
- Read and identify elements of notated music.

### Responding

- Listen to, analyze, and describe music.
- Respond to music and music performances.

### Connecting

- Understand relationships between music, other arts, other disciplines, and daily life.

## Grading

Summative Assessment - Playing Tests/Pass-offs/Written Test 40%

Formative Assessment - Rehearsal Participation, worksheets, reflections 60%

### **Summative Assessment: Playing Tests/Pass-offs**

- Scales and techniques
- Method book selections/Repertoire Excerpts (announced/unannounced)
- Pass-offs- Sixth Grade students must perform assigned skills/music. Requirements will be listed on a Pass-off sheet. Pitch/rhythm accuracy, correct instrument position, and tone quality are evaluated before students can progress to the next piece.

### **Formative Assessment: Rehearsal Participation**

- Actively participates in rehearsal and/or class activities.
- Has ALL class material for class each day. Each day a student is missing materials, 20 points are deducted from their weekly participation grade (100 points per week). Students with instruments in the repair shop should bring a signed note. ALWAYS ASK FOR A LOANER WHILE YOUR INSTRUMENT IS BEING REPAIRED. Generally rental programs provide this service at no extra cost.

## Private Lessons

A complete music education involves two groups of teachers- the orchestra directors and the private lessons teacher. The amount of detail and reinforcement received in private lessons is vital and logistically not available in the full Orchestra class. We would love to sit one-on one with every student and spend a half-hour each week on their technique, but it is just not feasible in a large class setting.

Additionally, private lessons get students practicing more regularly and with a purpose. Students improve as they delve more deeply into their instrument outside of class.

Private lessons provide personal attention, accountability, and motivation. These aspects lead students to take personal ownership of their craft. Private lessons give your child a complete music education and make the most of your orchestra investment.

Ask the directors for recommended private teachers (virtual & in-person).

## Orchestra Fundraisers

Our Orchestra Fundraisers provide enhancements to students' education not provided by CCSD. These include: Clinicians (professional musicians), county instrument repair/maintenance, Large Group Performance Evaluation fees, t-shirts, awards, rewards, transportation, sheet music, recruitment, Pope transition activities, recording fees, website maintenance, music commissions, and professional development.

## Trips

Traveling with the Orchestra requires great conduct, digital citizenship, and academic integrity. When we travel, our students represent the Orchestra program and the school. Students with administrative referrals may be removed from trip rosters. Absences from concerts and rehearsals may lead to loss of privilege to attend certain trips.



## Awards & Achievements

### Orchestra Program

- GMEA Music Program of the Year (2019)
- GMEA Exemplary Performance Award (2015, 2022)

### 8th Grade and Chamber Orchestra

- GMEA In-Service Conference in Savannah & Athens (2013, 2019)
- ASTA National Orchestra Festival in Atlanta (2018)
- Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago (2004)