

2026–2027
Science Hill High School
Topper Orchestra Handbook



" More Than Notes . . . It's a Journey"

Welcome

Dear Orchestra Families and Student

Welcome to the Science Hill Orchestra!

We are excited that you have chosen to be part of the Science Hill High School Orchestra. Our goal is to provide a positive, challenging, and rewarding experience where every student can grow as a musician and as a person.

Being a member of the orchestra is a privilege and a commitment. Every student is expected to come to rehearsals and performances prepared, participate with a positive attitude, and always give their best effort. Together, we work to maintain a tradition of musical excellence while creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, supported, and encouraged.

This handbook is designed to answer your questions and help everyone understand how our orchestra program works. Please read it together as a family and keep it handy throughout the year.

Susan Sterling Lambert
Orchestra Director

Christin Belt
Assistant Orchestra Director

Student Quote “Orchestra helped me find my people.”

Our Goal

The Science Hill Orchestra strives to:

- Help every student become a stronger and more confident musician.
- Provide a positive, supportive environment where students are encouraged to do their best.
- Introduce students to a wide variety of music, musical styles, and performance opportunities.
- Develop excellent playing techniques, musicianship, and performance skills.
- Teach teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and cooperation through ensemble performance.
- Encourage students to appreciate music as a lifelong source of enjoyment.
- Prepare students for future opportunities in music, whether they choose to perform professionally, teach, study music in college, participate in community ensembles, or simply enjoy music throughout their lives.
- Inspire students to become lifelong supporters and advocates of the arts.

Our goal is not only to create outstanding performances, but also to help students develop the confidence, discipline, and leadership skills that will benefit them long after high school.

What We Expect

Every orchestra student is expected to:

- Come to every rehearsal prepared with their instrument, bow, music, pencil, and any needed accessories.
- Participate with a positive attitude, good effort, and respectful behavior.
- Practice regularly so they continue to improve each week.
- Complete all playing assessments, written assignments, and other required work.
- Attend all required concerts and performances, wearing the correct concert attire.
- Be willing to learn, encourage others, and most importantly—enjoy making music!

Citizenship and Character

Being a member of the Science Hill Orchestra is about more than learning to play an instrument. It is also about developing qualities that will help you succeed in school, your future career, and life.

A Positive Attitude

A positive attitude is one of the most important ingredients for success.

Come to rehearsals ready to:

- Learn something new.
- Work hard and do your best.
- Encourage your fellow musicians.
- Accept challenges with a positive mindset.

Regular home practice, consistent effort, and a willingness to improve will help you grow into the best musician you can be. Every rehearsal is an opportunity to learn, improve, and make great music together.

Responsibility & Self-Discipline

Being part of an orchestra is a privilege that comes with responsibility.

Students are expected to:

- Practice regularly.
- Come prepared for rehearsals and performances.
- Follow directions.
- Make choices that help the entire orchestra succeed.

Learning self-discipline now will benefit you far beyond high school.

Pride in Everything You Do

Take pride in your work, your attitude, and your accomplishments.

Represent yourself, your family, Science Hill High School, and the orchestra with integrity both on and off the stage. Whether you're in rehearsal, performing in concert, or representing the orchestra in the community, strive to do your very best.

Respect & Courtesy

Treat everyone with kindness and respect.

This includes:

- Teachers/School Staff
- Parents and guardians/Chaperones
- Fellow students
- Audience members
- Guest clinicians and conductors

When we support one another, everyone has the opportunity to grow and succeed.

A respectful orchestra is a successful orchestra!

Grading

How Your Grade Is Determined

Orchestra is a performance-based class, so your grade reflects both your musical growth and your participation throughout the nine-week grading period.

1. Assessments

Students will complete playing assessments throughout the year to demonstrate the skills they are learning in class.

2. Concerts & Performances

Concerts are an important part of the orchestra curriculum and are required for all students.

3. Classwork & Assignments

Students will also receive grades for completing classroom assignments, including:

- Written classwork and homework
- Quizzes
- Music folder checks
- Online assignments or forms
- Permission slips and required paperwork
- Short playing checks and performance activities

Students may also receive a progress grade based on their musical growth and consistent effort over time.

4. Participation & Professionalism

Being a successful orchestra member means being an active participant every day.

Participation grades are based on:

- Being on time and ready to rehearse
- Bringing all required materials to class
- Demonstrating respectful behavior toward teachers, classmates, and guests
- Following rehearsal procedures
- Maintaining a positive attitude and giving your best effort

Great musicians are also great teammates!

Daily Expectations

Our orchestra classroom is a place where everyone should feel safe, respected, and able to learn. Every student plays an important role in creating a positive rehearsal environment. By working together and following these expectations, we can make every rehearsal productive and enjoyable.

Be Ready to Learn

- Arrive on time and be in your seat, warmed up, and ready to play within three minutes after the bell rings.
- Bring everything you need to class every day, including your instrument, bow, music, pencil, and any other required materials.
- If you forget your instrument, you are still expected to participate by following along with the rehearsal. Since playing is an important part of the class, your participation grade may be affected.

Show Respect

- Treat your teachers, classmates, guests, and school property with kindness and respect.
- Respect other students' instruments and equipment. Never touch or use something that does not belong to you without permission.
- Listen carefully when the director or another student is speaking. Please do not talk, play, or pluck your instrument while instructions are being given.
- Raise your hand if you have a question or need assistance.

Rehearsal Expectations

- Stay in your assigned seat unless you have permission to move.
- Put your music, instrument, and supplies away neatly at the end of each rehearsal.
- Give your best effort every day and help create a positive rehearsal atmosphere where everyone can succeed.

Food, Drinks, and Safety

- Water is welcome in the orchestra room, but please leave all other drinks, food, and gum outside.
- For everyone's safety, running, horseplay, and roughhousing are never allowed in the orchestra room, instrument storage area, or hallways.

School Policies

All Science Hill High School and Johnson City Schools policies apply during orchestra classes, rehearsals, performances, and school-sponsored activities. This includes expectations for behavior, dress code, and treating others with respect.

A great orchestra starts with great teamwork

Making Good Choices

Restrooms, Hall Passes, and Appointments

- Please use the restroom before class whenever possible.
- If you have an emergency and need to leave during class, ask the director for permission before leaving.
- If you need to visit the nurse, counselor, or another school office, please check with the director first.
- Hall passes will be given only when necessary.

Our goal is to spend as much rehearsal time making music as possible while ensuring every student has a safe, respectful, and enjoyable learning experience.

Cell Phone & Technology Policy

During orchestra class, students are expected to stay focused on making music. To help everyone learn and get the most out of rehearsal:

- Cell phones should be put away and out of sight.
- AirPods, headphones, earbuds, smart watches, and other personal electronic devices should not be used during class unless the director gives permission.
- Chromebooks should only be used when instructed for a class activity.

Technology is a wonderful tool, but orchestra is your opportunity to unplug, work together, and enjoy making music. Be present, participate, and challenge yourself—you might be surprised how much fun you'll have!

Discipline

Our classroom works best when everyone contributes to a positive environment. If expectations aren't met, we'll work together to correct the behavior through conversations, parent communication, and school discipline procedures when necessary. Our goal is always to help students learn from mistakes and return to being successful members of the orchestra family.

Attendance

Because orchestra is a performance-based class, every rehearsal and performance matters. Each student plays an important role in the success of the entire ensemble. When one person is absent, everyone is affected.

Class & Rehearsal Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes and scheduled rehearsals.

Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence from class or rehearsal may result in:

- A zero for that day's participation
- A lower participation or performance grade
- Changes in seating assignments
- Loss of the opportunity to perform at a concert, when appropriate

Concert Attendance

Concert Attendance

Concerts are a required part of the orchestra curriculum and count as a major grade. Students are expected to:

- Attend every required performance.
- Arrive at the assigned call time.
- Wear the required concert attire.
- Stay for the entire performance.

If an emergency prevents a student from attending, please notify the director as soon as possible.

If you know about a conflict ahead of time, submit a written request from a parent or guardian at least two weeks before the concert. Requests will be reviewed individually, but approval is not guaranteed. An unexcused absence from a required performance will result in a zero for that performance.

Being On Time

Being on time is an important life skill and shows respect for your fellow musicians. Students are considered on time when they are:

- In their assigned seat
- Ready to rehearse
- With their instrument, bow, music, and pencil

For concerts and special rehearsals, a call time will be provided. Students who arrive after the assigned call time may receive a reduced performance grade.

Private Lessons

Private lessons are not required, but they are one of the best ways for students to improve their playing.

Working one-on-one with a private teacher allows students to:

- Build stronger playing techniques.
- Improve tone and musicianship.
- Prepare for auditions and honor ensembles.
- Grow in confidence as musicians.

If you are interested in private lessons, please contact Mrs. Lambert or Ms. Belt for a list of qualified local string teachers.

Every Performance Tells Our Story

Concerts Matter

Concerts are the “tests” in orchestra.

Attendance is expected because every student is an important member of the ensemble.

September

- 20 SH Chamber Shirefest @ JC Library
- 29 SHHS Concert 7 pm

October

- No major events listed

November

- 8 SH Chamber @ Centenary Veterans Program
- 21 SHHS Sr Clinic Auditions @ Bearden HS

December

- 8 SHHS Concert 7 pm

January

- 13–16 SHHS All-State Orchestra

February

- 4–6 SHHS Sr Clinic Orchestra
- 16 SHHS KSO Sectional
- 18 SHHS/8th Grade/KSO Concert

March

- 6 Jr Clinic Auditions

April

- 8–9 Jr Clinic @ ITMS
- 13 SHHS Concert
- 15–18 SHHS Williamsburg

May

- 11 SHHS Concert

Concert Attire - Ladies

Concert Uniforms

Concert attire is an important part of our orchestra program. When everyone is dressed the same, it creates a professional appearance and allows the audience to focus on the music.

Students who are not in the required concert attire may not be allowed to perform.

Concert Attire for Ladies

Ladies in the Topper Orchestra are required to wear the official Science Hill Orchestra concert dress.

Dress Information

- Style: 3755AA
- Color: Black Soft Performance Knit
- Company: Formal Fashions Inc.
- Website: formalfashionsinc.com
- Phone: (800) 528-7909
- Cost: Approximately \$75.00 plus shipping

Please use the sizing guide on the company's website to select the correct size.

Important Reminders

- Order your dress by the end of August.
- The dress will likely need to be hemmed, so allow time for alterations before the first concert.
- This is a one-time purchase and will be used throughout your student's time in the Science Hill Topper Orchestra.

Need Financial Assistance?

If your student qualifies for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program and your family needs assistance purchasing a concert dress, please notify Mrs. Lambert in writing by August 10.

Concert Attire - Gentlemen

Concert Attire for Gentlemen

Gentlemen are required to wear a tuxedo for all formal orchestra performances.

Students may:

- Provide their own black tuxedo, or
- Rent a tuxedo from the Science Hill Orchestra program.

Orchestra Tuxedo Rental

- Rental Fee: \$50.00
- Payment Due: August 10
- Tuxedo fittings will take place during orchestra class during the first week of school.

Students renting a tuxedo should complete the rental agreement and payment through the orchestra website.

Students Must Provide

- A white tuxedo shirt
- Black dress shoes
- Black dress socks

The orchestra will provide:

- Maroon bow tie
- Maroon cummerbund

End-of-Year Responsibilities

Students renting an orchestra tuxedo are responsible for:

- Having the tuxedo professionally dry cleaned after the final concert.
- Returning the tuxedo no later than May 15.

Need Financial Assistance?

If your student qualifies for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program and your family needs assistance obtaining a concert uniform, please notify Mrs. Lambert in writing by August 10.

Uniform Payments

Payments for tuxedo rentals may be:

- Paid online through the orchestra website.

Beyond the Classroom

Orchestra Trips

Trips are exciting opportunities that students earn through:

- Good citizenship
- Responsible behavior
- Academic success
- Concert participation

Specific eligibility requirements and payment information will be shared before each trip.

Students who wish to participate in off-campus orchestra events, such as festivals, competitions, honor orchestras, field trips, and other extracurricular activities, must meet the Johnson City Schools academic eligibility requirements.

To remain eligible, students must:

- Maintain at least a 2.0 GPA (C average).
- Have no failing grades (Fs) in any class.

Students who become academically ineligible may not participate in off-campus orchestra activities until their eligibility has been restored.

However, students are still expected to attend all regular orchestra classes, rehearsals, and required on-campus performances while working to regain eligibility.

Supporting Our Community's Orchestra

One of the greatest opportunities our students have is the chance to experience live orchestral music performed by professional musicians right here in our community. The Johnson City Symphony Orchestra represents the highest level of orchestral performance in our region.

Attending Symphony concerts allows students to see the skills they are developing in the classroom come to life on stage. They hear beautiful music performed at the highest level, observe professional rehearsal and performance etiquette, and gain a deeper understanding of what is possible through dedication, teamwork, and a lifelong love of music.

Students can attend JCSO Concerts for free with student ID!!!!

Communication

The best orchestra programs are built on string communication.

Please watch for:

- Email updates
- School announcements
- Concert reminders
- ParentSquare messages
- CutTime messages
- Orchestra website updates

If you ever have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We're here to help.

Johnson City Schools Orchestra Guild

JCSOG is the Johnson City Schools Orchestra Guild

Every family who has a string student in orchestra is a member. This non-profit organization serves as an advocate for our orchestra program and orchestra students in our community.

Thank You!!

Thank you for trusting us with your child. We cannot wait to see the amazing growth our students will make this year.

Here's to a fantastic 2026 - 2027 school year!

Let's make great music together!!

STAY CONNECTED

Johnson City Schools Orchestra Program

<https://johnsoncityschoolsorchestra.com/>



Orchestra Website



Facebook



Instagram



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Teacher Contact



<https://www.facebook.com/JohnsonCitySchoolsOrchestraGuild>
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