

FROST MIDDLE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK

Michael Rais, Director of Bands &
Orchestras mrtais@livoniapublicschools.org

www.fmsmusic.org

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Music Department of Frost Middle School! Parents, I invite you to all scheduled performances and ask that you fully support your child in this new experience. The music handbook will give you some sense of my goals and curriculum, my philosophy of grading for this course, and my expectations of each ensemble member. Parents and students are requested to read this entire handbook, discuss it, and keep it for reference for the entire school year. Only when every member of the ensemble puts forth a 100% effort can an ensemble attain its goals in musical achievement and service to school and community. You are embarking on a lifetime of musical enjoyment. The more you invest of yourself, the more will be your reward. Together we can make this the best year ever.

Please take special notice of the sections dealing with attendance, grading, and the student resource notebook, daily procedures, concert dress, and important dates found on website.

I appreciate all your support and look forward to another exciting school year.

COMMUNICATION

A key element of a successful music program is communication. The Frost Middle School Music Department maintains a website that has all the information needed for participation in the program. This is a very convenient resource if you have misplaced this handbook, calendar or any other forms that have been passed out in class during the year.

Please go there regularly to keep up-to-date on information regarding the program. Students and especially parents are highly encouraged to sign up for weekly e-mails by signing up on our music website. E-mail communication will be used solely for providing updates about assignments, tests, concert dates, department news, and general information about the music program. Addresses will remain hidden for privacy.

WEBSITE:

<http://www.fmsmusic.org>

FACEBOOK:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/frostmsmusic>

EMAIL:

mrtais@livoniapublicschools.org

TELEPHONE

734.744.2670

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials List for All String Classes

All String Students:

- Instrument in good working condition
- 2 Pencils (*Keep one in your music locker or instrument case*)
- Standard accessories (shoulder rest (violin/viola), rosin, cleaning cloth, rockstop for home and concert use (cello/bass), etc.)
- Electronic tuner & Metronome (They can be purchased as a combination 2 in 1 device)
- **Sheet Music stand for practice/to bring to various concerts – folding stand (Please label students name)**
- Music Folder – Provided by music department

Violin and Viola students should keep a spare set of strings in their case.

Method Book (Required):

Concert Orchestra - Sound Innovations for Orchestra (Book 1) & Sound Innovations for Orchestra (Book 2)

Chamber Orchestra - Sound Innovations for Orchestra (Book 2) and Sound Innovations Creative Warm-Ups

Grade Requirements:

Students will be evaluated through tests, performance, participation and practice assignments. Tests will be written, playing, or rhythmic interpretation. Tests and classroom demonstration will be the strongest factors of each student's grade; however, students will also be graded on participation, concert attendance, and daily preparation. Grades are not rounded.

Grade Distribution:

Tests (Performing): 50 points each

Rhythm Test: 25 points each

Concert Performances: 150 points each

Class participation / Following the music agenda (Weekly): 25 points

Class Participation:

- Arriving to class with instrument, music and proper accessories.
- Actively contributing to the learning process of the classroom.
- Returning instrument, music, materials, to their proper place at the end of the class period.
- Not chewing gum during class.
- Attending every concert and before / after school rehearsals.

Concert Participation & Attendance:

Perfect attendance is extremely important to our organization. Absence and tardiness lower the effectiveness of rehearsals and create tense situations for concerts. Students are expected to be in their seats with their instrument and materials when class starts. Once class begins, students should be warming up on their instruments and preparing their materials for rehearsal. The daily agenda is listed on the board.

Concert attendance is mandatory, not optional. This is a performance based class. Concerts are a way for students to exhibit what they have learned over the course of the year, and are a vital part of each student's music education. Since unexcused absences from performance situations cannot be tolerated, a student's overall grade may be lowered by a maximum of two letter grades for a missed performance. The director may consider special circumstances for absence. Written excuses from the parent must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to a performance. Emergencies and illness will be treated on an individual basis, but generally an illness excuse must be presented to the teacher WITHIN 24 HOURS of the students return to school. Improper notification could result in an unexcused absence.

Excused absences from a concert need to be made up. An individual who finds himself/herself in this situation needs to make an appointment with the director to determine a make-up assignment.

* A portion of a student's grade is also affected by concert and rehearsal participation.

Rehearsal Etiquette:

Performance classes are quite different from most classes at Frost. The classes tend to be larger, students are sitting in close proximity to their friends, and the success of the class depends heavily on the success of each individual. Due to these issues, students are asked to keep a quiet atmosphere during the lesson. Talking and playing while instructions are being given is inappropriate and will not be tolerated. Excessive talking and/or distracting behavior will result in removal from class; a detention or a referral will affect the student's grade.

Orchestra members are required to observe the following rehearsal regulations:

1. To each rehearsal bring your instrument, folder with music, pencil and method book.
2. Upon arrival in the rehearsal room, promptly get your instrument, return to your seat, and warm up.
3. When the director steps in front of the class, all playing and talking must stop immediately.
4. Respect everyone and everything in the orchestra area.
5. Listen more than you talk.
6. At the end of rehearsal, return your instrument and music to their proper place.
7. No student is allowed to stay after school or before school without Mr. Rais or a teacher present in the room.
8. No food or gum is allowed in the classroom.
9. Keep personal belongings in your hall locker.
10. All Frost Middle School Rules apply.

* See Classroom Procedures for more info.

Practice

Daily practice is to playing an instrument what homework is to other classes. In order for any student to be successful in instrumental music, focused practicing is essential. Please encourage your child to play their instrument daily.

Students should aim to practice 20-30 minutes each day. Students will be responsible for practice assignments, as noted in the grading policies; the practice/demonstration assignments will constitute 20% of a student's grade.

Students who need additional assistance on their orchestra music may make an appointment with the director to seek help before school, during morning Phantom Time, or after school.

Sample Practice Session:

1. Bowings, staccato, legato, marcato, etc. (2-3 minutes)
2. Scales and scale patterns (5 minutes)
3. Method book assignment (5-10 minutes)
4. Review: solos, theory, rhythm, etc. (5 minutes)
5. Orchestra music woodshed (5-10 minutes)
6. Fun review, pop music, etc. (5 minutes or more)

Practice Tips:

1. Practice five days or more a week
2. Practice new music and review the old music
3. Ask for help when you hit a hard spot
4. Pick apart music one note/measure at a time
5. Practice with a friend sometimes
6. Practice the parts you are having difficulty with

While schedules can get hectic and students suffer the unexpected sickness, there are practice techniques that can be employed in these circumstances. Please contact me if you need assistance with extra practice techniques. Activities that also count as practice and the amount of time that can be counted per week:

1. Private lessons (30 minutes)
2. Attending a professional concert (30 minutes)

Private Lessons

Private lessons are strongly encouraged for all orchestra students. A student working independently with a teacher can develop individual skills; learn solo music, and other repertoire specific to their instrument. Moreover, private lessons help students develop the skills necessary to be successful musicians. A private teacher list is available on our music website for your convenience.

Chair Placement

The director will determine chair placement based on the needs of the ensemble. Generally chairs are assigned once a card marking. However, since each student brings individual strengths to the ensemble, the director will assign parts for some pieces to ensure the best balance for the ensemble. There are no chair placement challenges.

Clinics

In past years clinicians have come to Frost to work with ensembles. This year there will be clinicians coming to work with the various groups to prepare for competition and to help students refine and develop their skills on their instruments. The dates and times will be posted as they are scheduled. Please be advised that attendance for clinics is mandatory. Clinicians are brought in to benefit the students' music education and are respected professional musicians, many of whom are associated with universities. For this reason, attendance at clinics is essential for each and every ensemble member.

MSBOA Band Festival

Each February and March the 8th grade ensembles participate in the District 12 MSBOA Band/Orchestra Festival. The students perform a planned program and sight read new music for a panel of judges who comment on areas for improvement and strengths of the ensemble. Frost Middle School competes in the top division for eighth grade band and orchestra; therefore, intense preparation is necessary. The preparation may include an evening rehearsal, a clinic (to be scheduled later in the year), and some morning sectionals. The attendance policy for Festival is the same as for other performances.

* Please note that Festival may fall on a Saturday. There is no time or location listed because we do not receive that information until 2-3 weeks prior to the competition. Please leave the entire day available. In the past we have been involved with the competition until as late as 7 p.m.

CONCERT DRESS CODE

Ladies

black dress pants
black dress shirt
black dress shoes

Gentlemen

black dress pants
black dress shirt
black socks
black dress shoes

Black jeans are not acceptable.
No Sneakers / No Gym Shoes

EXTRA CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

Honors Ensembles

Throughout the year students have the opportunity to participate in many performance opportunities outside of the classroom day. If it falls on a school day, the student will be marked school business in the attendance records. Students have opportunities to participate in Wayne State University Honors, Detroit Symphony Orchestra Honors, Bowling Green State University Honors Band, Downriver Percussion Day and many other events

Solo and Ensemble Festival

Every January/February, on a Saturday, students have the opportunity to perform at Solo and Ensemble Festival. The festival is held at Franklin High School in Livonia and is open to instrumental students all over Southeastern Michigan. At this event, students perform a solo, an ensemble, or both in front of a judge. Students receive a rating of I – V on their performance (a I is Superior). Those students that receive a rating of I or II earn a medal. Students usually find the experience to be quite rewarding, even though it may be a little intimidating the first time.

Fundraisers

Students will have the opportunity to raise funds at the beginning of the year. Individuals are not required to take part in the fundraiser, however, students involved in the activities will benefit from the profits brought in by their participation. Our program relies on fundraiser profit to pay for transportation to festival, sheet music, music supplies, clinicians, recordings, apps, electronics, tuners, awards and more. Donations may be made to the program. We will be running two fundraisers. The first one by SnapRaise! A crowdsource fundraiser and the other is Century Resource Fundraiser, which will kick off in February. Our program is funded by how much we raise. All of our students will benefit from what we fundraise.

MUSIC PROPERTY

Music

Each student will receive a music folder to keep sheet music and other handouts in. This folder needs to go to and from school on a daily basis. Students will need to keep all music and handouts in the folder at all times, so that no one will lose their music. Music will be provided for each student and consequently, each student is responsible for his/her folder and its contents. Students must keep the music in good condition (only pencil marks, no pen). A FEE WILL BE ASSESSED FOR LOST OR DAMAGED MUSIC ACCORDING TO ITS REPLACEMENT COSTS. One original piece of music can range in price from \$1 to \$5. Rehearsal books cost between \$7 and \$15 to replace. Students are responsible for returning music in acceptable condition at the end of the school year and will be required to pay for lost or damaged music.

Lockers

Each student will be assigned an instrument locker at the beginning of the school year. Some of the students with larger instruments will have to share lockers. Please read the following guidelines in relation to music lockers.

Lockers are assigned to students at the beginning of the year. If a student's instrument does not fit in the locker or they need another locker for additional instruments, he/she needs to see the director. Students should only keep his/her instrument in the music locker. It is disruptive to other classes when students wander into the music room to pick up lunches and materials for other classes. Each student is assigned a hall locker at Frost for such items. Any items not secured in a locker will be taken to the lost and found in the Main Office. Students who leave food or damaging items in their lockers will lose the privilege of having a music locker. Damage to your locker will result in repair fees, so take care of the lockers!

Instruments

You are personally held responsible for your instrument whether school or privately owned. For safety purposes keep a record of the serial number at home and consider listing a privately owned instrument on your home insurance policy. Never leave an instrument unattended and take your instrument home as often as possible for safety reasons and for practicing. It is essential to the orchestra that you keep your instrument in good playing condition (new strings, re-haired bow, working instrument, etc.); therefore, if your instrument is going to be in repair for more than one day a parent notification will be needed.

Students who play large instruments (i.e. cello and double bass) may have the option to rent a school instrument for home practice. During the time of rental, the student is responsible for maintenance such as cleaning; tuning the instrument, replace strings if broken, etc. If there is a problem with the instrument and it needs to go in for repair, the student/parent needs to notify Mr. Rais immediately.

Classroom Procedures Instrument Storage Room

- 1.1 Quietly enter the instrument storage room NO LATER than the bell.
- 1.2 Put your books in your designated area and gather the following materials to bring with you into the music room:
 - Instrument (All Violins/Violas leave cases in storage room).
 - Sheet Music (In Folder)
 - Method Book
 - Pencil
 - Rosin / Tuner / Cloth
- 1.3 Move quickly and quietly in the storage room. (Remember; there are other classes in session).
- 1.4 Walk into music room with all materials.

Entering the Music Room

- 2.1 Spit out any gum, candy or other "Chewables".
- 2.2 Get a music stand if necessary.
- 2.3 Go directly to your assigned seat and follow the directions listed on the board or the overhead.
- 2.4 Have music and a pencil out on your stand.
- 2.5 Be ready to play by two minutes after the tardy bell.

Rehearsal

- 3.1 When the director steps on the podium, be silent and give your complete attention to the director.
- 3.2 Follow all verbal and non-verbal instructions.
- 3.3 Do not talk during music or teaching.
- 3.4 Always play with proper posture and technique.
- 3.5 Put forth your best effort during the entire rehearsal
- 3.6 Make choices that are for the benefit of the whole ensemble.

Dismissal

- 4.1 Pack up when instructed to do so.
- 4.2 Stay in your seat until given permission to enter the instrument storage room.
- 4.3 Go silently into the instrument room. Put your instrument and band materials in your designated area.
- 4.4 Quickly and quietly get your books and return to your assigned seat.
- 4.5 Silently listen to all announcements.
- 4.6 If there is time after announcements, you may talk quietly.
- 4.7 When dismissed, exit the room and walk to your next class.

Instruments

- Do not let anyone else play your instrument.
- First and last name must be plainly visible on the outside of the instrument case.
- Instruments should not be left at school overnight except with the permission of the director. When at school, instruments must be placed in the instrument storage room.
- Do not leave any personal belongings in the instrument storage room other than when you are in music class.
- Students must keep their instruments in good playing condition at all times. All instruments are subject to inspection by the director. Director will be happy to assess the need for repair and/or perform simple repairs.
- Students are responsible for all items necessary for the proper function of their instruments at every music function. There may be periodic checks ensuring that students have the necessary equipment.
 - Violin / Viola – Shoulder Rest, Rosin, Cleaning Cloth, Metronome/Tuner, Pencil
 - Cello / Bass – Rock Stop/End Pin Rest, Rosin, Cleaning Cloth, Metronome/Tuner, Pencil

Special note about switching instruments

At the Intermediate level, students are continuing on the instrument they started on before middle school. However, we start adding specialty instruments to complete the orchestra. These instruments include viola, cello and double bass. In most cases, a director will approach a student if switching instruments that would be a benefit for the student. If a student is interested in switching to a specialty instrument, he/she MUST talk to the director. It is critical that switchovers take private lessons, care for the school-owned instrument issued, and plan to stay in the district through high school performing on the instrument. Students cannot switch to any of the beginning instruments such as violin unless in rare circumstances where a director approves.

A Note to Parents

Ways You Can Help Enrich Your Child's Music Education (Which will help them in a bunch of other areas, too!)

Time Management

Help your child plan out a homework schedule that includes practicing their instrument every day.

Responsibility

Reinforce the importance of bringing all materials to music and being on time to rehearsals, performances and classes. Suggest ways that your child can be responsible for his/her own things without needing a reminder every time.

Attitude and Determination

Learning an instrument can be very frustrating. Use positive encouragement to help your child overcome roadblocks along the way.

Pride and Accomplishment

Don't just ask your child what they learned in music that day... ask them to show/demonstrate for you! Mini "recitals" and performances for loved ones can really boost a young musician's self-esteem about performing. Not only is it great practice, but it shows that you are really interested in what your child is learning. Plus, you'll get an opportunity to hear your child improve over time. (Don't worry, they will sound better...I promise!)

Other tips

- Help your child practice the right way. Practice doesn't make perfect. Practice makes permanent. Only perfect practice makes perfect.
- Sign your child up for private lessons (if possible). One-on-one work with a professional musician will raise your child to the next level of musicianship.
- Come to concerts – it really does mean a lot to them!
- Take your child to other music related event/concerts.
- Talk to your child about music, whether it is what he/she is playing, what is on the radio, what you listened to when you were his/her age, etc.
- Encourage your child to get together with other musicians to practice or just "Jam".

Please contact me to discuss your child's progress in music. If at any time you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let me know. Here's to a great year and great music!!!!



Google Classroom:

Our program will be utilizing Google Classroom this year. Students will be able to access sheet music, supplemental materials, rhythm sheets, assignments, PDF handouts, recordings, videos and more. Parents will also be able to join and see how your student is performing in the class. Announcements and lesson plans will also be uploaded onto GC. Students will need to use their @student.livoniapublicschools.org e-mail account to sign up. This is a wonderful program that allows students to take ownership for their learning.

How to sign up and join a class:

Concert Band 1: d4dnxiu
Concert Band 2: fuaq1mt
Symphonic Band: 1oclqx
Concert Orchestra: mjqegdm
Chamber Orchestra: 21z1d8
Jazz Band: 1jhekym

Playing tests:

Students will need to submit their playing tests online. Students may use a computer, cell phone, video camera or other electronic devices to submit a video of their playing assignments. These playing tests may also be completed at home.

Sound Innovations (Method Book):

Students will need to purchase Sound Innovations 1 and 2 for their instrument for the 7th grade ensemble class. The 8th grade ensemble classes will need book 2 (carry over from 7th grade) and will also need Creative Ensemble Warm-Ups. These method books can be purchased at local music stores (call ahead for availability) or order online. For more information about the method books we will be using, visit:

<https://www.alfred.com/sound-innovations/si-online/>

Please sign and return by: _____ Name: _____

By signing below, you are signifying that you...

- ...have read and understand the concerns of this handbook.
 - ... agree to follow the guidelines found within.
 - ... have posted important dates on your calendar and understand the attendance policies.
- This handbook is also posted on our music department website.

Student Information

Student Name: _____

Homeroom Teacher: _____ Room #: _____

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Information

Parent(s) Name(s): _____

Home Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Parent's E-Mail Address: _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____