

Cockrill Middle School

Orchestra

**Parent & Student Handbook
2021-2022**

Orchestra Directors

John Powelson

jpowelson@mckinneyisd.net

Corderro Salazar

cosalazar@mckinneyisd.net

cockrillorchestra.com

Letter from the Directors

Dear Orchestra Parents,
Welcome to the Cockrill Orchestra program!

We are very proud of our tradition of musical excellence. We have consistently won the top ratings in every contest and festival we have entered since Cockrill's opening in 2008!

The foundation that we build in Cockrill MS Orchestra is specifically designed to help students build college-readiness. Due to the skills and discipline learned in Orchestra, college admissions officers will always give higher consideration to applicants with seven years of school orchestra experience.

Members of CMSO learn valuable life skills such as discipline, teamwork, responsibility, and critical thinking. Additionally, our high standards for personal character make the Cockrill Middle School Orchestra the perfect place for kids to create quality friendships that last a lifetime.

We are honored that you have decided to be a part of our CMSO family!

You need no musical experience in order to be a great Orchestra

Parent! This handbook, along with our communications throughout the year, will give you what you need to help your child have the most successful and happy Orchestra experience possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact us throughout the year!
Sincerely,

John Powelson and Corderro Salazar, Orchestra Directors

jpowelson@mckinneyisd.net

cosalazar@mckinneyisd.net

Contents

Class Policies and Objectives.....	4
Expectations.....	4
Classroom Procedures	4
Grading Policies.....	5
General Absence Policy	5
Rehearsal Attendance	5
Performance Attendance	6
Eligibility Guidelines	6
Virtual Learning.....	7
Student Communication.....	7
Instrument and Equipment Policies	7
Equipment and Supplies.....	7
Instruments	8
Orchestra Hall and Practice Room Policies	9
Performing/Uniforms	9
Private Lessons.....	10
Field Trips.....	10
Cockrill Orchestra Booster Club and Orchestra Fees	10
Volunteer Criminal Background Checks.....	11
Buyer Beware.....	12

Class Policies and Objectives

Expectations

We take great pride in our Orchestra program; therefore, we expect these standards of you as an Orchestra member:

Responsibility. We expect you to be responsible for your instrument and other musical equipment. That means taking care of it and having it with you and ready to go for every class session, extra practice, and concert.

Dependability. We expect you to be at all class sessions, extra practices, and concerts on time and ready to play.

Musical Excellence. We expect you to never be satisfied with anything less than your personal best.

Dedication. We expect you to practice regularly in order to reach your musical potential.

Classroom Procedures

If you faithfully follow these procedures, our Orchestra will run efficiently, and we can spend our time making music and having fun!

Behavioral Expectations

- **Be Responsible.** This includes bringing all required materials to class, following all written and verbal instructions, doing assigned work, being on time, communicating important information to parents, being an active participant in the group, and doing your personal best.
- **Be Respectful.** This includes respect for the Director and other adults, other students, instruments, equipment and facilities, and yourself.

If you follow these behavioral guidelines, you will receive an excellent participation and conduct grade. If you do not, you may receive verbal warnings or detentions, your parents may be called, and/or you may receive administrative referral.

Personal Guidelines

- Don't bring food, chewing gum, or drinks into the orchestra room.

- Keep your fingernails below fingertip length. Nails must be short enough to play in proper position (**no acrylics or gels unless SHORTER than fingertip length.**)
- Take care of your equipment—clean off rosin daily, secure your instrument locker, etc.

Grading Policies

According to MISD grading guidelines, Orchestra grades fall into two categories:

Summative: 70% (Performing/Tests)

- Playing grades- proficiency on assigned material
- Attendance at rehearsals and performances
- Other written or performance based exams

Formative: 30% (Daily Assignments)

- General rehearsal weekly grade which includes having supplies for class, assigned music or techniques learned, active involvement, positive effort and attitude, following class procedures.
- Practice logs (recorded in your agenda daily; graded weekly)
- Music theory (worksheets or other written assignments)

General Absence Policy

A performing organization must have all members present at each event. You must participate in all rehearsals (before, during and after school) and performances unless excused by your director. If attendance is a problem, please contact your director immediately.

All absences require a written note from a parent*—verbal or written excuses from students are not acceptable. If you have an unexcused absence from either rehearsals or concerts, you may be excluded from Orchestra social events.

In the event of an orchestra event absence, the Orchestra Director must receive a written note **IN ADDITION to the note that is sent to the school attendance office.*

We follow school policy regarding tardies and absences during the school day. Clear tardies and absences with your director in advance whenever possible.

Illness and family emergencies are considered excused absences if you provide written notice within 24 hours of the absence. Oversleeping, babysitting, forgetting, attending a hair appointment, etc. are not valid reasons for missing a rehearsal or performance. If you have questions, please contact your director to discuss your situation. Your director will handle all conflicts on an individual basis.

Rehearsal Attendance

Because Orchestra is a performing class, rehearsals and practice time outside of class are necessary. **Sectionals** are designed to work on individual technique, style, and intonation.

Sectionals and rehearsals are called on an “as needed” basis and vary in length. If you have a problem attending, contact your director immediately.

An unexcused absence for rehearsals may result in forfeiting your chair placement and/or your grade being reduced. You may also become ineligible for trips.

Performance Attendance

You must attend ALL performances. We function as a group—if ONE person is missing, we are lacking important input from that person. If transportation is a problem, contact your director as soon as possible.

All performances count as **two summative grades**. There are no excused absences from a performance. An absence from a performance will result in a failing test grade. In the event of a family emergency or other extenuating circumstances, you are to contact your director AS SOON as you are aware of the conflict. Your director will give you a make up assignment for partial credit, but there is no way to re-create the concert experience. It is critical that you make every effort to be there with the rest of the group.

All performances are set months in advance (see “Calendar”) with consideration given to other school events. If we need to change a date, we give you written notice as early as possible.

School functions take precedence over non-school functions such as dances, church trips, non-school athletics, etc. Commitment is vital to every organization’s health. If some conflict does arise, contact your director as soon as possible so that we can solve it. Simply not showing up to a performance is irresponsible and hurts the other students involved.

As a district, every effort is made to avoid scheduling important events on the same day. However, it is not always possible and conflicts will occasionally happen. For example, it is nearly impossible to find any day of the week on which there is not some Athletics event. School Athletics Coaches and the Orchestra Directors will always work to resolve any conflicts between their activities. However, the student is responsible for bringing possible conflicts to Coaches’/Directors’ attention as soon as possible. This will enable us to work out a solution that is most fair to everyone involved. If a student neglects to inform Coaches/Directors of a conflict and misses one event or the other, it would be considered an unexcused absence. Everything can be worked out, but communication is key.

Eligibility Guidelines

In order to be eligible to perform with the ensemble for regularly scheduled concerts, students must learn and pass off their required music. In addition, academic eligibility (passing all classes) is required for all trips and competitions, such as the NRH2O Music Festival and Solo/Ensemble. Academic eligibility does NOT affect the UIL Concert and Sightreading Evaluation, due to UIL being a required evaluation for all non-beginner students (similar to STAAR for core subjects). If there is an event that a student is ineligible to participate in, we will communicate that privately to both student and parent, and an alternate assignment may be given.

Student Communication

We encourage students to advocate for themselves and communicate with their teachers. Canvas has a function that allows students to directly email any of their teachers, and we want to encourage them to email us with any questions or issues that arise during school.

When a student emails a teacher, they should include the following:

- A clear subject line.
- A properly formatted email (Dear Mr. Powelson, Dear Mr. Salazar, etc.)
- Complete sentences are part of a properly formatted email.
- Write in a professional and respectful manner. You are emailing an adult, not texting a friend.
- Finish the email with something like “Sincerely, student name” or “Thank you, student name)

Students need to remember that teachers probably will not answer emails immediately and should expect 24 hours for a reply during the school week. Some teachers might not access their school email over the weekend, so please keep that in mind as well.

Instrument and Equipment Policies

As a member of the Orchestra, you’ll need to rent or purchase your instrument as well as purchase a number of other supplies.

Equipment and Supplies

- Approved instrument with bow (PLEASE NO INSTRUMENTS BOUGHT ONLINE! Refer to “Buyer Beware” on page 11 of this handbook.)
- Rosin
- Properly-fitting shoulder rest for violin and viola students
- Xeros Strap or Rock Stop for cello and bass students
- Home bass stool (bassists only) to make home practice accurate/comfortable. Consult director.
- Method book **and** solo book for your class level and instrument
- Folding music stand and carrying case for home practice and performances
- Soft cloth (plain cotton is best- NOT treated with any kind of cleaner or polish)
- Fingernail Clippers (to be kept in your orchestra binder or case)
- Chromatic tuner (Korg Pitchclip is recommended)
- Bow-right for violin or viola
- Practice Mute (not required, but HIGHLY recommended!)

Instruments

You must have an instrument to use at home and at school. The school owns basses and cellos, so if that is your instrument, you don't have to bring your instrument to and from school each day. You are responsible for properly caring for your instrument both at home and at school.

Keep your instrument in good playing condition at all times. Your instrument is very valuable, so taking good care of it should be your top priority. See your contract with your rental company for information about repairing broken strings and equipment.

Identify your instrument with a tag that includes your name, your school, and your instrument serial number. You will want to be sure your instrument has proper insurance coverage (see your homeowners or renters' insurance policy). The school district is not responsible for lost or stolen instruments.

Students' personal instruments (owned or rental) must not be left at school overnight. They must be brought home each day so that they are safely in your possession, and so that you may do practice assignments at home.

Cello and Bass Maintenance Fees

In addition to the cello or bass students rent/own at their home, there are a limited number of cellos and basses available for students to use at school during class time. The student is responsible for the proper care of the school issued instrument. A \$50 fee is charged to help contribute toward the costs of yearly maintenance (string replacement, bow rehair, etc.)

Students must provide their own personal accessories (rosin, tuner, rock stop, etc) for use with a school-owned instrument.

The instrument will be inspected at the end of the year for damage and the student must pay for any repairs above normal wear and tear. Please see your director in the case of extreme financial need. See the cello/bass instrument form in your form packet for additional information.

Instrument Repair

When your instrument needs repair, you should **NEVER** try to repair it yourself. Your director will be happy to look at your instrument to determine if you need to have it professionally repaired. If your instrument is being repaired, you must bring your director a note describing

- when the instrument was taken to the shop
- the type of repair to be made
- the expected date of return.

Having an instrument in the shop is not an excuse to miss a rehearsal or performance. Let the repair shop know you have a performance coming up and ask if they can expedite the service. Some shops have repair loaners, and your director may be able to arrange temporary use of another instrument as well.

Orchestra Hall and Practice Room Policies

General Guidelines

You may not be in the Orchestra Hall unless a director or designated adult is present. Only orchestra students are allowed in the Orchestra Hall. Non-orchestra friends must wait outside when you're bringing in or taking home your instrument. If you abuse or physically disrespect the building or equipment you may be dismissed from the program. Please don't bring gum, food, or drinks into the Orchestra Hall. Gum is the enemy of all musical instruments and will not be allowed in any of the classrooms on the Fine Arts hallway.

Practice Rooms

Schedule practice rooms in advance unless your director gives you special instructions for using a practice room. Use practice rooms only for private lessons and/or special practice situations calling for privacy.

You may not be in the practice rooms or hallway without permission and must be either on the way to or from practicing if you're in the hallway.

Performing/Uniforms

Attire

You must comply with uniform guidelines and instructions before a performance to be allowed to perform. Your director has the final say as to whether your performance dress is appropriate. Please inform your director AT LEAST one week prior to an event if you have an extreme hardship in meeting the uniform requirement.

Our Orchestra uniforms will be the following:

Casual Uniform

Your casual uniform will be your current 2021-22 Orchestra shirt and nice jeans (no torn jeans) with tennis shoes. **Flip-flops are never appropriate for a performance!** The cost of one orchestra t-shirt is included in your yearly Orchestra fee.

Formal Concert Uniform

For some concerts, you'll wear what we call "Formal Black". This means a solid **BLACK** dress shirt, solid black dress pants or ankle length skirt, black socks or stockings, and solid black dress shoes. Please refer to "Concert Attire" under the "Parent Resources" tab on cockrillorchestra.com.

Boys: shirt must be a collared, long-sleeved button-down shirt that can be worn with a tie.

Girls: No high heels! (for your safety.)

Everyone: Long BLACK socks. No white socks! (they stick out like a sore thumb!)

No black tennis shoes! (they're great for PE, but not a fancy concert stage!)

In other words, you should be wearing head-to-toe dressy black clothes that will help make the group look professional and emphasize the importance of the special occasion- your concert!

Private Lessons

Private lessons are tailored to the student's exact needs and pace in order to help him/her become their very best. Private lessons can help struggling students achieve mastery. They can also help fast learners keep from getting bored, as each private lesson could have music and challenges above and beyond what is going on in Orchestra class. **Private lessons are not "tutoring" or "remediation"**. All of the best musicians take private lessons throughout their lives to continue refining their technique and musicality.

What you'll need and when they're offered

The in-school private lesson cost is set by MISD at \$24. Lessons are half of a class period, once per week. If you take lessons at a teacher's home or studio, you will pay his or her set rate. Private teachers will assign music in addition to what you are working on in Orchestra Class. You will need to purchase any music that the private teacher assigns.

It is expected that students in the Varsity performing ensemble (Honors Orchestra) take private lessons. Students in the Non-Varsity Orchestras are not required to take lessons, but it is strongly encouraged.

Private lesson sign-up information is on a form available from the orchestra directors. Have your student ask for one in class, or email us and we can send it to you. In case of extenuating financial circumstances, please contact your Orchestra Director. COBC has a limited number of scholarships available to defray lesson costs for deserving students in need.

Field Trips

We schedule field trips and contests throughout the year. You will be required to turn in any paperwork and appropriate fees on time in order to participate. District policy mandates that without the "Release of All Claims" form, you will not be allowed to get on a bus with us. The form for all school trips throughout the year is included in your form packet. ***You will not receive a new form for each individual trip.***

Campus principals and district staff approve all off-campus events during the school day. We notify all campus teachers of your excused absence from their class. You must make up any schoolwork that you miss.

Cockrill Orchestra Booster Club and Orchestra Fees

The Cockrill Orchestra Booster Club (COBC), formerly known as MOBC, is a 501(c)3 Non-Profit organization run by parent volunteers to support and serve the Cockrill Orchestra program. You can support the COBC by donating time, tax-deductible financial donations, serving on a committee, etc. Our successful orchestra program would not be possible without our dedicated parent volunteers!

The MISD budget contributes to our program, but unfortunately it does not provide all the funds needed. This is the case for all fine arts groups.

Orchestra Fee

There is an orchestra fee of \$75 to help cover the following items:

- One orchestra t-shirt (can purchase additional shirts for \$15 each)
- Orchestra binder and organizational items for binder
- Orchestra bag for organizing and carrying binder and supplies.
- Contest entry and accompanist fees for Solo & Ensemble Contests.
- Contest entry and transportation for spring festivals. (Does not include park admission, etc.)
- The fee also helps contribute toward the cost of other yearly activities and supplies (incentives and awards, transportation for trips, guest clinicians, master classes, etc.).

Please make checks payable to **Cockrill Orchestra Booster Club**. Orchestra fees are not refundable.

If you would like to help disadvantaged students pay their fee, please do so and make a note of it on your payment form. Due to your generosity, we have never turned away a student due to financial need.

We do have some items for sale that kids can bring in cash to purchase so you don't need to make a trip to the music store or order off of Amazon. For example, if your student breaks their rosin to the point it's unusable, we sell rosin directly to students. We also have tuner batteries, and occasionally a student needs an extra part for their shoulder rest. If there's something in particular your student needs that we don't carry, we'll contact you and advise the best way to purchase that item.

Fundraising is the natural and logical way to provide opportunities for us to raise the additional funds needed to run a quality orchestra program. We will do one annual fundraiser that will help supplement the funds needed. If you prefer to make a tax-deductible donation in lieu of participating in fundraising activities, we will thank you greatly and provide a receipt for tax purposes.

Volunteer Criminal Background Check

We always need parents to help with the Orchestra, for example as chaperones on field trips, assistants during performances and competitions, or filing music and other paperwork.

Even if you are not certain of when you will be available to help out, please consider registering as a volunteer. Registering early on makes things easier for us as the year progresses. Even if you were an approved volunteer last year, **you must reapply each year**.

If you'd like to volunteer, though, you must complete an online Volunteer Criminal Background Check. Go to www.mckinneyisd.net and click on "Parent Resources." Please complete this form by September so that you'll be approved by the time that we need your help and let your director know that you have done so!

Thank you for your support of our orchestra programs!

Buyer Beware

The quality of instrument on which your child plays affects not only their personal progress and ability but also the overall sound of the orchestra as a whole.

FRAUD

There are many companies selling string instruments that are marked "Stradivarius" or "Teacher Recommended." Real Stradivari instruments cost millions of dollars and anyone can

say they are a teacher online. A large percentage of these instruments are poor copies that are machine manufactured and NOT recommended by teachers. Many are “kits” put together in a sweat shop style facility where the workers know nothing about how the instrument is supposed to perform.

QUALITY

As professional string teachers, it is our job to help you select a quality instrument that does not have built in flaws that will hinder your child’s progress. Looking on Amazon, you may see many 4 and 5 star instruments that are budget friendly. Those instruments are always built with inferior materials that simply do not hold up with daily use.

- They are difficult to tune, and if we’re able to get them in tune the pitch does not hold because the pegs are not properly fitted for the instrument and the fine tuners wear out.
- The bridges are not cut properly. If a bridge is too high, the student cannot easily press the strings down and they can hurt the muscles and tendons in their hands. If the bridge is too low, the strings will buzz uncontrollably against the fingerboard, or in some extreme cases the strings cannot vibrate at all.
- The bow is often made with cheap materials that warp and break.

We recommend renting an instrument for a year or two before you purchase. There are several reputable companies such as Dallas Strings that rent acceptable instruments for your child to learn on.

SIZING

Not every child is the same size, so the instrument they play on must be scaled down to fit their particular needs. Students who play on instruments that are too large for them can significantly slow down their learning process. Please do not consider purchasing a full sized instrument until your child is physically ready. Please trust our decision in recommending instrument sizes for your child. We have their best interests in mind.

When you are ready to purchase an instrument, we WANT to be involved in the process to make sure you are receiving a quality instrument that is worth the money you are spending on it.

WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT PURCHASE AN INSTRUMENT FROM THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

- 1. Pawn shop**
- 2. Websites**
- 3. Department Stores**
- 4. Warehouse Club Stores**
- 5. An online company that does not allow returns.**
- 6. Anyone who has kept the instrument in an attic, garage, or any other non-climate controlled environment.**

We are trained professionals who want to help you get the very most for your money. Please do not buy without consulting us. We do not receive any sort of incentive or kickback from the music dealers that we recommend. The quality of your child’s instrument is going to directly affect their motivation, ability, and success, so it matters greatly to us!