

Harpool Middle School

Orchestra Handbook



2025-2026

A Guide for Orchestra Students and Parents

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[Harpool Orchestra Website](#) [Orchestra Facebook Page](#) [Orchestra Instagram Page](#)

Dear Harpool Orchestra Parents,

I am excited to be back at Harpool for my eleventh school year teaching orchestra here. I welcome our new and continuing students to the Harpool Orchestra Program! I am looking forward to working with your child this school year. Your child has made an excellent decision to participate in learning an instrument. **The neurological, emotional, and social benefits are truly endless.** I cannot wait to see what our students will accomplish this school year!

All parents and students are expected to read the orchestra handbook. It is important that both you and your child understand what is required and expected of a Harpool orchestra student. This handbook addresses most of the frequent questions and concerns regarding participation in orchestra as a yearlong commitment.

At the beginning of the school year we encourage you to pay careful attention to the list of required materials, required performance dress, and the list of orchestra fees. Required orchestra fees are different for each level of orchestra because of the increase in activities and contests.

We strongly recommend that students take advantage of our private lesson program here in DISD or lessons outside of school. We have highly qualified teachers who come into our schools to teach lessons on campus.. Nothing can help a student progress faster than one-on-one help from a trained professional. Private Lesson Enrollment Forms will be sent out the first week of school. To sign up, please complete the form and return it to school.

After reviewing this handbook, please complete the Handbook Agreement Form. This will serve to confirm that you have read and agree to the orchestra program's policies. Please complete this process **by August 29**. Students interested in signing up for private lessons should also turn in the enrollment form as soon as they are able. Students interested in leasing a school instrument for at-school use should turn in their "Application for School Owned Instrument Usage" form in the first week of school with a payment, so the instrument can then be assigned to him/her. An instrument will not be assigned to a student until this paperwork is received.

Please visit the orchestra website throughout the year for additional copies of forms, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and other helpful information. All forms can be found on the HMS Orchestra website under "Handbook + Forms." Our Google Calendar is the best way to stay up to date on all orchestra events!

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Ryan Napier, Orchestra Director

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Welcome to the Harpool Orchestra Program!

1. Harpool Orchestra Goals

- To help students to master performance skills on their instrument
- To develop students' appreciation for music as a method of creative self-expression and nonverbal communication
- To enhance analytical and problem-solving skills through music
- To promote self-esteem and self-respect
- To promote teamwork and respect of others
- To allow students to analyze the music and social issues of other cultures
- To develop the ability to evaluate and respond to music and musical performances.
- To enhance skills required in the TEKS Objectives for Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies through a variety of classroom activities.

2. Class Descriptions:

FM (Felix Mendelssohn) 6th Grade Orchestra:

6th grade orchestra consists of 6th grade students who have participated in 5th grade orchestra, beginning bass and violin/viola students, or new students who have been studying privately. 6th grade orchestra is divided into four class periods that meet daily.

Objectives:

- Demonstration of fundamental instrument techniques such as posture, hand position and acceptable tone production
 - Successful music reading and performance of basic notes and rhythms
 - Understanding of basic music vocabulary words and composers
 - Demonstration of a basic understanding of intonation and how to adjust intonation
 - Demonstration of basic tuning procedures using the fine tuners
 - Demonstration of proper performance etiquette during concerts including correct dress, behavior and procedures
 - Evaluation of music and musical performances in verbal and written form
 - Demonstration of self-discipline and acceptable behavior during class time
- Expectations and Requirements:**
- Attend all 3 school concerts, DISD Solo/Ensemble Contest and the String Fling concert (see the orchestra's Google calendar tab online for dates and times). Attend the after school rehearsal prior to each concert if scheduled (see online calendar for dates and times). Have all required materials in class daily (see Section 3--*Materials*).

Optional activities:

- All-Region tryouts
- Contest field trip at a water / amusement park, or other venue
- Private Lessons

WAM (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart) Concert Orchestra:

WAM consists of 7th and 8th grade students in the Non-Varsity group. WAM orchestra members are encouraged, but not required, to participate in various optional activities.

Objectives:

- Mastery of fundamental techniques including posture, hand position and tone production
 - Introduction of advanced techniques such as vibrato and shifting
 - Successful music reading and performance of intermediate rhythms and key signatures
 - Successful application of orchestra vocabulary words in verbal and written form
 - Understanding of basic music history time periods and composers
 - Adjusting of intonation without prompting
 - Understanding of advanced tuning procedures using the fine tuners and pegs
 - Demonstration of proper performance etiquette during concerts including correct dress, behavior and procedures
 - Evaluation and analysis of music and musical performances in verbal and written form
 - Demonstration of self-discipline and acceptable behavior during class time
- Expectations and Requirements:

- Attend all 4 school concerts, the String Fling concert and the Pre-UIL after school clinic (see HMS calendar for dates and times)
- Participate in the UIL Concert and Sight Reading Competition (during school assessment)
- Attend the Denton ISD Solo/Ensemble Festival
- Have all required materials in class daily (see materials checklist)

Optional activities:

- All-Region tryouts
- Private Lessons

CD Orchestra (Claude Debussy) Sinfonia Orchestra:

CD orchestra, or “varsity” orchestra, consists of 7th and 8th grade students who were selected by audition. CD orchestra members are required to participate in several extra activities throughout the school year. Students can be removed from CD orchestra for failure to meet the requirements of this orchestra.

Objectives:

- Successful use of advanced techniques such as vibrato, shifting, and advanced bow strokes
- Successful music reading and performance of advanced rhythms and key signatures
- Successful application of orchestra vocabulary words in verbal and written form
- Analysis of music history time periods, styles and composers
- Few intonation errors/quick correction of intonation errors
- Successful use of advanced tuning procedures without help using the fine tuners and pegs
- Demonstration of exceptional performance etiquette during concerts including correct dress, behavior and procedures
- Evaluation and analysis of music and musical performances in verbal and written form
- Demonstration of self-discipline and acceptable behavior during class time

Expectations and Requirements:

- No excessively long fingernails, natural or artificial
- Attend all 4 school concerts and the String Fling concert (see calendar for dates and times)
- Attend the after school UIL Clinic/Rehearsal, and the UIL performance/field trip
- Attend all after-school sectionals in the spring semester (if they are scheduled)
- Audition for All-Region Orchestra
- Attend the after school All-Region Orchestra Clinic/Rehearsal if admitted into the orchestra
- Perform at least one event at the Solo/Ensemble contest
- Pass all classes throughout the year
- Have all required materials in class daily (see materials checklist)

Optional activities:

- Private Lessons (The majority of CD orchestra students participate in private instruction. This additional instructional time is highly encouraged.)

(expectations and requirements continued on next page)

CD Orchestra Sectionals and After-School Rehearsals (from January to March): All CD orchestra members will be required to attend any after school sectionals called in the spring. We do not anticipate needing many sectionals, if any, and will notify members at least one week in advance if a section of the orchestra needs extra attention after school with their orchestra music.

3. Materials

Required Materials (must be in class every day):

1. Instrument and bow in good working condition (see section on “instrument maintenance”)
2. Violins/Violas – Shoulder rest
3. Rosin (cello/bass keep in “at home” instrument case along with rock stop)
4. Cleaning cloth to wipe your instrument (a washcloth or bandana will do!)
5. At least one sharpened pencil at your music stand at all times during class
6. Orchestra binder/folder with all music
7. 6th Grade: Sound Innovations Book 1.
8. SmartMusic Account (provided by DISD)
9. Individual tuner

Recommended Materials:

1. Music stand (for home practice)
2. Violins/violas – extra set of strings

4. Orchestra Fees

The list below explains the expenses that will be required of each orchestra student this year. Students who are on the free/reduced lunch program may qualify for a reduction in some of the orchestra fees. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain a fee waiver form from Mr. Napier to qualify for fee reduction. Eligibility for fee waiver will be determined by the principal.

6th Grade \$50

7th & 8th Grade \$65

These fees pertain to (but are not limited to) various individual and group contests, related travel expenses, guest clinicians and judges, rewards and parties, uniform cleaning, orchestra shirts and other materials necessary throughout the year.

5. School Instrument Lease Policy

All students are required to rent or own an instrument for home practice. Because of the size of the instruments, it is recommended that cello and bass students also lease a school instrument to use during class throughout the year. The cost to lease the school instrument is \$125 a year, which covers regular string replacement and wear and tear. The school instrument must stay at school at all times. Students who are able to transport their cellos between home and school on a daily basis may do so if they commit to transporting the instrument every day. No student will use a school cello or bass at any time if they have not paid the instrument lease fee.

Please note: The school instruments are extremely delicate and must be treated with the utmost care and respect. Each cello and bass student will be solely responsible for the care of his/her instrument and bow, including packing and locking it up safely, handling it safely and carefully, and wiping off rosin and the fingerboard. Students will be responsible for paying to repair any damage caused by extreme carelessness or defacement (e.g. intentionally striking bows against objects, knocking over instruments repeatedly due to carelessness, etc.).

6. Policies & Expectations

Grading Policy

Formative (unweighted)	Minor Summative (40%)	Major Summative (60%)
♪ Playing, posture, or technique spot-checks ♪ Supply checks ♪ In-class demonstrations	♪ Demonstration of proper playing technique ♪ Section/Rehearsal Performance ♪ Playing Quiz ♪ Music Theory	♪ Concerts and Contests ♪ Major Project or Presentation ♪ End of Unit Performance Test ♪ End of Unit Written Test ♪ Competency demonstration during clinician events

Denton ISD Reassessment Policy (Revised August 2018) In accordance with the district grading guidelines, Harpool Orchestra uses the following standards for reassessments:

1. Students receiving a 90 or higher have demonstrated adequate mastery and will not have the opportunity to reassess.
2. Students scoring below a 90 may reassess one time, for a maximum possible final score of 90.
3. The student engages in additional learning opportunities/assignments as determined by the teacher.
4. The student must reassess within 4 days of the student receiving the original grade.

Practice Requirements

Orchestra, like any other class, has nightly homework requirements. But here's the great news:

Our homework is playing on our instruments!

- There will be graded and ungraded quizzes in class over excerpts of music every 5-10 days. These quiz "checkpoints" will help both students and us to evaluate the results of their practicing at home, as well as help us as teachers to plan future lessons. Please encourage your child to practice and prepare for these regular quizzes.
- Practice is the most important part of learning to play an instrument. Please encourage your child to practice daily so they enjoy their success in orchestra.

Behavior

All policies outlined in the DISD Student Code of Conduct apply to the orchestra classroom. Disruptive behavior in rehearsal will not be tolerated. The only way we can be a truly successful orchestra is by making the most efficient use of our rehearsal time. Successful performing ensembles require self-discipline and commitment from their members. Students who repeatedly make choices damaging to our ensemble will be considered for removal from the orchestra program. **Students are ineligible for field trips or extracurricular activities if they have been placed in ISS in that same nine weeks or semester. Exceptions to this policy will be initiated at teacher's discretion.**

Digital Citizenship

Please treat any virtual learning space with equal respect as you would our physical classroom, including video conferencing, recorded assignments, and written assignments and discussions. We will not tolerate disruptive behavior, cyberbullying, plagiarism, or offensive language. Offenders will be subject to disciplinary action.

Scheduling Conflicts

Orchestra is a year-long commitment. If a conflict arises in a student's class schedule at any point in the year it will be handled on an individual basis.

Conflicts with Orchestra Rehearsals

Any scheduled orchestra rehearsal counts as a grade. It is the student's responsibility to notify Mr. Napier in advance and to provide a written note signed by a parent before the rehearsal. Rehearsals cannot be made up; there is no way to get everyone back together to work on the same things again. Practicing "extra" on your own cannot make up for the time that was missed when the ensemble was together.

Conflicts with Orchestra Performances

Orchestra performances are major grades! Students will not be excused from a performance in order to participate in a rehearsal or practice for another activity. Any absence from a concert

requires a written note signed by a parent and turned in to the teacher before the concert date. Coaches and other teachers work together, but the student has to be the one keeping up with their dates.

Depending on the situation, the student may or may not be excused and may be required to complete an alternate project. Missing a concert without providing a signed note ahead of time will result in a zero for the grade.

****Conflicts with athletic games, which are considered performances, should be discussed jointly between the student, parents, coach, and Mr. Napier, to determine the best resolution. Missing performances or clinics for athletic practices are not excused.**

****Missing a performance because of an emergency or illness will be fully excused, but the student may have to complete an alternate project to make up the grade. A written excuse from a parent is required.**

Tardy Policy

School policy requires the signing of a ticket.

Restroom Passes

Students will be allowed to leave class to go to the restroom as long as they have an unused HMS restroom pass available. This ensures that students will not miss class time unless truly necessary. There is sufficient passing time to take care of bathroom needs between classes.

Locker Policy

All students will be provided with a locker and a combination lock if desired. The school and HMS Orchestras will not be held liable for any instrument theft or damage.

The following rules ensure the protection of the student's and school's property:

- It is the student's responsibility to use the combination lock provided for them, memorize their combination, and not give out their combination to anyone else
- Keep only orchestra materials in the orchestra locker
- Keep locker locked at all times except during class
- Take instrument home regularly for at home practice
- Put lock on locker when taking instrument home to avoid locks getting switched

Eligibility (for extracurricular activities and field trips)

Students who participate in orchestra will be expected to maintain passing grades in all subjects. Students being ineligible at the time of an orchestra event seriously jeopardizes the success of the orchestra.

Fundraising

The orchestra will conduct up to two fundraisers during the school year. Fundraising monies will go directly into the orchestra "activity fund." The money raised from fundraisers helps pay for various activities the students will participate in, such as field trips, parties, as well as music, supplies, bus fees, clinicians, and instrument repairs. **Students are not required to participate in fundraisers but are strongly encouraged to, as they benefit directly from the money raised.**

7. Procedures

Classroom Procedures and Expectations

- Enter the Orchestra room quietly, with all necessary materials (pencil, music, and instrument).
- Immediately take your instrument to your seat, and warm up, unless given another assignment.
- No cell phones, food, drinks or gum are allowed in the orchestra room due to our carpet.
- Raise your hand to ask an appropriate question at an appropriate time.
- Running or horseplay in the orchestra room is a severe offense with immediate consequences.
- Never touch another student's instrument without permission.
- Follow all directions given by the director to the best of your ability and with a positive attitude.

Before- and After-School Procedures

- Only orchestra students are allowed in the orchestra room for the safety of your property and our equipment. Please ask friends to wait at the doorway.
- Lockers are for instruments and music only. Items that are not used in orchestra class should be kept in the student's school locker or backpack.

Before School:

- Students may drop off their instrument in their orchestra locker before school.

After School:

- The orchestra room will remain open after-school for instrument pick up for any student involved in any after school activities.

Do I take my instrument home every day, or do I leave it at school?

- Practice should be happening 2 to 3 times outside of class time a week. Make a regular practice schedule for yourself based on your personal schedule and after school activities. This

is the only way to ensure you will fulfill your required amount of practice. Take your instrument home throughout the week and every Friday so that you can practice.

**Bus riders: You may carry instruments on the bus, as long as you keep your case closed and the instrument stable (don't let it fall or slide around!). Tell Mr. Napier IMMEDIATELY if your bus driver does not allow you to carry your instrument on your bus so he may help find a solution.*

8. Performance Dress

Our professional appearance reflects the pride we have in our performance. Sloppy dress detracts from a good performance. Students will be expected to follow Concert Dress Guidelines strictly. Proper dress is factored into the student's grade for each performance. Orchestra T-shirt and jeans will be worn for all extra performances, the String Fling concert, and other informal performances. For all on-stage, formal concert performances, dress is as follows:

FM Orchestra (6th grade):

- Orchestra T-Shirt and Jeans

WAM / CD Orchestras:

Uniforms will be checked out to students in the fall. Please follow the dress code closely – it's very important at contest that the whole orchestra looks completely uniform.

Both WAM and CD must provide own:

- Solid black dress socks
- Solid black dress shoes with a closed toe – no exceptions! Please be sure if you choose to wear a heel that it is wide and not very high. Your safety is most important.
- Avoid large, distracting jewelry or watches, especially if it will affect your playing (bracelets, rings, etc.).
- Always avoid wearing strong perfume to any performance; it could affect the allergies of someone sitting near you.

9. Concert Etiquette

- All students and their families are asked to stay until the end of every concert except in cases of emergency. It is thrilling and highly motivating for the younger students to hear the more advanced students play. All students will be proud to share their hard work and achievement with you. **I plan carefully to make sure concerts do not run longer than 1 hour, so please be respectful and stay until the concert is finished.**
- Adults, young children, and orchestra members in the audience should try to stay seated during the performance so as not to distract the performers or other audience members.

- It is respectful to the performers to refrain from talking during both tuning and performance. Please extend the same courtesy to those onstage that you would want during your own performance.

10. Instrument Maintenance

String replacement:

- Most rental companies replace broken strings for free if the student brings the instrument to their shop.
- Students renting from Dallas Strings and Music & Arts will have their string replaced at school.
- If you own your instrument and a string breaks, Mr. Napier has an assortment of strings available for purchase. Strings range in price based on the instrument and the level of string selected. There is no guarantee that Mr. Napier will always have the correct string for your instrument. The most commonly broken strings are Violin E and A strings so it is recommended to keep an extra of each of these on hand. Mr. Napier can recommend string brands and stores as needed.

Music Supplies:

For recommendations on replacing music supplies, Mr. Napier can point you in the direction of vendors and products and do not make a profit on any of this. We simply have experience and want to help you make a smart purchase.

Instrument Condition:

An instrument in good working condition is absolutely essential to the student's progress. The student should see Mr. Napier whenever there is a question about a necessary repair or maintenance. Before making any purchase please contact Mr. Napier for recommendations on brands, styles, sizes, stores, etc. What does it mean for an instrument to be in "good working condition?"

- No visible cracks or deep scratches on the instrument
- 4 fine tuners that work smoothly (the bass does not have fine tuners)
- Pegs are fitted properly and work smoothly – they don't stick and they don't slip
- Strings are in good condition. If the winding on a string appears to be coming off it is time to replace the string.
- No stuck-on rosin on the strings – it affects the sound and should be cleaned off with a cloth after every use
- The bow screw turns properly, there is plenty of bow hair left on the bow, and the hair is fairly clean. If there is only a thin strip of hair left or the bow hair has black marks on it, it is time to re-hair the bow.

Maintenance you can and should do yourself:

- Clean off the rosin dust from the strings and the body of the instrument after every use
- Loosen the bow after every use

- If you cannot get all of the rosin off the strings with a cloth alone, rub it off with a small amount of rubbing alcohol on a soft cloth occasionally but do not let the alcohol or the cloth touch the body of the instrument.

Things **you should not do:**

- Attempt to repair your instrument yourself
- Allow anyone to repair your instrument other than Mr. Napier or a trained professional
- Leave your instrument outside its case when not in use
- Leave your instrument in a very hot or cold place (such as a car) for more than a few minutes– it could be seriously damaged.
- Polish your instrument – although there are many products available in your local music store, it is not necessary to polish your instrument and some products could possibly damage the instrument.

11. Instrument Rental vs. Purchase

Why rent? For all but the most advanced middle school student, the quality of most available rental instruments is sufficient. It is not usually recommended to consider purchasing an instrument. Most rental companies offer instrument insurance and free maintenance and repair. Many companies offer rent-to-own programs.

Why purchase? If the student is on a full size instrument and would benefit from playing on a higher quality of instrument it may be a good idea to look into instrument purchase. Students intending to play through all 4 years of high school should seriously consider owning a high quality instrument.

What should I be aware of when purchasing an instrument? Always deal with reputable companies. Mr. Napier can provide a list of recommended dealers. It is not recommended to purchase an instrument without trying it first. This does not completely eliminate internet shopping, as some reputable music companies will ship the instrument to you for a trial period.

Please do not purchase an instrument off of online marketplaces like Amazon. Always have a trained professional such as Mr. Napier or your private teacher help you evaluate the instrument before making a final decision or purchase. In general, in the world of string instruments, you get what you pay for. **Cheaper instruments are made with inferior materials, lower quality craftsmanship and often are unplayable, break easily or lack sound quality.** This can be very frustrating for a student. We are always welcome to guide you through any of this. Just because an instrument looks like it will save you \$ in the short-term, you may be stuck with that instrument and your child's progress may be hindered. Please have your child pick up a list of recommended dealers from Mr. Napier when considering an instrument purchase.

12. Parental Responsibilities

There is nothing that will assure your child's success at learning to play an instrument more than your sincere interest and participation. Here are some of the things that will help.

1. Set aside a regular time and suitable place for your child to practice. Developmentally, your student is still at an age where they need guidance on time management and what they spend their time doing. Regular practice teaches many life skills such as discipline, grit, responsibility, but it is also very rewarding and teaches students that hard work pays off.
2. Show interest in your child's practice. Remind them to do it. Ask them what they are working on. Ask them what their goals are.
3. Make certain your child is on time for all school performances and rehearsals with the necessary clothes and materials.
4. Email or call your child's teacher, Mr. Napier, with any questions or concerns regarding your child's performance in orchestra class.
5. Attend all concerts and show your enthusiasm for your child's accomplishments. Even if you do not have a musical background. Celebrate them on their journey! Don't be afraid to reach out if you do not understand the context of what your child is doing (All-Region, Solo & Ensemble, etc.). We are happy to share with you what your child is working towards and its importance.
6. If financially possible, obtain private lessons with a qualified instructor. Mr. Napier strives to give every student as much individual attention and instruction as is possible to fit into the day. However, additional one-to-one teaching with a qualified teacher gives students even more help and can speed their progress more than anything else. String playing is passed on from generation to generation. It cannot be learned the same through a book or website. Private lessons are how students refine their skills and can help them continue the torch of great string playing.

13. Private Lesson Program

According to research, the average privately tutored student outperforms 98% of students taught only under standard classroom-group-instruction. Denton ISD offers a private lesson program before and after school, as well as during your student's regular orchestra class.

- Teachers will be available on all instruments. All teachers are selected by interview, approved by the district, and screened through a background check. Many are working on advanced degrees in their field.
- Lessons are offered at a reasonable price of \$20 per lesson (set by the district).
- Students will take one lesson per week.
- All interested students should fill out the enrollment form found on the HMS Orchestra website under Private Lessons.
- If you would like to take lessons outside of this program, and wish to receive information on private teachers in the community who have private studios, please contact Mr. Napier

~~We are looking forward to a successful year and working with your child! Even during this strange time, we will help inspire your child and make learning an instrument exciting!~~

Additional Course Syllabus Guidance (SB 12 Information)

- The course name and short description (from the Denton ISD Course Planning Guide). ***See page four through six of this handbook.***
- The link to your year-long course overview (found on the Denton ISD Secondary Curriculum Suite). ***See page four through six of this handbook.***
- The link to the TEKS for the course (or use the “TEKS by Unit” document on the Curriculum Suite). ***Middle school orchestra TEKS can be found at:***
<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/laws-and-rules/sboe-rules-tac/sboe-tac-currently-in-effect/ch117b.pdf>
- The link to the Denton ISD Instructional Resources document. ***Fine Arts Instructional Resources coming:***
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kL1tHmnBu3ah7wvetZ9eappGJxtFsy4Gs8GqxeTjXmg/edit?tab=t.0>
- A general overview of your course assessment plan, including important dates (or ranges of dates) for unit assessments or major assignments. ***In our class, our concerts/performance are our major assessments and our formative and minor assessments happen weekly. Our playing quiz day is Thursday every week.***

Please reach out if you have any further questions regarding syllabus and information pertaining to the Harpool Orchestra classes.

~Mr. Napier