



Greenwich Public Schools Curriculum Overview

HONORS STRING ENSEMBLE

Personalized learning is achieved through standards-based, rigorous and relevant curriculum that is aligned to digital tools and resources.

Note: Teachers retain professional discretion in how the learning is presented based on the needs and interests of their students.

Course Description:

Honors String Ensemble

Full Year

098700 Meets before school once a week .25 Music Credit

Honors String Ensemble is Greenwich High School's premier auditioned string ensemble and is composed of the school's most advanced violin, viola, cello, and bass students. Enrollment is designed for highly motivated musicians who demonstrate exceptional technical proficiency, musical independence, listening skills, and sight-reading ability while participating in one of the school's regular orchestra ensembles.

Students perform advanced orchestral literature representing a variety of musical styles, historical periods, and cultures while refining technical fluency, artistic interpretation, and ensemble musicianship. Participation in Connecticut Music Educators Association (CMEA) Western Regional Orchestra and the Connecticut All-State audition process is required, and students are expected to participate in festivals, community performances, and additional performance opportunities throughout the year.

This course may be used to fulfill the required **1.0 Career and Life Skills credit** and the required **1.0 Fine Arts credit**. Enrollment in Orchestra for three years may also fulfill a STEM elective credit.

Prerequisite: Previous orchestra experience on violin, viola, cello, or bass and successful audition at the beginning of the school year.

Unit Guide:

The high school curriculum is structured around four strands, which are taught concurrently throughout the year:

- 1. Technique: Advanced Principles and Techniques in String Performance**
Students refine advanced bow technique, left-hand facility, shifting, vibrato, intonation, tone production, and technical fluency required for advanced orchestral performance.
- 2. Musicianship: Artistic Development Through Performance**
Students study and perform advanced orchestral literature representing a variety of composers, historical periods, cultures, and musical styles while developing artistic interpretation, stylistic authenticity, and expressive performance.
- 3. Literacy: Advanced Literacy Skills in Performance**

Students strengthen advanced sight-reading, music theory, score study, rhythmic accuracy, aural skills, and musical analysis to become independent musicians capable of performing complex repertoire.

4. Ensemble Skills: Advanced String Performance Practice and Rehearsal Techniques

Students develop leadership, active listening, communication, rehearsal strategies, and collective responsibility necessary for high-level ensemble performance.

Enduring Understandings:

- Playing a string instrument is a powerful means of artistic communication, capable of expressing feelings and emotions that surpass the spoken language. Advanced performance requires technical mastery, expressive interpretation, and thoughtful musical decision-making.
- Artistic expression can be analyzed, described, and evaluated, both intellectually and emotionally. The depth of musical knowledge one possesses impacts how, and to what degree, one analyzes, describes, and evaluates music.
- Advanced music literacy, including score study, sight-reading, aural skills, and music theory, enables students to interpret and perform sophisticated repertoire with independence and confidence.
- Exploring orchestral literature from diverse composers, cultures, historical periods, and traditions fosters empathy, cultural understanding, and artistic appreciation.
- Successful ensemble performance depends upon leadership, collaboration, disciplined rehearsal habits, active listening, and shared responsibility among all members of the ensemble.
- Participation in honor ensembles, festivals, adjudicated performances, and community performances develops confidence, resilience, professionalism, and a lifelong commitment to music-making.

Performance Tasks: (Assured Experiences)

Students will demonstrate their learning through a variety of authentic performance experiences, including:

- **Honors Ensemble Participation**
 - Students are required to audition for the CMEA Western Regional Orchestra in the fall. Students selected through the audition process participate in the annual Western Regional Festival in January.
- **Public Performances:**
 - Fall Concert (October)
 - Candlelight Concert (December)
 - Spring Concert (March/April)
 - Pops Concert (May/June)
 - Students may travel to festivals and competitions.
- **Playing Assessments:**
 - **Quarterly Tests:** Students complete quarterly playing assessments using a performance rubric (scale test) that measures student understanding and execution of skills in standards 5 and 6.
 - **Practice "Check-ins":** Students submit quarterly practice videos that allow the teacher to provide individualized feedback and monitor musical growth.

- **Concert Reflection:**
 - A performance/concert reflection rubric is used to measure student understanding outlined in standards 8 and 9. This is completed by the student and discussed as a class.

Standards:

The course is aligned with the [National Core Arts Powered Standards](#):

- **Creating:** MU:Cr3.2.E.8a
- **Performing/Presenting:** MU:Pr5.1.E.8a, MU:Pr6.1.E.8a, MU:Pr6.1.E.8b
- **Responding:** MU:Re8.1.E.8a, MU:Re9.1.E.8a
- **Connecting:** MU:Cn10.0.E.8a

Resources:

- **Differentiation and Support:** Individual conferences, advanced coaching, additional instructional resources, and peer mentoring are provided as needed to support continued musical growth and artistic excellence.
- Brungard, K. D., Alexander, M., Dackow, S., & Anderson, G. E. (2011). *Expressive Techniques for Orchestra*. Tempo Press.
- Connecticut Music Educators Association (CMEA) [Western Region and All-State audition materials](#)