Watertown Middle School 2025 - 2026
Orchestra Handbook

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Important Dates

Please put these dates in your family calendar. If there is a conflict with any of the mandatory dates, the instructor must be notified 4 weeks ahead of time (barring an emergency) to plan an alternative assignment.

- **Thursday, December 4, 2025**: WMS/WHS Orchestra Concert, 7:00 PM at WMS
- **Tuesday, March 17, 2026:** WPS String Spectacular (Grades 4 - 12), 7:00 PM at WMS
- **Tuesday, May 19, 2026**: WMS/WHS Spring Orchestra Concert, 7:00 PM at @WMS

Please join these NEW Google Classrooms!

Go to classroom.google.com

8th Grade Google Classroom Code: **bzho7tv6**

7th Grade Google Classroom Code: **r5bpbem3**

6th Grade Google Classroom Code: **rsme2del**

Students are responsible for checking their Google Classroom throughout the week for assignments. Work will be announced in class; however, not having notifications turned on in Google Classroom is not an excuse for not knowing there was work due.

Materials List

- Upper strings: shoulder rest that fits your instrument
- Lower string: end pin stopper (rock stop or otherwise)
- Binder or folder for practice music
- Rosin
- Pencil

Introduction

Welcome to the Watertown Middle School Orchestra Program!

In this handbook, you will find information on class expectations, required materials, and important dates throughout the school year. **Please save this handbook.**

Classroom Expectations

1. **Always be respectful** – to your peers, your director, your equipment, others' equipment, and yourself
2. **Arrive on time and be prepared** for every rehearsal and performance with all necessary materials (see above)
3. **Work as a team to keep the space clean.** This means picking up trash that may not be yours and setting up/putting away more than just your own stand and chair
4. **Be responsible** and hold yourself accountable for your obligations. This includes knowing all important dates, submitting assignments on time, and practicing on your own
5. **Show good integrity.** Be honest, ethical, and trustworthy

Classroom Rules/Procedures

- Students who are **not on stage by 10:20 will be marked tardy**.
    - Class is **finished at 11:04,** and students will be dismissed by the teacher at this time
- Students are expected to enter the classroom appropriately (no yelling, no running, no touching others)
- There is **no food allowed** in the auditorium, barring special circumstances
- Upon entering the classroom, students are expected to go to the stage and begin unpacking and warming up/getting help with tuning
- There will be a **slide at the front of the classroom with instructions** on what to do while waiting for class to begin, including a countdown
- Instrument cases must be returned to racks after unpacking to remove tripping hazards
- Students will be expected to sit in the seat assigned to them
- **Phones** are not allowed in class
    - There are tuners at the front of the class to help with tuning

Leaving Class & Special Occurrences

- Please do not save bathroom trips for the WIN block; we cannot all go to the bathroom at the same time
    - There are no bathroom breaks in the first or last five minutes of class
    - Only two students are able to leave the auditorium for the bathroom at a time

- Do not ask to meet with other teachers/faculty during orchestra
- If a substitute is leading the class, all expectations and classroom rules still apply
- In the event of an alarm (drill or otherwise), students will place their instruments on their seats and carefully proceed to the side door of the auditorium to exit the building

FLEX WIN - Fridays:
Every other week you have the opportunity to have orchestra three times, with one of those class periods occurring on a Friday. Friday is also FLEX WIN, when other teachers can sign you out to finish an assignment/assessment.

- The FLEX roster will be checked at 9:00 AM on the day of. **If you are not signed out by 9:00 AM and do not attend orchestra, you will be marked absent.**

Grading & Assessment

Students should expect to complete one assignment per week in this course. Assignments could include, but are **not limited to…**

- Journal entry
- Listening log
- Goal setting
- Prompt in Google Classroom
- Group project done in class
- Playing assignment recording
- Group playing assessment

Assessments will be completed on a monthly basis and may include the following:

- Technique check (quick check in class to see how a skill is going)
- MusicTheory.net assessment (note reading, primarily)
- Spot check in music (specific line)

We will attempt to get most assignments done in class, but students will be expected to do work outside of class if it is not completed in class.

Practice Expectations

The WMS orchestra classes meet twice weekly for 44 minutes, for a total of 88 instructional minutes per week. Every other week, we will have the opportunity to meet for three class periods if students are not already scheduled for another FLEX period. This is not a lot of time when we consider the number of students in the class. If students are not meeting playing goals from class time alone, it is expected that they will…

1. Practice at home

2. Attend practice club (Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:15 - 3:00; Ms. Byham is available to help)
3. Both 1 & 2

If students are not putting in the work to learn the skills required to play their instrument, a caregiver/teacher conference may be scheduled to discuss student participation in class. As a team, we must all be committed to doing our part to make sure we are progressing appropriately.

Upper string players (violin/viola): instruments go back and forth between school and home for practice
Lower strings (cello): We hope to have enough instruments at school so you can leave yours at home, but you will need to bring your instrument back and forth until we distribute instruments and see what we have left (basses can leave one at home and one at school)

Important Dates

Here is a more extensive list of dates, including optional dates, throughout the school year. The three dates listed at the beginning of this handbook are the required dates for middle school students.

Note:

- Concerts that are **bolded** are mandatory
- Call times may be earlier than the start time listed

FAPA & Orchestra Dates for 24/25 SY (Subject to Change)				
Date	**Event**	**Location**	**Time**	**Notes**
9/11/25 Thursday	Instrument Rental Night	WMS Auditorium	3 - 6 PM	Size up your instrument, community service or honors credit for older students, and start a rental contract if you don't already have one
9/12/25 Friday	Beginning Strings Boot Camp	WMS Auditorium	3 - 5:30 PM	For 4/5th grade beginners, older students can help out for community service hours or honors credit
11/1/25 Saturday	Senior District Auditions	Concord-Carlisle HS	Time TBD	Optional; grades 9 - 12 who have prepared the appropriate scales & repertoire. $20 audition fee
11/13/2025	BSO Open Rehearsal	Symphony Hall	Morning/Afternoon	Optional field trip grades 8 - 12 ($15)
Early December	Merry Mingle	Commander's Mansion	Time TBD	Holiday tunes - optional (7- 12)

	(formerly Whoville Jubilee)			
12/4/25 Thursday	**WMS/WHS Orchestra Concert**	**WMS Auditorium**	**7:00 PM**	**Quick dress rehearsal at 6:15 for all involved students**
1/9/2026 - 1/10/2026 Fri/Sat	Senior Districts	Milton HS	All Day	If accepted into the ensemble
1/31/2026 Saturday	Junior District Auditions	Bedford HS	Early afternoon	If an earlier audition time is needed, let Ms. Byham know. Registration fee of $20. Students in grades 7 - 9 who have learned the appropriate scales and repertoire.
2/5/2026	BSO Open Rehearsal	Symphony Hall	Morning/After noon	Optional field trip Grades 8 - 12 ($15)
3/6 - 3/7/2026 Fri - Sat	MMEA Jr. Districts	Lincoln - Sudbury HS	All Day	All-day rehearsals, PM performance on Sat. Mar 7. Rain date is Sunday, March 8 (requires acceptance via audition on 1/31)
3/17/26 Tuesday	**String Spectacular**	**WMS Gym**	**7:00 PM**	**Mandatory Performance 4th - 12th grade**
4/16/2026	BSO Open Rehearsal	Symphony Hall	Morning/After noon	Optional Field trip grades 8 - 12 ($15)
5/8/26 Friday	Music in the Parks	6 Flags	All day	7th and 8th grade only; typically $100 - $140pp for event + tshirt. Fundraising opportunities throughout the year.
5/19/26 Tuesday	**Spring Orchestra Concert**	**WMS Auditorium (Gym?)**	**7:00 PM (dress rehearsals in the afternoon beforehand)**	**Dress rehearsals will precede this concert, as all groups will perform one piece together** **Mandatory performance 6 - 12th grade**
May TBD	MICCA Solo & Ensemble	Salem HS	Time TBD	Perform a solo or chamber selection for a group of judges and receive a rating. Not required.
6/5/26	WHS Graduation	Victory Field	5:30 PM	**Mandatory HS 9 - 11th grade;** optional for 7th and 8th grade students
Last day of school	8th-grade graduation	WMS Gym	Morning	Interested/select 6th and 7th grade students (tight space!)

Ample notice will be given in the (unlikely) event that we need to change a date

Commitment and Attendance

Attendance at concerts is a required portion of this course (unless otherwise noted). As an ensemble, we are depending on each player for our performance.

If, at the beginning of the school year, you already have an event scheduled for one of the above dates, please contact your director to discuss options/alternative assignments. If an emergency or illness prevents you from attending a concert, please let your director know when possible. An alternative performance assignment will be available for students who are unable to attend.

Concert Attire

Consider, if you will, the Red Sox. If they came to games wearing their everyday workout gear, would the game be quite as exciting? Likely not. It is the same with our concert gear.

Concert attire is a black dress top, black dress bottoms, and black shoes. Please do not wear clothes with logos, white sneakers/sneakers in general, etc.

Students should wear a dress top (button down, blouse, etc) and black pants or a long black skirt (must fall below the knee) for performances unless otherwise alerted. Please wear black socks/shoes/sandals.

No shorts, sweats, short skirts, tank tops, t-shirts, flip flops, or sneakers.

If you are unable to procure the clothes, please let Ms. Byham know ahead of time. If a student arrives in the incorrect uniform, we have spare clothes that can be borrowed.

Get Connected!

Stay in the know! Teachers will utilize email for quick updates and information, so please be sure to clearly print your preferred contact email on the following page.
In addition to email, please check out our Fine Arts Website, Twitter, and Facebook pages!

- Facebook: tinyurl.com/WPSFineArts
- Instagram: @watertownorchestras
- Website: tinyurl.com/wpsinstruments

PLEASE GET THIS PAGE SIGNED BY YOUR CAREGIVER, AND REMOVE IT FROM THE REST OF THE PACKET. RETURN THE SIGNED PAGE AT YOUR NEXT CLASS.

Student Information Form

Student Name: _____ Student Grade: _____

Ensemble (circle all that apply): Strings Chorus

Handbook Agreement

❒ I have read and agree to the concert attendance policies outlined in the handbook.

❒ I have read and agree to the performance attire policies as outlined in this handbook.

❒ I have read and agree to the classroom behavior expectations as outlined in this handbook.

Student Signature: _____ Date:_____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date:_____

Please detach this page to return to your director and keep this handbook as a reference for the rest of the year.