



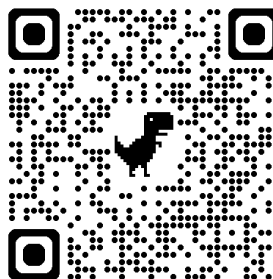
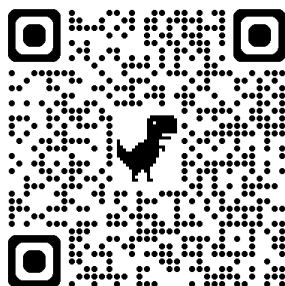
# Handbook

## 2026-2027

Mr. John Garner  
[jgarner@k12k.com](mailto:jgarner@k12k.com)

This handbook is in addition to the Ross N. Robinson Middle School Student Handbook. All rules and policies will be adhered to as stated.

**Follow the Ross N. Robinson Orchestra**  
on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)



## Welcome Message

**Dear Orchestra Families,**

### **Welcome to the 2026-2027 Ross N. Robinson Middle School**

**Orchestra season!** Since you have committed to being a member of this organization, I hope you dedicate yourself to make the experience as successful and fulfilling as possible. This handbook provides all the information needed to enhance your orchestra experience this academic year. I am committed to providing all students with a superior orchestra experience. I strive to cultivate a classroom environment where students feel compelled to learn and comfortable to take risks allowing them to grow as musicians and individuals. Each student will experience the pride and satisfaction that comes with performing as part of a team.

I am a professional violinist & violist beginning my 35<sup>th</sup> year of teaching orchestra. I also teach the orchestras at Dobyns-Bennett High School. I have my Bachelor of Music Education from The University of Georgia. In addition to being an orchestra teacher, I am a performer, an adjudicator, a clinician and an organizer and host of many types of musical events. During the school year I attend multiple music in-services, conventions and workshops to stay up to date in relevant in the field of music education. I know what it is like on both sides of the podium and am excited to share my love of playing in an orchestra with my students.

A responsibility I do not take lightly is cultivating generations of musicians and future advocates of the arts. I believe that music is a learned skill, and I also believe that all people are capable of learning. I am determined to arm my students with the tools needed to become great thinkers, citizens, and lifelong lovers of learning. I am committed to each student's development and promise to do my best to support and encourage them in all of their endeavors.

**Sincerely,**

*Mr. John Garner*

**Orchestra Teacher**

*Dobyns-Bennett High School*

*Robinson Middle School*

[jgarner@k12k.com](mailto:jgarner@k12k.com)

DB: 423-378-8602

RNR: 423-378-2221

## Orchestra Fees

- \$45 (cash or checks made out to RNR Middle School, not the Guild this year) for orchestra t-shirt, orchestra sticker, string replacement, and miscellaneous expenses
- ETSBOA Junior Clinic (optional for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- TMEA Middle School Allstate (new for 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Carowinds Music Festival Trip (optional for 7 & 8 depends on numbers)

\*Fees are not meant to be a limiting factor for participation in orchestra. Please complete a fee waiver form if needed.

## Instrument Quality

The quality of the instrument you play on impacts your sound and the sound of the orchestra. High quality string instruments are an investment and appreciate in value over time.

**WARNING:** I have had many parents try to get an instrument from Amazon, Ebay or other internet sites. I highly caution against this. Even though you can find what appears to be a great deal, the instruments you usually end up getting are often of extremely poor quality with a bad sound, and difficult to care for. This results in many problems and repairs that can cost more money in the long run. *Please be sure to try out an instrument before purchasing it.* Feel free to ask me about any instruments you find. I will be glad to look at any instruments for you, and tell you if I think it is worth purchasing or repairing.

**Avoid the brands** Cecilio, Mendini, Palatino or Lark as these instruments function more as toys and do not function well in a classroom setting. Most students with these instruments get discouraged and ultimately quit playing.

## Instrument Dealers

Rental or purchase

Wilhite Strings: [www.wilhitestrings.com](http://www.wilhitestrings.com)

Knoxville Fine Violins: [www.knoxvilleviolinshop.com](http://www.knoxvilleviolinshop.com)

Music Doctors: [www.musicdrs.com](http://www.musicdrs.com)

\*Purchase only online

Shar Music: [www.sharmusic.com](http://www.sharmusic.com)

Southwest Strings: [www.swstrings.com](http://www.swstrings.com)

The Woodwind and Brasswind: [www.wwbw.com](http://www.wwbw.com)

\*If you are considering purchases an instrument online from any source, please email the link to me first so I can verify that it is or is not a good quality instrument.

## Required Materials

*Most materials are available from a local music dealer.*

### Method books-specific to each student's instrument

- Method book:-
  - *6th grade*: Sound Innovations for String Orchestra Book 1 by Bob Phillips and Kirk Moss
  - *7th grade*: Sound Innovations for String Orchestra Book 2 by Bob Phillips and Kirk Moss
  - *8th grade*: Sound Innovations: Sound Development for Intermediate String Orchestra by Bob Phillips and Kirk Moss
- Getting In Gear: Fundamental Warm-Ups for String Orchestra Book (7th and 8th grades only)-[Getting In Gear](#)

### Instrument and bow in good working order

- Violins and violas may rent or purchase from a reliable dealer (see list above). A limited number of school violins and violas are available to check out. Please contact the director for more information.
- Cellos and basses will be provided with instruments for school and at home.
- \*\*Cellos and basses need to purchase a bow and bow case to take to and from school.
- Cello bow link (be sure to consult the director about what size the get before purchasing): [Cello Bow](#)
- Cello bow case link: [Cello Bow Case](#) OR [Protec Cello Bow Case](#)
- Bass bow link (please get French grip and consult the director for the correct size): [Bass Bow](#)
- Bass bow case link: [Bass Bow Case](#)

### Accessories required for specific instrument

*Everyone*: Rosin, soft cleaning cloth (Basses-get Pops or Eastman)

*Violin/Viola*: \*\*All students are required to purchase a shoulder rest (Kun or similar brand-*no sponge type shoulder rests are acceptable* except Polypad)

*Cello*: Xeros strap

*Bass*: Rock stop

**Music Folder**: These are durable and useful for keeping all your music and pencil together. I recommend a music notebook that holds music and can be kept in order like this one linked here: [Sheet Music Folder](#)

**Pencils** are required for class every day. If you prefer to highlight or use colored pencils to make music, that is acceptable.

**Wire Music Stand**: For use at home. Available from local music dealer.

**“Snark” Clip-on Tuner (6th grade only)**: Keep in your instrument case.

**Nail Clippers**: Keep in your instrument case.

***String players must keep their fingernails short at all times in order to correctly play their instrument. It is the expectation that all students have short fingernails.***

## **Code of Conduct**

We will follow the Robinson “Ready” expectations.

1. Respectful
  - a. Keep hands and feet to yourself.
  - b. Follow all adult instructions.
  - c. Treat everyone with respect.
  - d. No talking or playing out of turn during rehearsal.
2. Eager
  - a. Come to class with a good attitude and an open mind, ready to learn.
  - b. Come with a growth mindset.
3. Accountable
  - a. Take care of your instrument and other materials.
  - b. Attend all concerts after school.
  - c. Use the restroom during designated breaks. I only send students during class for emergency situations only.
  - d. Come to class prepared and on time.
  - e. No food, gum, candy, or drinks other than water is allowed.
  - f. Cell phones, ear pods, and other technology remain in backpacks.
4. Determined
  - a. Work hard, try new things, and do not give up when a task is difficult.
  - b. Work together as a team and support one another.
5. Yearn to Learn
  - a. Keep fingernails short.
  - b. Come with a positive attitude ready to learn.

## **Personal Responsibility**

Students may be expected to document their practice time. Students will be required to perform playing exams in class and by video through the Canvas course. Students are encouraged to keep their music organized and wrinkle free. Students will be expected to attend all classes with a positive attitude and ready to work together to meet our goals. They will show up with all required materials.

If a student loses their music and needs a new copy, the student may submit a request to the orchestra director and will receive the music the following class. If a student requests music more than twice for the same concert, it will impact their rehearsal etiquette grade.

## **Personal Device (Cell Phone, Earbuds, Smartwatch, etc.) Policy**

- Cell phones and earbuds must be OFF and kept in your backpack during the ENTIRE school day. Technology enhanced Smart Watches should not be used for texting or calling.
- If a cell phone or earbuds are SEEN outside the backpack between the hours of 7:45-2:45, the following will occur:
  - **1st offense:** WARNING...asked to put away
  - **2nd offense:** kept in office for 5 days
  - **3rd offense:** kept in office for 10 days
  - These consequences also apply for smart watches if used as a cell phone (calling -or- texting) from 7:45-2:45

## Grading Scale

Playing tests, written tests, and written work will be given periodically to determine the progress of each individual student. Students will need to prepare music that is being used in class through individual practice. Students are responsible for their own individual progress and their contribution to the overall performance of the ensemble.

Playing tests may be given in class during a regular rehearsal or outside of the regular school rehearsal. If the student is absent at the time of an assigned test and the absence is excused by school policy, they will be allowed to make up the missed assignment. Absences must be approved by the school administration and the make up work must be completed in compliance with the student handbook.

If a student has a missing assignment, it will be marked as a “o” (zero) with a note stating that it is missing. It is the student’s responsibility to check grades regularly and follow up with the teachers to complete missing assignments.

|                                                    |            |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Practice time                                      | 20 %       |
| Rehearsal Etiquette                                | 40 %       |
| Concert Attendance & Participation                 | 20%        |
| Other Work (chrome book, written, playing quizzes) | 10 %       |
| <u>Sub Work</u>                                    | <u>10%</u> |
| <i>Total:</i>                                      | 100 %      |

Late work, excluding practice records, will be accepted for a maximum of 80%.

Students and families are expected to regularly check their grades on Canvas and Aspen and follow up with the director as soon as possible with any concerns.

## Seating Policy

Seating assignments and chair placement are completely at the *director’s discretion*. Students are seated based on a variety of factors, and every seat in the orchestra is important and valuable. I do not implement strictly ability-based seating or hold chair challenges; instead, I foster a sense of collaboration, team work, and flexibility among all students in the orchestra.

## **Concert/Performance Attire**

A good performance is as much a visual performance as it is an aural one. As we strive to sound as one ensemble, so should we look as one. Students must come to concerts dressed appropriately to receive full credit for attending. Students will be expected to wear concert black and adhere to the following guidelines.

All students will wear concert black or a tuxedo for all performances unless otherwise noted and are expected to purchase their own concert attire.

Students may wear the previously purchased orchestra dress and/or tuxedo.

You can find these types of items at Kohl's, Target, Belk, and Amazon. This will allow students to wear clothing that fits them well, is comfortable, and works for their instrument. This is the practice of professional orchestras as well.

Concert Black:

- Solid black skirt/dress/dress pants (ankle-length to floor-length when seated)
- Solid black shirt/blouse/top covering shoulders or longer
- Plain black socks/hose
- Black dress shoes (no tennis shoes)
- No black denim
- No flashy jewelry
- Clothing must be in good condition (no holes, tears, stains, etc.)

## **Concert/Performance Grades**

Concerts and various performances will be worth 100 points and are 25% of the student's grade. Concerts and performances will be graded as follows:

- |            |                                                       |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 points:  | Arriving on time                                      |
| 10 points: | Wearing correct concert attire                        |
| 10 points: | Bringing their own correct concert music              |
| 20 points: | Pre-concert/Warm up behavior                          |
| 35 points: | Performs in the concert to the best of their ability  |
| 20 points: | Listens/ watches other performing groups respectfully |

## Attendance & Participation

Students enrolled in orchestra are required to attend all activities and events during and after school hours. It is my responsibility to deliver to the students a complete performance schedule at the beginning of the year. Any changes will be announced with as much notice as possible in class and via email. The change will also be reflected in the online calendar.

Students will be excused for the following reasons: documented illness, death in the immediate family, observance of religious beliefs, or official school business as outlined by the *student handbook*. Excused absences must be communicated to the teacher, by the parent or guardian of a student, at least two weeks in advance. The two-week notice may be preempted in special circumstances. These would include emergency situations such as illness or death in the family and special circumstances related to State and District Activities listed in the *Student Handbook*.

Students who have made arrangements to be excused from a scheduled activity or event of a performing ensemble will be required to complete an alternate assignment to fulfill the requirements for that performance. This assignment will be given to the student with a proper completion date and will reflect the goals of the original assignment.

**The maximum grade for this assignment is 50/100 points** except for extreme circumstances that will be treated on an individual basis.

Attendance and participation in daily rehearsals will constitute 25% of the student's grade. Attendance at sectional rehearsals, extra rehearsals, and performances outside the school day will also constitute 25% of the student's grade.

## Spring Reward Carowinds Trip

Eligible RNR 7th and 8th grade orchestra students will be offered the possibility of a Carowinds Reward Trip in April. Eligibility will be determined by the director based on excellent behavior, and more details will be sent out after spring break. In addition, trip possibility will be determined by the number of students willing to participate and the availability of funds to help defer the cost of transportation.

## **Private Lesson Instructors-Private Lesson Instructors-Updated 4.2025**

Private lessons are an investment. Even with full participation in class and practice at home, lessons have significant benefits. Lessons provide one-on-one instruction that a large ensemble cannot. In this individualized setting, the private teacher assists students that either need extra support and students looking to increase their skillset or play competitively. Lessons are a fantastic supplement to orchestra class.

In private lessons, students can explore solo repertoire that is often technically more challenging and interesting than orchestral music. A student will become more well-rounded as a musician when performing both solo and orchestra repertoire. A student may discover a talent and interest in music that is sparked by private instruction.

Many colleges offer a number of music scholarships to play in the orchestra. Often, one does not need to be a music major or minor in order to receive these, but you must be a strong player. Even for those who do not plan to continue music in college, I hope that your dedication to the orchestra at the high school level motivates you to take this important step.

### **Violin**

|                                   |              |                              |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Anne Neely                        | 704-677-2343 | anneneely@hotmail.com        |
| Marianna Brickle                  | 864-933-7918 | mariannabrickle@gmail.com    |
| Catherine McGlasson               | 423-246-1367 | cjmcglasson@yahoo.com        |
| Linda Waltner                     | 423-913-3259 | waltnerl@aol.com             |
| Tim Barrett                       | 423-915-1212 | barrett@academyofstrings.com |
| Kim Barrett                       | 423-915-1212 | barrett@academyofstrings.com |
| Erin Keene                        | 423-913-1734 | violintchr@hotmail.com       |
| Daniel Blair                      | 423-833-8091 |                              |
| Daniel@BlairAcademyForTheArts.com |              |                              |
| ETSU Pre-College                  | 423-439-4270 | PRECOLLEGE@mail.etsu.edu     |
| Cori James                        | 423-292-1561 |                              |

### **Viola**

|                     |              |                          |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Catherine McGlasson | 423-246-1367 | cjmcglasson@yahoo.com    |
| Kinden Reyes        | 423-360-5804 | kinden101@gmail.com      |
| Linda Waltner       | 423-913-3259 | waltnerl@aol.com         |
| Tucker Jones        | 615-636-6251 |                          |
| ETSU Pre-College    | 423-439-4270 | PRECOLLEGE@mail.etsu.edu |

### **Cello**

|                   |              |                          |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Cheryl Fitzgerald | 423-218-4119 | cherylonda@hotmail.com   |
| Audrey Altonen    | 423-360-8378 | audreyaltonen@gmail.com  |
| Donny Snyder      | 817-262-0344 | dsnydescm@yahoo.com      |
| ETSU Pre-College  | 423-439-4270 | PRECOLLEGE@mail.etsu.edu |

### **Bass**

|                  |              |                                                                        |
|------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daniel Shifflett | 423-596-9216 | daniel_shifflett@yahoo.com                                             |
| Cynthia Mueller  | 423-406-1368 | cynthiamueller@charter.net                                             |
| Kim France       | 828-406-0897 | kimfrance@gmail.com                                                    |
| ETSU Pre-College | 423-439-4270 | <a href="mailto:PRECOLLEGE@mail.etsu.edu">PRECOLLEGE@mail.etsu.edu</a> |



**Ross N. Robinson Orchestra**  
**Calendar of Events**  
**2025-2026 School Year**

**Concerts**

Unless otherwise indicated, concert black is required for all performances

All concerts start at **6pm** in the RNR Auditorium

*Call time is 5pm for all students*

RNR Orchestra Fall Concert-Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026

RNR Orchestra Winter Concert-Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026

RNR Orchestra Recruitment Preview-Tuesday, February 16, 2027

RNR Orchestra Spring Concert-Thursday, May 06, 2027

**Other Events**

Upper Area Junior Clinic Auditions

- Saturday, November 1, 2025, 9am-2pm
- Robinson Middle School
- Optional audition for 7th and 8th graders

Upper Area Junior Clinic (select students only)

- Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup> and Friday 9<sup>th</sup> 2027 from 12pm-7pm
- Indian Trails Middle School, Johnson City
- Selected students only
- Students will have bus transportation to the event but parent pick up in the evening.
- Concert at 6:00pm Friday evening.

5th Grade Recruiting Concert (7th and 8th grades only)

- Friday, February 19, 2027
- During the school day

TMEA Junior High All-State Orchestra, TBA