

Lawton C. Johnson **Summit Middle School**



Orchestra Handbook

2026 - 2027
Mr. Liam Reilly

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

I would like to welcome everyone to the 2026 - 2027 school year of Orchestra at Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School! I am so excited to begin teaching orchestra in Summit Public Schools this year. I am equally excited to be working with your children. I am looking forward to a year of musical learning, adventures, performances, growth, and success.

Orchestra classes meet on BOC (Band, Orchestra, Chorus) days during periods 2, 3, and 4. In addition, all Orchestra members will have a small group lesson during a rotating period, once per week. The next page will explain the schedule in detail.

During our first day of class, each student reviewed the lesson schedule. It is important that all students are aware of when and where their lesson will take place, as this is a significant component of their grade. The lesson schedule will also be posted on my Google Classroom each month so your child can access it at their convenience. The students will come out of an academic class once per week, but the lessons will rotate on a weekly basis. This ensures that no student will miss the same class each week. Lessons are a key component of your child's musical education and development, so it is important that each student attends every lesson. In the event that an unexpected conflict arises, please contact me and we can work things out on an individual basis.

Just as with developing another skill, practicing outside of our shared lesson and rehearsal time is necessary to ensure each student maximizes their individual potential. In other words, practicing is your Orchestra homework. By practicing, we are able to use rehearsal time to put the prepared parts together for our performances.

I know that your child is going to have a great experience in the LCJSMS Orchestra and through individual work, lessons, and rehearsals, everyone will grow and gain confidence in themselves as musicians. In our shared time together, I hope we can create beautiful music and celebrate our future successes.

If you have any questions or concerns over the course of the school year, please don't hesitate to email me at ireilly@summit.k12.nj.us. In the event that you would like to speak on the phone, we can arrange a phone conference through email. Also, please feel free to visit my website for all information and updates throughout the school year. I am invested in your child's accomplishments and will do everything I can to help them during their time in Orchestra.

I look forward to a great year of Orchestra at LCJSMS and having the pleasure of working with each and every one of your children.

Mr. Liam Reilly
Orchestra Teacher
LCJSMS & Franklin Elementary
ireilly@summit.k12.nj.us

Scheduling Information:

Each grade level orchestra will meet two times per week most weeks with the occasional “drop day.”

The schedule by grade level works out like this:

- 6th Grade - Full Ensemble Monday and Friday.
- 7th Grade - Full Ensemble Wednesday and Friday.
- 8th Grade - Full Ensemble Monday and Wednesday.

Every student will participate in one small group lesson per week. Lessons will be on a rotating schedule. I will post monthly lesson schedules in **Google Classroom**. I will also keep a number of printed copies in the classroom. Lessons are essential to your learning **and are part of your orchestra grade**. If you are unable to attend a lesson, please let me know so we can reschedule or plan accordingly.

Equipment + Materials:

Each student is required to have an instrument at home for daily practice. Local instrument rentals are available from [Elefante Music](#), [The Music Shop](#), [Music and Arts](#), or other local stores. If private rental may cause a financial burden, please reach out to me as LCJSMS has a limited number of School Instruments available to rent. If you are ready to purchase an instrument, please check in with myself or another music teacher so we can guide you in the right direction. Please **do not** buy instruments from places like Walmart, Target, or Amazon. We wish to offer an instrumental experience to any student who may be interested, so if there is an issue, please let us know if we can be of any assistance. Small instruments such as violins and violas should be brought to school for orchestra rehearsals and lessons. We have a smaller inventory of larger instruments such as cellos and basses at school for students to borrow for school use during the school day.

In addition to an instrument, students will be **required** to have the following items for orchestra rehearsals and lessons:

- Pencil.
- Standard 1-inch 3-ring binder (**OR** a specific orchestra section of a binder marked with a binder divider) (all class handouts are hole punched).

- Your instrument's version of *Essential Elements for Strings* Book 2.
- Sheet Music (provided by the teacher).
- One block of rosin.
- Shoulder rest (violins and violas only).
- Roc stop, labeled with the student's name (cellos and basses only).
- School-issued Chromebook (only when requested).

The following items are **strongly recommended** but **not required**:

- Tuner (recommended CA-50 Chromatic tuner, Snark). Free tuner apps on smart devices or computers are also acceptable.
- Metronome. Free metronome apps on smart devices or computers are also acceptable.
- Highlighter.
- Binder Dividers with Tabs.
- Small Post-it notes.

Having the proper equipment will help students stay engaged and easily follow all rehearsal expectations.

Rehearsal Expectations:

Student Responsibilities:

1. Participation, cooperation, attentiveness, enthusiasm, respect, and appropriate behavior. Give your 100% effort in each lesson, rehearsal, and performance.
2. Arrive on time for rehearsals. Please follow the established procedures/expectations for the classroom.
3. Have all supplies for ensemble rehearsal and lessons.
4. **Use proper playing posture!!!**
5. There will be times where we will sing/vocalize during rehearsals. I ask for each student to give their best effort and participate.
6. Gum, candy, food, or beverages are **not** permitted during rehearsals.
7. Put your name on your belongings (instrument case and accessories).
8. Clean up after rehearsals.
9. **Refrain from talking and/or playing your instrument when the director is working with other instrument sections.**
10. Homework and school work must not be done at any time during a rehearsal/lesson.
11. Practice your lesson and orchestra music regularly.

When you are in any ensemble rehearsal, you are a part of a team. If we work together then we will have many productive rehearsals together. Making music is all about working together towards a shared goal.

Classroom Procedures:

All classroom procedures were reviewed on the first day of orchestra. Students are expected to follow these procedures during every rehearsal.

Beginning of Rehearsal:

When coming into rehearsal, please scan in and set your books, chromebooks (unless stated otherwise), or other unnecessary items for orchestra in the back of the classroom. Please only bring your instrument, binder (with music), pencil, and other musical materials to your seat.

Once you unpack your instrument, please tune (individually or with Mr. Reilly), go to your assigned seat, check the daily agenda, and warm up. The teacher will signal the start of the rehearsal.

During Rehearsal:

Be an **active participant** in the music making process! Even if you are not playing, you should be **actively listening** to what is happening around you. Think about how suggestions directed at other sections can apply to you.

To follow along, you are always allowed to QUIETLY finger or “airbow” your part if you are not playing. Please **do not** pluck, bow, or talk while the teacher is talking or working with another section.

End of Rehearsal:

A teacher will always **dismiss** the class. When dismissed, please put your instrument away correctly, straighten up any messes in the space, return any borrowed supplies, and take everything with you to your next class.

Instrument Care:

- Tighten and Rosin your bow before playing.
- Check your string tuning **every** time you play.
- Loosen your bow before packing up.
- Wipe off any rosin dust from your strings/instrument when packing up.
- Do not lean on Cello/Bass when the endpins are extended.
- Put the Cello/Bass endpins inside the instrument EVERY time you put the instrument down or away (EVEN ON THE STAND RACKS). Make sure you lock the screw so they do not fall out.

Grading Criteria:

Ensemble Participation:

This category is worth 100 points for the quarter. Depending on their grade level, students will have a full orchestra every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday on BOC (Band, Orchestra, Choir) Days during periods 2 (8th grade), 3 (6th grade), or 4 (7th grade). This is also their respective Physical Education/Health period. Students should report directly to the orchestra room at the beginning of the period and be prepared with a working instrument, music binder, and a pencil.

Lesson Participation:

This category is worth 10 points per week. Every student will have a weekly lesson with Mr. Reilly. This lesson will help each student to improve their skills on their instrument to become a better musician and performer. Students will be **assigned to a lesson group** and should only attend lessons with this group. The weekly lessons rotate periods on a weekly basis and **are mandatory**. Students will be excused from the lesson if they have a quiz / test / lab or presentation, but they must communicate that with me. If you are missing a lesson, an email with a teacher CC'd will be required. All students are responsible for making up any missed lessons. During the period they have their lesson, each student should go to their classroom teacher **first** to hand in homework and receive any daily assignments, and then they should report to lessons. Lesson rotations can be found on my Google Classroom.

Independent Assignments:

This category ranges from 10-50 points per assignment. Throughout the quarter, students will receive various assignments that need to be completed. This may include, but is not limited to, a playing evaluation in small lesson groups, individual playing assessments, or a written assignment.

Performance Assessment:

This category is worth 50 points. This category covers all concert performances and events that the orchestra participates in. In the event that a concert does not occur in a particular marking period, students will be assessed on assigned material during an in class performance.

*If your child is having difficulties in another subject area and you are having concerns about them missing class, please contact me ASAP. We want all of our students to succeed in all aspects of their education and will try to find a solution for your child.

2026 / 2027 Orchestra Performance Dates:

This year we have several wonderful performance opportunities planned for your children to showcase their musical achievements.

6th Grade:

- Wednesday, January 20, 2027 - LCJSMS Winter Concert
- Wednesday, May 12, 2027 - LCJSMS Spring Concert

7th Grade:

- Tuesday, December 8, 2026 - LCJSMS Winter Concert
- Wednesday, May 12, 2027 - LCJSMS Spring Concert

8th Grade:

- Tuesday, December 8, 2026 - LCJSMS Winter Concert
- Thursday, May 13, 2027 - LCJSMS Spring Concert

Concert Attire:

All orchestra students are required to wear **concert black** for their performances.

- **Option 1:** Black button down shirt, black dress pants, black socks & black dress shoes.
- **Option 2:** Black blouse, black dress pants or a black skirt/dress WITH black leggings or black tights, & black dress shoes
- **Do not wear:** Jeans, sneakers, T-shirts, or shorts.

Because we want to look our best at our performances, any students who are not in compliance with the concert attire will not be allowed to perform and will be required to complete the alternate assignment.

Since orchestra is a performing art these performances are part of our curriculum. This means **all students enrolled in orchestra are required to attend each concert.** This is a part of the class and a commitment that each student musician has to the ensemble. All performances count as a 50 point performance assessment grade. In the event that your child is not able to attend the concert, an alternative assessment will be given in order for them to receive credit for the performance. The alternate assignment can be found on the last page of this handbook.

Enrollment Policy:

Orchestra is a full year class and commitment for 7th and 8th grade students. Once orchestra begins on Friday, September 11, 2026 students will no longer be able to withdraw from the class. If a student is experiencing difficulties or is unhappy with their participation, we strongly encourage them to speak directly with Mr. Reilly. The department goal is to work together to address any concerns and help students succeed and enjoy their musical journey. Parents, you will have the opportunity to opt your child out of orchestra class for the following school year during the annual course selection process at the end of the year.

We offer a “trial period” for all 6th grade students who are interested in participating in band, orchestra, and/or choir. Once the school year begins, students are encouraged to fully immerse themselves in the new experiences middle school BOC has to offer, and will therefore NOT be allowed to immediately remove any BOC class from their schedule. After having the opportunity to experience the class, there will be a 2 week withdrawal period from Monday, November 2 - Friday, November 13. Students who wish to withdraw from a BOC class during this time will need to fill out a withdrawal form. This form can be obtained from your guidance counselor. Families will need to follow the instructions of the withdrawal form and have all signatures before any schedule changes are made in Genesis. Please note that after the trial period, students will not be able to withdraw from their BOC class until the end of the school year.

Chamber Orchestra:

The Chamber Orchestra is an after school, full-year commitment of mixed grade levels (6-8). Students must audition to be considered for this ensemble. Rehearsals take place on Thursdays from 3:00-4:00. There will be an audition workshop on Thursday, September 17th. Since the music chosen for this ensemble is more difficult than the music learned in the grade-level classes, it is expected that students will practice their parts thoroughly between rehearsals. I encourage any student that may be interested in this group to audition.

From The Director:

Please sign the “Acknowledgement of Orchestra Policies” Google Form. It will be linked [here](#) and on Google Classroom. Students and guardians are required to submit this online form to Mr. Reilly no later than **Friday, September 18, 2026**.

Should you have any questions, concerns, or comments regarding the handbook or any other concerns that may develop throughout the school year, please do not hesitate to contact me. E-mail is the best way to reach me.

Thank you for your involvement and support.

Mr. Liam Reilly

lreilly@summit.k12.nj.us

ALTERNATE CONCERT ASSIGNMENT:

Any student who misses a school concert will be required to submit this alternate assignment. All make-up work must be submitted at least one week before the end of the quarter. It is the student's responsibility to pick up this assignment from their music teacher.

Assignment requirements - REVIEW A CONCERT: **Attend a concert performance featuring the type of music you play.** Ideally, the concert you attend should be a middle school band concert in one of the neighboring towns, if this is not possible, other age group concerts will be acceptable. Write a review of the concert you attended. Students must attach a copy of the program to the final submission. The review should discuss each piece of music on the program. Comment on the content, historical/social significance of the music (if any), and the quality of the performance. You might also include a brief critique of the performers. (Ex. What did the music make you think about? Is there any other music that the piece reminds you of? What mood(s) do you think the composer was trying to create? Why? If the concert is also reviewed in a local paper or online, you may attach that review to your concert program and comment on the review as well. Your concert review should be 5 or more paragraphs, double-spaced and easily legible (500 words or more).

Concert Review Rubric:

CONCERT REVIEW 50pts	Student Self Grade	Teacher Grade
The concert is relevant to your instrument, ensemble, and you have the program attached to your paper. (10pts)		
Body Paragraph 1. Discuss the pieces on the program. (Favorite piece, least favorite piece, style, jazz, classical, pop etc.) (10pts)		
Body Paragraph 2. Discuss the historical significance of the music. What era of music? Any historical significance of that music? (10pts)		
Body Paragraph 3. Musical critique of the performers. Highlight positives, negatives, skills, expression, etc.. Attach any written articles about the concert. (10pts)		
The overall length is at least 5 paragraphs consisting of 3 body paragraphs, intro and conclusion. 3-5 sentences in each paragraph totalling 500+ words. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation is correct. If you use outside research, please cite the sources (10pts)		