

# Stillwater Public Schools Orchestra Program

## Mission Statement

The Stillwater Orchestra Program helps students become accomplished performers and intelligent consumers of music by nurturing individual growth, thereby helping students reach their full intellectual potential.

## Yearly Goals

**Upon completion of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students should be able to:**

- Produce a characteristic tone on the instrument
- Demonstrate proper posture and instrument position
- Perform with rudimentary bow arm and left hand technique presented in the first year method book, including usage of full bow and left hand finger placement variations
- Interpret all aspects of musical notation introduced in the first year method book
- Demonstrate an aural understanding of pitch in relation to the instrument fingerboard
- Demonstrate appropriate rehearsal, concert, and audience etiquette
- Understand proper care and maintenance of the instrument
- Recognize the need for individual practice outside of class time

**Upon completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students should be able to:**

- Demonstrate continued growth in concepts previously introduced
- Manipulate phrasing, dynamics, intonation, and balance through proper bow technique
- Refine understanding of how to adjust the pitch of individual notes
- Identify and interpret conducting gestures
- Properly play the C, G, and D major scales with appropriate range for their instrument
- Play music appropriate for 7<sup>th</sup> grade level, including North-Central Honor Orchestra audition material, class method book/concert literature

**Upon completion of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students should be able to:**

- Demonstrate continued growth in concepts previously introduced
- Demonstrate increased awareness of and sensitivity to phrasing, dynamics, intonation, ensemble unity, and balance
- Demonstrate an intermediate knowledge of bow control to achieve characteristic tone production in the range from pianissimo to fortissimo
- Vocalize (sing, hum) the open strings of their instrument and simple patterns presented by the instructor (small intervals, major/minor triads, scales fragments)
- Play with increasingly accurate pitch, adjusting problematic notes quickly and independently
- Properly play two octave C, G, D, major scales and one octave A, F, Bb, and Eb major scales with full bow/full tone production
- Play music appropriate for 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, including North-Central Honor Orchestra audition material, class method book/concert literature
- Recognize the benefit of private instruction
- Further growth of advanced techniques appropriate for string playing—ex.: spiccato, loure, and marcato bowing, and left arm shifting as well as an introduction to vibrato

**Upon completion of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students should be able to:**

- Demonstrate continued growth in concepts previously introduced
- Demonstrate an advancing knowledge of bow control to achieve characteristic tone production in the range from pianissimo to fortissimo
- Possess an understanding of pitch that allows them to adjust easily in class ensemble playing and to practice accurately during independent study periods (at home).
- Respond appropriately to the gestures of the conductor
- Perform two octave major scales up to 3 sharps and 3 flats, and perform the relative minor scales as assigned, and begin the study of three octave scales in up to two sharps/flats
- Play music appropriate for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade level, including North-Central Honor Orchestra audition material, class method book/concert literature
- Recognize the benefit of solo and ensemble literature
- Further growth of advanced techniques appropriate for string playing—forte sostenuto, allegro hooked, martelé, and collé bowing, and left arm shifting as well as a basic vibrato

**Upon completion of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, students should be able to:**

- Demonstrate continued growth in concepts previously introduced
- Perform three octave major scales up to four sharps and four flats, and perform the relative minor scales as assigned
- Make informed, independent decisions concerning use of bow to create an appropriate tone in when presented with standard repertoire/musical literature
- Possess an understanding of pitch that allows them to adjust easily and provide a pitch reference example in class ensemble playing and to practice accurately during independent study periods (at home).
- Respond appropriately to the gestures of the conductor
- Perform three octave major scales (and relative minors) and up to 5 sharps and 5 flats
- Play music appropriate for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade level, including North-Central Honor Orchestra and All-State audition material, class method book/concert literature

## **Concert and Contest Participation**

Events listed are approximate. Specific dates are announced in the fall.

Events listed in *italics* are optional.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Beginner Demonstration and Holiday Concert (late November)

Side-by-Side Concert with SHS Orchestra (early February)

*Stillwater 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Solo & Ensemble Contest (late March)*

Spring Concert (mid-May)

### **7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*North Central Honor Orchestra (NCHO) Auditions (1<sup>st</sup> weekend in October)*

*NCHO Clinic (late November, required for students accepted into NCHO)*

Holiday Concert (late December)

OSSAA Preparation Concert (late February)

OSSAA Large Ensemble Contest (early March)

*Stillwater 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Solo & Ensemble Contest (late March)*

Spring Concert (mid-May)

### **8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*North Central Honor Orchestra (NCHO) Auditions (1<sup>st</sup> weekend in October)*

Halloween Concert (late October)

*NCHO Clinic (late November, required for students accepted into NCHO)*  
 Holiday Concert (late December)  
 Winter/OSSAA Preparation Concert (February)  
*OSSAA District Solo & Ensemble Contest (early March) or*  
*Stillwater 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Solo & Ensemble Contest (late March)*  
 OSSAA Large Ensemble Contest (early March)  
*OSSAA State Solo & Ensemble Contest, 9<sup>th</sup> grade only (April)*  
 Spring Concert (mid-May)

### **High School Orchestra**

September Kick-off Concerts (one in PAC, one outdoor concert in the community)  
*North Central Honor Orchestra (NCHO) Auditions (1<sup>st</sup> weekend in October)*  
 Halloween Concert (late October)  
 OSSAA String Orchestra Contest (mid-November)  
*NCHO Clinic (late November, required for students accepted into NCHO)*  
 Early morning (pre-school) rehearsals for Full Orchestra (with winds and perc.) begin in late November and continue periodically through May, usually one or two mornings per week  
*OMEA All-State Orchestra Auditions (1<sup>st</sup> weekend in December)*  
 Holiday Concert (late December)  
*OMEA All-State Orchestra Clinic, Tulsa PAC (required for students accepted into All-State)*  
 Winter/OSSAA Preparation Concert (early February)  
 OSSAA Large Ensemble Contest (mid-February)  
*OSSAA District Solo & Ensemble Contest (early March)*  
*OSSAA State Solo & Ensemble Contest (April)*  
*Pit Orchestra for Spring Musical Production*  
 Spring Concert (mid-May)

## **Required materials**

- Instrument (contact director with questions about an appropriate instrument rental/purchase)
- Pencils, and a Folder or other protective sheet music storage device
- Appropriate accessories for given instrument- Rosin, shoulder rest (violin/viola) endpin stop (cello/bass)
- Method book
  - String Explorer Book 1 – 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> grade
  - String Explorer Book 2 - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade
  - String Explorer Book 2 - 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Essential Elements Book 3 – 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Music stand (recommended for home practice)
  - All other assigned music and recommended materials

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Does my child need a new instrument?***

[This document has information about instrument purchase/rental/school loan.](#) Used instruments are frequently perfectly acceptable, and they are often equal or superior to “brand new” instruments. It is recommended that you have your orchestra director check your instrument to evaluate its quality and make sure it is working properly. As a beginner, many students rent an instrument. Entry-level instruments work well for the first few years in orchestra, however, as students progress, it is beneficial to upgrade them to a more advanced instrument. We schedule a meeting each fall for beginners to meet with a music dealer about renting instruments, and try to have other meetings periodically for those wishing to purchase a more advanced instrument.

***What size instrument does my student need?***

String instruments are made in fractional sizes so that a young player may have an instrument that fits them very well. In fact, a student should not be learning on an instrument that is too large for their growing body. The orchestra directors will give guidance on proper sizing of the instrument. In addition, most instrument dealers are qualified to fit the student for the right fractional size. If in doubt, please contact your student's instructor.

***Does the school provide instruments?*** The school can provide instruments on a limited basis; however, the student is responsible for the instruments up-keep. The orchestra program reserves the right to assess a yearly maintenance fee as well. One further note-- the quality of a rental instrument will likely exceed what the school can provide. We encourage each student to rent or purchase their own instrument at the beginning of their third year. Due to the difficult logistics of transporting the larger instruments (cello and bass) back and forth to school, there are instruments in the orchestra room that students will use during class. Violins and violas get to use the same instrument at school and home because they transport their instrument daily. This arrangement continues until the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade. At that time all cellists will need to be renting or own a cello.

***What are the requirements for uniforms?*** Beginning orchestra students are asked to purchase a SPS Orchestra monogrammed polo shirt. This shirt is worn with black pants (or long skirt) and black shoes and socks during 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The eighth and ninth grade orchestra students are required to wear "black and white" – white long sleeve shirts with black slacks (or a skirt) and black shoes and socks. Jeans, cargo pants, tennis shoes, and boots are not acceptable. The high school provides uniforms (tuxedo jacket, pants, bow tie, cummerbund) for the high school orchestra only. Those wearing them are required to provide a collared black button-up shirt, a white undershirt to wear under their uniform, black socks, and black dress shoes. To ensure uniformity, tuxedo shirts, bow ties, and cummerbunds are ordered together. All others are required to provide an all-black outfit with at least ½ arm length sleeve with a floor length pant/skirt. Alternatively, a black dress that fits the same parameters may be selected. Black hose and dress shoes in both cases.

***How much does it cost to be in Orchestra?*** The answer to this question can vary greatly based on a number of factors. In sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, student costs are kept to a minimum. The greatest cost during these years for most families is the purchase or rental of an instrument. The range is anywhere from \$100 - \$400 per year depending on the rental arrangement one selects. Additional fees are associated with extra activities, such as NCHO auditions and solo & ensemble contest. In high school, costs can vary based on travel plans for the year. Our boosters do a great job of working to keep the student costs to a minimum.

***What are private lessons? Are they required? How do I find a teacher?*** Private lessons allow a student to get more individual time and feedback than we can provide in class. Lessons are not required, but they are strongly recommended for all students. Students who study privately are able to make great progress. We work with the Stillwater community and the OSU Music Department each fall to create a list of recommended private lesson instructors that is posted in each orchestra room and on our websites.

***What are NCHO/All-State auditions?*** Beginning in seventh grade, students have the opportunity to audition for honor orchestras. NCHO hosts three honor groups – Seventh Grade Honor Orchestra, Junior High Honor Orchestra (8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> grades), and High School Honor Orchestra (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades). In October, students audition against other students from various schools, and the top performers in each section are accepted into the NCHO for that year. Students that are selected receive music to prepare on their own, and they present a concert at Oklahoma City University In November at the conclusion of a rehearsal clinic. High school students can choose to audition for the OMEA All-State Orchestra in December. Students selected for the OMEA All-State Orchestra perform in January at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center at the OMEA Convention.

***What is solo & ensemble contest?*** Beginning in seventh grade, students have the opportunity to sign up to perform solos or ensembles at the OSSAA District Contest. Students prepare their music individually or in small groups outside of class time. They perform this music for a judge at district contest, and they get a rating and feedback from the judge. It is an excellent opportunity to develop individual and small ensemble skills. High school students that receive a superior rating at the district level advance to the state level, which occurs in April.

## Glossary

**NCHO**– The North Central Honor Orchestra is a group formed yearly composed of students from 8 school districts. Students audition for membership in NCHO each Fall.

**OKMEA** – The Oklahoma Music Educators Association is the statewide organization responsible for coordinating the All-State Band, Orchestra, and Choir programs.

**OSSAA** – The Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association oversees all athletic and performing arts programs in the state. OSSAA sponsors district and state solo & ensemble contests, string orchestra contest, sight-reading contests, and full orchestra contest.

## SHS Orchestra Course Description

### Philharmonic Orchestra

Membership in the SHS Philharmonic String Orchestra is based on completion of previous year's orchestra courses. Alternatively, students may audition to join the class as well. This class is for string players that:

- Enjoy playing music in a wider variety of styles (less focus on classical music)
- Are playing repertoire at the 4A-5A level (required by the OSSAA)
- Are willing to practice and give strong effort during class rehearsal
- Want to develop the skills necessary to become a member of chamber orchestra and solo performance opportunities—the instructor will help make technical development a focal point for any student who is practicing consistently

Requirements for SHS Orchestra include:

- Participation in all assigned concerts and the OSSAA String Orchestra Contest in mid-November and Mid-February
- Maintenance of an instrument and assigned class music
- consistent positive musical contributions to the ensemble

Other performance opportunities include:

- Participation in Full Orchestra rehearsals/performance (see FAQ for rehearsal time frame).
- Performance as a Soloist or Small Ensemble member in District/State Solo/Ensemble Contest
- North Central/All State Honor Orchestra Auditions/All-State Orchestra (fee applies)
- "Pit Orchestra" for the SHS Musical Production each Spring (depends on personnel needs)
- Community Concerts such as outdoor performances and outreach concerts at schools and assisted living centers

## Contact Information

Website: Coming soon from the Canvas platform

Scott Jackson – Orchestra Director Stillwater High School, Jr. High, and Middle School  
Courses taught – Chamber Orchestra, Concert Orchestra, Stillwater Jr. High Orchestra  
Planning period/Lunch: 12:15-1:15 and 3:20- 3:50 at SJHS

E-mail: [sjackson@stillwaterschools.com](mailto:sjackson@stillwaterschools.com)

Taylor Weatherwax, Orchestra Director, Stillwater Middle School and Jr. High  
Courses taught - 8th Grade Orchestra, Middle School Intermediate Orchestra, Beginning Orchestra  
Planning Period/Lunch : at SMS/SJHS  
E-mail: [tweatherwax@stillwaterschools.com](mailto:tweatherwax@stillwaterschools.com)  
High school main office – 405-533-6450  
High school orchestra office – 405-533-6450 x5385  
Junior high main office – 405-533-6420  
Middle school main office – 405-533-6430