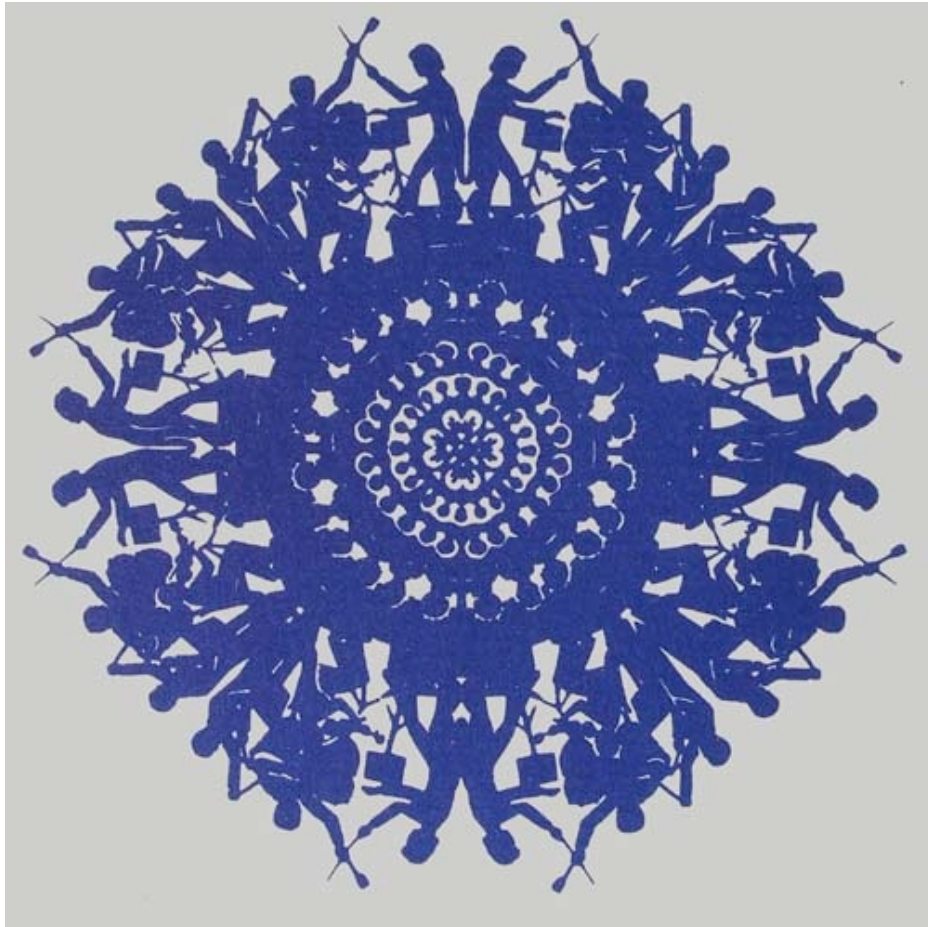


CCSD 181
Hinsdale Middle School



ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK
2019-2020

Gretchen Pearson Nerad,
Orchestra Teacher

August 2019

Dear HMS Orchestra Parents and Students:

Welcome to another exciting year of Orchestra at Hinsdale Middle School. I am really looking forward to working with all the orchestra members this year and watching them grow as musicians!

Please take a few moments to review the information in this handbook with your child. This packet contains all information concerning your child's participation in orchestra, including all of our concert dates, as performances are a very important aspect of orchestra class. Expectations as far as classroom behavior and rehearsal and concert etiquette are also outlined in this handbook. There is a form on the back for you and your child to sign and return.

My name is Gretchen Pearson Nerad and I am the orchestra teacher at HMS. I grew up in St. Charles, IL and have been teaching in the western Chicago suburbs for the past 14 years. I currently live in Chicago with my husband, my son Conor and our dog Argos. In addition to my love of orchestra, I also have a keen interest in running, playing words with friends against all three generations in my family and rooting for my favorite team, Chicago Cubs.

I will be teaching 6th, 7th and 8th grade orchestra, as well as Chamber Strings this year at HMS. Our large ensembles are split by grade level, one orchestra for 7th and 8th grade and two orchestras for 6th grade (blue and white). These meet every other day. We also will have a weekly pull out technique (formally known as sectionals) class for all students. There we will learn more advanced techniques and skills on our particular instrument, work on small ensemble music, and take any playing assessments.

Please also note the extra-curricular opportunities listed in the handbook. We encourage your child to become involved in these additional performance opportunities and field trips.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding your child's participation in orchestra. Email is the best form of communication for me. My email address is gpearsonnerad@d181.org However if you prefer a phone call back, please email me when it is best to call you. I welcome your family to the program and hope orchestra is a fun, rewarding, positive experience for your child, both this year and in years to come.

Musically Yours,
Mrs. Gretchen Pearson Nerad
gpearsonnerad@d181.org

ORCHESTRA EVENTS CALENDAR

2019-2020

August

- 27 - Chamber Strings Sectionals Begin (see calendar for more information)
- 29 - Orchestra Technique Lessons Begins

September

- 11 - Chamber Strings Full Rehearsals Begin

October

- 24 - 6th Grade Combined Mandatory Rehearsal 7:30 am

November

- 13 - HMS Orchestra Concert, 7:00 pm (Grades 6-8)
- 20 - Orchestra Festival at HCHS (Grades 5-8)
- 25-26 - Parent/Teacher conferences

December

- 5-7 - HMS Musical (Grades 6-8)
- 21 - In School Concert (Grades 6-8)

January

- 16 - 6th Grade Combined Mandatory Rehearsal 7:30 am
- 27 - HMS Orchestra Concert, 7:00pm (Grades 5-6 & Chamber Strings)
- 30 - Peoria Illinois Music Educators Conference Performance (All Chamber Strings)

February

- 14-17 - HMS Music Trip (7th & 8th Grade Chamber Strings)
- 27 - 6th Grade Combined Mandatory Rehearsal 7:30 am

March

- 14 - IGSMA Contest @ HMS (Grades 6-8)

April

- 30 - 6th Grade Combined Mandatory Rehearsal 7:30 am

May

- 8 - Solo/ensemble festival after school at HMS (Grades 5-8)
- 13 - HMS Orchestra Concert, 7:00 pm (Grades 5-8)
- 17 - CSO goes to the Movies Jurassic Park field trip (parents/families are invited)
- 29 - Orchestra Fun Night (Grades 5-6)

June

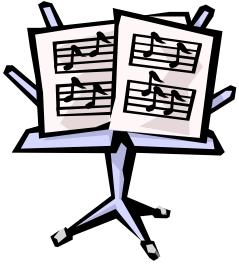
- 3 - last day of school

**Please Note: Events can be added or changed. I will send home emails and notes if there is an additional event or a change in time or date.

ORCHESTRA CLASS GRADING

All orchestra students receive a grade each quarter. Orchestra grades are updated bi-weekly and are available for viewing with your students other grades on Infinite Campus.

Students will be graded on the following:



- ♪ Daily work (participation and written assignments), 40% of total grade
- ♪ Technique Classes, 40% of total grade
- ♪ Concert Attendance, 20% of total grade

Aside from the written assignments and projects listed above, the majority of “homework” for orchestra is practicing and being prepared for rehearsals, concerts, and Technique Classes. Your student’s preparation is very important for his or her grade in orchestra and in order to improve his or her skills.

♪ **Attendance and materials** are worth **5 points**. Please see supply list for all Technique Class materials.

♪ **Practice is** worth **5 points**. Students receive one point per day of practice during the week. Extra credit is given for practicing more than 5 days.

♪ **Parent signature** verifying practice minutes is worth **5 points**.

♪ **Playing assignments (quizzes)** are worth **10-40 points**.

♪ **6th grade combined morning rehearsals** are worth **40 points**. (This is an all or nothing grade, no partial credit will be given)

ORCHESTRA CONCERT DRESS

HMS Orchestra students are expected to dress properly for all concerts. Students arriving in improper dress may lose points for that performance.

The orchestra uniform consists of a white shirt without letters, black dress pants, black socks or hose, and black dress shoes. Please no workout pants, tennis shoes, casual sandals, white socks, skirts or denim. **Your orchestra concert grade will be reduced for failing to wear the proper uniform.**



ORCHESTRA PERFORMANCES

♪ **CONCERT ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED OF ALL ORCHESTRA STUDENTS!!**

Performances are the culmination of many weeks of hard work.



♪ A concert is equivalent to a unit test in a math or science class.

♪ If your orchestra student will be missing a concert for a **VALID** reason such as an illness or family emergency, please contact us as soon as possible regarding the absence so a make up assignment can be given.

♪ Please contact Mrs. Pearson Nerad at least **two weeks** in advance if your family will be out of town or your son or daughter is unable to participate.

A make up assignment will be given if you notify two weeks in advance. Less than two weeks will result in less time to complete the makeup assignment or potentially a Zero.

♪ Students who miss a concert without a valid reason ***will have their grade reduced by 20%***.

A calendar of performances is included at the beginning of this handbook. Please make arrangements now to have your child at **EVERY** concert.

♪ All of our orchestra students are very busy, well-rounded young people. Many of them manage their time very well and are able to juggle many outside activities. Please keep in mind that orchestra concerts are **GRADED** events and students need to be in attendance.

Practice

It is vital that your orchestra student practice consistently, as this is the only way he or she will make progress in orchestra.

♪ Practicing will help your musician apply new skills learned in class as well as develop pride and confidence in playing their instrument.

♪ Students will need to practice **AT LEAST** 5 days per week to receive full credit. Minimum of 10 minutes of practice each day. The more you practice, the easier the music gets :)

♪ One point for every day they practice. Extra credit is given for days 6 and 7 of practice per week.

♪ Parent initials each week is worth 5 points. Please sign it for them each week.

♪ Practice records are due on the day of technique class. Late charts can be turned in for partial credit.

PRACTICE TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

♪ Establish a practice routine where the student practices at the same time every day. Students should practice in the following suggested order:

♪ Warm-up with a scale or familiar piece

♪ Practice an “easier” section of an orchestra piece or sectional assignment

♪ Break down harder sections and practice slowly and carefully

♪ Put the whole piece together

♪ End with a favorite piece



PRACTICE TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS Continued

- ♪ Although your musician must practice 5x each week, encourage he or she to strive for “quality” practice, rather than timing their practice sessions. Students should feel as if they have improved on at least one concept at the end of the session.
 - ♪ **ALL** orchestra students need **SHORT** fingernails in order to produce the best sound.
 - ♪ Practice someplace quiet and free of distractions such as the TV and computer. All students should make sure they are using a music stand for at-home practice. Their stand should be adjusted to eye level.
 - ♪ All violin, viola, and bass students should stand when practicing with good posture. Cello students need to sit at the edge of a chair such as a dining room chair or a piano bench to practice.
- Never practice sitting on a couch, bed, or Lazy-boy style chair.**
- ♪ Encourage your student to practice with friends or siblings who also play instruments. Making music with others is the best part of orchestra! Encourage your musician to play for you often, as this will build his or her confidence!



Large Rehearsals and Sectionals (Technique Class)

Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade orchestra classes meet every other day for full ensemble rehearsal and once a week for a technique class.

Sixth Grade Blue Orchestra - 3rd period “A” Days:

Sixth Grade White Orchestra - 6th period “A” Days:

Seventh Grade Orchestra - 4th period “A” Days:

Eighth Grade Orchestra - 5th period “A” Days:

During full ensemble rehearsals, students will work on building musical ensemble skills. We will work on concert literature while refining our skills and learning to play as a group. Students will also have the opportunity to build upon their knowledge of music history and theory through written assignments.

TECHNIQUE CLASS (Formally known as sectionals)

Technique classes are a required part of the CCSD 181 Instrumental Music curriculum. Students are placed in small groups according to instrument and ability level, thus allowing for more individualized attention and the opportunity to work on instrument-specific techniques. Receiving more individualized attention will help further their musical growth.

Students will be assigned to a technique class. This class will meet for one period and will be on a rotating schedule that should repeat at most twice per quarter. Mrs. Mandel will be teaching 6th and 7th grade lessons and Mrs. Pearson Nerad will teach 8th grade.

Students are responsible for remembering their own technique schedule. Their teacher will not go to class to remind them. Every student receives a copy of their technique schedule at the beginning of the quarter. Schedules will be put up on our orchestra webpage for parents to download. Technique schedules are also posted in numerous places in the orchestra room. There is no reason for a student to not know when their class meets each rotation.

Students must always check in with their scheduled classroom teacher before coming to Technique to receive assignments and other important information. If a student has a test, quiz or lab in class during their technique period that cannot be rescheduled, they should contact Mrs. Mandel or Mrs. Pearson Nerad **ahead of time** to discuss an alternate period they could attend. To receive the **EXCUSED** absence grade, the student needs to fill out an excuse form and get it signed by the teacher of the class that they could not miss. Students will also receive an **EXCUSED** absence if they are absent from school or involved in a field trip or other special event. Excuse forms need to be turned in within **1 week of your lesson** otherwise you will receive a zero for the class



Any student who “forgets” or chooses not to come to their technique will receive an **UNEXCUSED** absence and a check and reflect slip. Students will be able to make up their missing written assignments and practice time from the unexcused absence; however, the student will still lose their 5 attendance points for the class. Unexcused playing assignments can be made up during make up week. Up to 3 unexcused playing assignments may be made up during the make-up technique class.

If you miss a lesson, Mrs. Pearson Nerad will have designated makeup lessons every other Wednesday for all three grades. She will contact the student and the teacher directly for these lesson times.

INSTRUMENT PURCHASE

For many families, middle school is the perfect time to purchase an instrument, as this is the time when your student will become more mature in his or her playing, as well as having built up rental credit through the instrument rental company. Purchase quality instruments offer superior tone and ease and comfort in playing. Contact your rental store for more information regarding instrument purchase plans.

Buying an instrument is a lot like buying a car, you need to test drive them first.

Please exercise caution regarding instruments from stores not specializing in instrument sales, as well as instruments for sale on the internet or from overseas dealers. Instruments from such stores are not made with the same careful craftsmanship as an instrument purchased from a musical instrument retailer, and repair or set up costs could exceed the cost of the instrument. **Please feel free to consult Mrs. Pearson Nerad if you are planning on purchasing an instrument. I will go to the store with you and help you purchase the best instrument for your son or daughter. Please ask I am happy to help :)**



PRIVATE LESSONS

Please encourage your orchestra student to take private lessons. Your student will advance very quickly on his or her instrument and receive one-on-one instructor specializing in your child's instrument. An updated list of private teachers will be available the first week of school. Please contact me if you need more information concerning private lessons.

CONTACTING THE HMS ORCHESTRA DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Pearson Nerad is best reached through email: gpearsonnerad@d181.org

Mrs. Mandel is best reached through email: mmandel@d181.org

Phone number at HMS: (630) 861-4700

Mrs. Pearson Nerad's office phone: (630) 861-4700 x 4768

Mrs. Mandel's office phone: (630) 861-4700 x4734



Thank you for your support of your child's musical education. We are looking forward to working with all orchestra students and families this year. Please contact me with any questions and concerns!

This is your first orchestra assignment worth 5 POINTS!!

Orchestra Students: I have read and understand the polices and procedures outlined in the HMS Orchestra Handbook posted on the D181 Orchestra Website. I understand what is expected of me as a member of the HMS Orchestra and will direct any questions or concerns to one of my orchestra teachers. By signing this contract, I agree to follow all rules and expectations as a member of the HMS Orchestra Program.

Orchestra Student Name (Please Print Clearly)



Orchestra Student Signature:



Parents: please initial:



_____ I have read and understand the concert uniform requirements and concert makeup policy.



_____ I have read and understand the practice requirements and know I need to sign their practice chart every week.



_____ I have read and understand that Mrs. Pearson Nerad is happy to help buy a full sized instrument when the time comes. I will ask her for help! :)



_____ I would be happy to volunteer at the Orchestra IGSM festival on Saturday March 14, 2020 (an hour or two of my time)

6th grade only:



_____ I have read and put on our family calendar the four mandatory before school 6th grade rehearsals.

Orchestra Parents: I have read and reviewed the HMS Orchestra Handbook with my child. I am aware of all performance commitments, expectations, grading and Sectional Class policies of the HMS Orchestra, and will direct any questions or concerns to Mrs. Pearson Nerad.



_____ Parent/Guardian Signature

_____ Home Phone Number

Thank you for your support of the HMS Orchestra Program. Your support is extremely vital to student growth as a musicians, and is much appreciated! I am thrilled to be a part of HMS and look forward to a wonderful year of music-making!