

BOLES
ORCHESTRA
HANDBOOK
2009-2010

August 24, 2009

Dear Parents and Students:

Welcome to Boles Junior High, "Where the Best Begins". You can be proud to be part of a school that has a reputation for excellence and outstanding achievement in all areas. Our orchestra program is no exception. We have a large and successful program that continues to grow and excel.

The following pages will explain the orchestra program and procedures and the responsibilities of students and parents. Please return the bus permission form & the signature page and retain the remainder of the handbook for your reference. Many of our concerts/events are scheduled & are listed in the August BOBC newsletter. As soon as the remaining dates & venues are finalized, I will send home a calendar of events. Throughout the year I will send home letters that require a response from you. It is important for these forms to be returned when due (usually a week later). The signed handbook forms are due no later than Friday, 9/4/09.

I want to emphasize the importance of maintaining high academic standards all year. The no pass-no play rule affects us all. Students must be passing ALL classes in order to participate in many of our activities.

I am excited that you have chosen to be a part of the orchestra program here. We work hard, play a lot of fun music, and have a great time in the process. We will have many social activities together, and you will form friendships that may last for a lifetime. Some of you will receive scholarships to college as a result of your years of orchestra experience. Some of you will even choose to make a career in music. Hopefully, all of you will have a greater understanding and appreciation for music when you leave Boles. Please let me know what I can do to make your experience the best it can be. I am here to help you in any way I can.

Parents, I look forward to working with your child. If you have any questions about the handbook or the orchestra program in general, please call me at Boles (682/867-8060). You may also e-mail me at the address below. I truly care about your child and will do my best to make this another successful year for all of us.

Sincerely,

Lyn Stone
Orchestra Director
AISD e-mail: lynstone@aisd.net

P.S. We need **pencils and tissue** for our classroom. If you will please send these items to school with your child I would greatly appreciate it.

GRADING

The orchestra "academic" grade will be comprised of weekly/practice grades and test grades. Weekly grades/Practice Cards. Students will earn a weekly grade of 80 for full participation with their instrument. If repair work is being done on an instrument, the student will need to bring a note from the parent in order to be excused from participation and not receive a zero for the day. Students are also expected to turn in a signed practice card weekly for which they can receive up to 20 extra points per week. The practice requirement for each student is at least 2 hours per week outside of class. They may include private lesson time but not rehearsal or performance time with outside groups. Students will receive 5 points per half hour practiced. Signed practice cards are due **every Monday**. Please total the amount of time, have a parent sign the card, then return the card to school for a grade. Practice cards must be turned in by Week 4 to count on the mid six weeks grade report. Weekly grades for weeks 1,2,& 3 **will not** be changed after progress reports are sent home. Just as athletes have to practice on individual skills to help the team, orchestra members need to practice their instruments to enhance the quality of the orchestra. It, too, is a team effort that takes the cooperation of all members to make a really fine performing group. A good rule to follow is--"PRACTICE ONLY ON THE DAYS YOU EAT". Practice tips are found at the back of the handbook.

Playing/Written tests will be given usually two to four times per six weeks and will count twice. Written exams will cover any materials studied including music theory and music history/literature. Playing tests (tryouts) will be given on material studied in class (rhythms, scales, music). Playing tests will be assigned one of two ways--either as an assignment to be taped at home and turned in to the director or to be played in class. If a playing test is assigned to be done at home (cassette tape or CD) and has a specific turn-in date, the tape must be turned in on the assigned due date except in cases of an extended absence (3+ days). If a playing test is turned in late (i.e. due Friday but turned in Monday) it will be accepted for 1/2 credit. **NOTE:** Tryouts for chair placement within a section often cause a great deal of emotion and stress for the student, especially when a test is played in class. Please remember that each and every child is important to the success of the orchestra. Competition should be viewed as an isolated event, not an overall value judgment of the student as a person or musician. A playing test evaluates a student's performance at one specific time under one specific set of circumstances. Each student responds differently. Some perform easily under stress, others poorly. Therefore it is essential that the competition be viewed only as a part of the learning process and not an end in itself.

Performances. There will be two orchestras at Boles this year: Symphony & Philharmonic. Unlike other classes, the orchestra is a performing group, and required concerts are part of the curriculum. No student will be excused from a performance for any reason except severe personal illness or at the discretion of the director (UIL ineligibility, e.g.). Unusual conflicts must be discussed with the director & approved at least two weeks prior to the performance. Transportation & work conflicts **will not** be accepted as excused absences. If you need help with transportation, let me know in advance so I can help you make arrangements. An unexcused absence from a concert will result in a **31** point deduction from the final six weeks grade. An orchestra is a team and cannot perform effectively with team members missing. Note: **All students are required to remain for the entire performance at all concerts (2nd & 3rd period students are not to leave after their portion of the concert).** If not included in this handbook, an event calendar will be sent home as soon as all dates & venues are finalized. Please post the calendar in a convenient location in your home. (Events listed do not include social functions arranged by the BOBC.)

All-Region. All students have the option to audition for the region orchestra. Symphony members are strongly encouraged to do so. This year auditions will be on Saturday, November 14 at Bowie HS. Music and general information regarding region orchestra will be handed out the first week of school.

Extra rehearsals. The Symphony will have sectionals promptly at 7:30 am on Tuesdays (violins) &

Thursdays (viola, cello, bass). Habitual unexcused absences or tardies for Symphony sectionals will result in moving the student to another class. Prior to a performance with band or choir, it will be necessary to schedule a rehearsal with the combined group depending on the band/choir schedule. Philharmonic: Since the plan this year is to combine 2nd & 3rd periods for one large group, it will be necessary to schedule a rehearsal of these combined classes prior to all performances. You will be notified in advance of these practices. Unexcused absence from a sectional or an extra rehearsal will result in a four (4) point deduction from the final six weeks grade.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

The orchestra "citizenship" grade will be based on the student's response to instruction and their cooperation in class on a daily basis. Everyone starts with an "A" in citizenship. Each time a student's name is put in the citizenship book, the grade will be lowered three points. Our classroom rules are:

1. Be seated and ready to play with music and all equipment:
1st period--8:55 (should be tuned also) **2nd period--9:45** **3rd period--10:35**
2. No talking, practicing, or interfering in any way when director is tuning or rehearsing.
3. No gum, candy, drinks, or food of any kind in orchestra hall or practice rooms.
4. Respect other people and property.
5. Return papers/letters when due.

In short, students are expected to exhibit common courtesy, mature conduct, and to follow the rules and policies as outlined in the school handbook. Failure to follow classroom rules will result in a phone call from the director and/or a written assignment. We will also call you with good news as well.

FINGERNAILS

All students will need to keep their fingernails short, especially on the left hand. They must be able to play on their fingertips, otherwise poor left-hand position and poor intonation will result. Girls will not be able to play with sculptured nails, nail tips, or press-on nails. *Don't even think about it!!!*

PRIVATE LESSONS

Private instruction is offered at Boles before school and during the students' orchestra class. All private teachers are first approved by the AISD. The fee has been set by the district at \$16 per 25 minute lesson and is paid directly to the private instructor. Private lessons are beneficial to all in developing their talents but are especially good for those students who audition for All-Region or the UTA Solo & Ensemble Festival. If you are interested in private lessons please indicate so on the signature page of the handbook. All students who study privately (on or off campus) are expected to participate in the UTA Solo & Ensemble Festival (April 24, '10) and/or an end-of-the-year recital.

PERFORMANCE APPAREL / APPEARANCE

Each orchestra member will be responsible for the care of a numbered uniform which will be issued at the beginning of the year. Boys will wear black shoes and black socks with their uniform. Girls may choose to wear black dress flats or heels. Tennis shoes (high or low tops), crocs or rubber flip flops may not be worn with the uniform. Girls will also need to avoid wearing a sport bra or a t-shirt under their dress. A \$50 fee will be collected at the beginning of the year. This includes the uniform rental fee & the orchestra t-shirt. At the end of the year all uniforms must be returned CLEAN, with cleaning tags attached unless requested otherwise by the booster club. For all performances, students are expected to wear a clean uniform. In addition, students may not have unusually colored hair (any shade of purple, green, orange, blue, pink, etc.) as this distracts from the group's performance.

SOLO & ENSEMBLE FESTIVAL

All students who study privately (on or off-campus) are expected to participate in the UTA Solo & Ensemble Festival (April 24, '10). In addition, all symphony students are required to participate in the UTA festival. Philharmonic students who do not study privately are strongly encouraged to participate as it is a good learning experience.

BOOSTER CLUB

Boles Orchestra is very fortunate to have an active and dynamic booster club. This dedicated group of parents has supported the orchestra in a variety of ways over the years: parties, newsletters, yearly scrapbook, field trips, lock-ins, dances, after-concert receptions, banquets, purchase of uniforms, music, equipment, photographs, etc. Without the support of the booster club activities such as these listed would not take place. You will receive newsletters throughout the year to keep you informed of all our activities. I also need many parent volunteers for events throughout the year. Please help us by responding to the parent survey and completing an AISD volunteer form.

REPAIRS

Whenever a repair is necessary, please take your instrument to a trained and certified repairman. Check with me for a recommendation before you have any repair work done. When a bridge breaks, the instrument must be left at the repair shop. Bridges must be adjusted to fit each individual instrument. Bows will sometimes have to be rehired when there has been a lot of hair loss or when the bow hair is too dirty for rosin to stick. Any time you take your child's instrument to the repair shop, please let me know by sending a note to school.

Please take care of repairs promptly. Without an instrument, your child cannot participate in daily rehearsals or practice at home. If you are unable to get your child's instrument to the repair shop within two (2) days, please let me know. After 2 days, points will be deducted from the student's weekly grade if the instrument has not been taken in for repair. If the repair is going to take longer than 2 school days, please ask for a "loaner" so valuable class time and practice time will not be lost.

TRAVEL

District policy requires a signed AISD travel form from every student who will ride a school bus or charter bus. This will include orchestra night, UIL, elementary concerts, booster club field trips, etc. Please complete and return the bus form found at the back of this handbook. I will keep it on file for this school year. In addition, the district requires a signed and notarized medical authorization form for every student involved in district travel. These forms must be completed as instructed and returned to me by the due date.

INSURANCE

I urge everyone to insure their instrument. You should have the brand name and serial number of the instrument filed somewhere at home. There are occasionally unavoidable accidents and, in rare instances, instruments are stolen. Check your homeowner's or renter's policy for specific coverage. Often times a rider to your policy is necessary for complete coverage. There is also a company in Arlington which specializes in band and orchestral instrument insurance. If you would like information about this company, please indicate so on the return page of this handbook. If you are renting an instrument and have taken the optional insurance, ask specifically what is covered and what is not.

SUPPLIES

1. Strings. Violin/viola students in junior high should use a perlon-type string such as Dominant on their instruments, unlike elementary students who should use metal strings. Cello students should use Helicore or Dominant strings. If you study privately, have your private teacher advise you on other string brands as well. Strings on all instruments should be replaced at least once a year, preferably twice. They will also have to be replaced when they begin to ravel, when the inner core severs producing a false sound, and when they break. I recommend having an extra set of strings in your case. For your convenience, there are strings and supplies for sale at school. I will replace strings on your child's instrument and put a payment envelope in their case if you choose that option. Payment is made to the music store and not to the director or to Boles. Just put a check in the payment envelope and return it to school. If you prefer I not replace strings for your child, indicate so on the last page of this handbook.
2. Violin and viola players **must** use some type of shoulder pad in order to support the instrument properly. Without good support, shifting and vibrato will be more difficult to learn for most players. Brands recommended are Wolf and Kun (or a generic of these). The student should try out both types to find the one that is most effective for them.
3. Cello and bass players all need to have their own rock stop.
4. Rosin. Each student should have their own rosin. Bass players need to use Carlsson or Petz #2 or #3 bass rosin (do not buy Pops rosin).
5. Students need to have a tuning device for use at home (pitch pipe, keyboard, tuning fork, etc.). There is also a new tuning peg available that makes tuning MUCH easier. They are called "Perfection Planetary Pegs" & I highly recommend having them installed on your child's instrument if at all possible.
6. Students need a music stand at home to practice (see practice tips).
7. Students need to have access to a cassette tape recorder and a blank cassette tape (not a micro-mini cassette recorder) or a CD recorder. Symphony students will usually be assigned a playing test to be taped at home, and, as the year progresses, the other classes will do the same. This saves valuable rehearsal time and allows the student to take as much time as necessary to turn in a quality test tape. The orchestra booster club has purchased several cassette recorders for student use. We will also utilize the Superscope CD recorder throughout the year in all classes.
8. **For class:** all students will need a small 3-ring notebook for worksheets, tests, letters/memos, and home copies of music. They should also have a pencil in their case and a soft rag to clean off the rosin at the end of each rehearsal.

PRACTICE TIPS

"Practice makes perfect". We have all heard that phrase many times. A person learns to play sports well, read well, play an instrument well, or do anything well by practicing. The material learned in the classroom has to be practiced at home for the student to be able to hear themselves and to perfect the music. The following are some tips for home practice:

1. Set a regular time rather than just practicing when you think about it, or after you've finished your homework, or if there is nothing good on TV. Don't wait until the end of the day to begin practicing. Regular practice, even of a small amount, is much better for you than a single exhausting 2-3 hour session once a week. Practice only on the days you eat--if you are well enough to eat, you are well enough to practice.
2. Practice away from any disturbances such as TV, phone, stereo, pets, people, etc. Find a quiet place.
3. You will need a pencil (never mark your music in ink), a straight chair, and a music stand. Don't sit on the bed, leaning over your music.
4. Warm up slowly. Start out with whole note exercises or scales to get your fingers and bow arm relaxed and limber.
5. After your warm-ups, start working on exercises to build technique: faster scales, arpeggios, rhythm & bow studies.
6. Sight-read. Check keys, accidentals, and counting. You should count through each line before you attempt to play it because rhythm is so important. The right note at the wrong time is a wrong note.
7. Practice things you are unfamiliar with or are difficult for you. Don't continue to practice something you already know.
8. Practice with a metronome. This is probably the best way to become a good, confident player. Set a tempo and play exactly with the metronome. Start out slow enough that you can play the exercise perfectly, no matter how slowly. Then gradually increase the tempo, playing perfectly each time before moving to a faster tempo. If you make a mistake, any mistake, slow the tempo.
9. Practice with a tape recorder. Because you are concentrating on so many things at one time (bowing arm, left-hand fingering, rhythms, etc.), it is not easy to remember how you played. With a tape recorder you can listen to your tuning, sound quality, and rhythmic accuracy.
10. Practice is practice time. Don't waste time cleaning and polishing your instrument, replacing strings, etc.
11. Practice for results, not minutes. Make your time count by practicing for improvement.
12. Don't become discouraged easily. Remember, if playing an instrument were easy, anyone could do it. Work at it regularly, with patience, and don't expect miracles overnight.

SIGNATURE PAGE

I have read and understand the information in the Boles Orchestra Handbook, including attendance policies and grading for concerts, sectionals and extra rehearsals.

student's signature

home phone

parent's signature

date

mom's work phone

dad's work phone

parent e-mail addresses:

PARENTS -- Please respond to the following:

_____ Attached is the \$50 booster club fee (if not paid at registration). This includes uniform rental & orchestra t-shirt. Make check payable to BOBC.

_____ I would like information about on-campus private lessons.

_____ I would like to receive information about instrument insurance.
(student can pick up at school)

_____ I give permission to replace strings at school when necessary, thus saving me a trip to the music store (bass players do not need to respond).

_____ I prefer that strings NOT be replaced at school
(covered by rental agreement, etc.).

_____ I/we have completed an AISD volunteer form.

**THIS PAGE DUE BY
FRIDAY, 9/4/09**