

Tays Junior High School Orchestra



2024-2025
Handbook

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tays JUNIOR HIGH ORCHESTRA
KATY ISD 26721 Hawks Prairie Blvd Katy, Texas 77494

Dear Tays Junior High Orchestra Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Tays Junior High Orchestra! It is wonderful to have you here as part of our Orchestra Family. This handbook is designed to inform you of all aspects of the TJH Orchestra. You and your parents will need to read the entire handbook and become familiar with the rules and procedures for this class. In addition to this handbook, please closely review the orchestra calendar for the year. It is very important to know when your attendance is required at various events. It is your responsibility to know what is expected of you this year as a member of our orchestra. Orchestra is not just another class; it is a performing group. By joining this group you have taken on a big responsibility. Every member of the orchestra is important and each person must do his or her part to create a strong group. Being a part of the orchestra is a lot of hard work but it is also a lot of fun. It is a great way to meet new people and make new friends while you improve your playing. With a little hard work and a lot of determination, you will be proud of what you accomplish as a musician this year.

We challenge you to do your very best work this year in orchestra. We look forward to spirited and productive rehearsals and memorable concert and contest performances.

Sincerely,

Bryanna Porter
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Tays Junior High School Orchestra Handbook

2024 ~ 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Katy I.S.D. is proud to offer a comprehensive music program that includes string instruction from grades 6 - 12. TJH Orchestra is a vital segment of the music curriculum. It is expected that members of the Tays Junior High Orchestra will exhibit the highest possible standards in the following areas:

1. Responsibility
2. Dependability
3. Dedication
4. Music Excellence

It is the goal of the director to promote musical understanding and produce outstanding orchestras. It is also the belief of the director that students learn more and develop better self-discipline, responsibility, and knowledge, and take more pride in superior orchestras than in weak ones. To produce an outstanding orchestra requires that each student accept certain responsibilities.

This handbook will outline the basic requirements for the Tays Junior High School Orchestras. This will indicate your notification and acceptance of the policies of the Tays Junior High School Orchestra program. Please retain the handbook and calendar at home so that you may refer to it when necessary.

PURPOSE

The Tays Junior High School Orchestra is a class that meets for one forty-five minute period each school day. The nature of this class requires the development of skills, concepts, and attitudes to be learned in class. These must, however, be demonstrated outside of class via many varied forms of rehearsals and performances. Along with your musical growth, we would expect to see development in the areas of leadership, self-discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and a deeper appreciation for the beauty and joy that music offers to all who partake in it.

CONDUCT

The behavior of an orchestra student reflects not only on himself or herself, but also on other students as well as his/her school and community. It is expected that each orchestra student abide by the following at all times:

1. Each student is expected to make a positive contribution to the TJH Orchestra.
2. Display common courtesy and respect to directors, students, and parents while exhibiting mature conduct.
3. Follow expectations as outlined by the orchestra directors on the next page.
4. Follow rules and policies of Katy Independent School District as outlined in the Katy I.S.D. Junior High School Student Handbook.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS:

1. Candy, gum, food, and drink are not allowed in any area within the Orchestra rehearsal space. A container of water with a pull tip or flip tip is the only exception.
2. Phones are not permitted in the rehearsal space. They must remain in the student's backpack for the duration of the class.

3. Speak or play only when invited.
4. Bring your instrument, bow, orchestra binder and pencil to class each day unless told otherwise by your director.
5. Enter the orchestra room quietly!
6. Be in your seat ready with supplies ready to perform before the tardy bell rings.

ATTENDANCE

An orchestra performs at optimum with all members present. Therefore, **students are required to participate in all rehearsals, sectionals and performances unless excused by the director.** An orchestra calendar accompanies this handbook, and should be studied closely so as to avoid possible conflicts. All rehearsals will be announced as far in advance as possible. **Sectionals, extra rehearsals, concerts, contests, and UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Contest are considered an extension of the classroom instruction and therefore, co-curricular.**

Students who enroll in other school activities such as athletics, choir, drama, etc., need to plan ahead to avoid conflicts that cannot be resolved. Should an unavoidable conflict arise, the orchestra member's parent should email the director a minimum of two weeks before the event. The orchestra director will work together with the other teachers, coaches, and directors of various activities to give each student every opportunity to be a part of other groups. **NON SCHOOL-SPONSORED activities, teams, and organizations must not conflict in any way with the practice or performance schedule of the orchestra. Good communication between teacher, student, and/or parents can prevent misunderstandings.**

PROMPTNESS

To optimize the before school rehearsal time we have, it is essential that all of the members are early for each rehearsal so that we may start rehearsals on time. Each of us needs to commit to arriving early to unpack your instrument, and place your music on the stand. Promptness ensures that no instruction time is lost and that our rehearsals are interruption free! Be considerate of your classmates and ensemble.

To be early, is to be on time

To be on time, is to be late.

To be late, is to be forgotten.

ABSENCE POLICY

Before school rehearsals: Camerata, Philharmonic, Lyrica, Cambiata, Sinfonia and Chamber orchestras will each have one to four before-school rehearsals in the Spring semester. These rehearsals are needed to better prepare us for our UIL contest in February and March. Rehearsal dates have been listed on your orchestra calendar. The FYO will have one before school rehearsal in the Fall and Spring Semesters. **Attendance is required and graded for each of these rehearsals.**

If you miss a before-school rehearsal for any reason you are required to send Mrs. Porter a forty-minute recording of your practice time by the end of the current week. Parents must communicate the conflict in writing a minimum of two weeks before the missed rehearsal.

Sectionals, orchestra rehearsals, concerts, and U.I.L. Concert and Sightreading Contests are considered an extension of the classroom instruction and therefore, co-curricular. In the event that a student is excused from a rehearsal, concert or contest he/she will be asked to do an alternative assignment to replace the excused event.

Every before or after school rehearsal and performance is graded. Promptness is part of the grade as well. Your rehearsal grade will be lowered if you arrive late for rehearsal or concert.

Failure to have your child picked up on time will result in a lower rehearsal grade for your child.

1. Written notices from parents are required for all absences. Verbal or written excuses from students are not accepted.
2. Advance notice is required for all prior commitments. A prior commitment is defined as an event already committed to before the Orchestra time schedule is announced. A notice of such a commitment should be sent to the director the next school day after a scheduled rehearsal or concert date is announced. In the case of an unscheduled or extra rehearsal being called, each student is expected to make every attempt to attend. Conflicts with extra rehearsals are easily resolved with good communication.
3. In the case of illness and/or family emergency, the parents should send a written notice or email to the orchestra director as soon as they are aware that such a situation exists.

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karissawilliams@katyisd.org

If it is an emergency situation it may be impossible to get in touch with anyone. In this case, please follow up with a written note within four days after the fact. This is the only category where absences will be excused the same day, or after the event.

4. Religious holidays or conflicts with individual religious beliefs are considered excused if the director is notified in writing by a parent before the scheduled date.
5. All absences in the above categories, verified by parent note, will be considered excused.
6. Non school-sponsored activities will not be excused for any reason.

Please communicate directly with Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Capshaw or Mrs. Williams if there are individual, or unusual, circumstances which may be a problem. Unexcused absences and tardiness affect the morale of the entire orchestra. ***Although it would be impossible to include a complete list, the following items are examples of unexcused absences:***

1. Commitments accepted after a rehearsal or concert date is announced.
2. Homework. Please plan ahead. Good time-management is essential to success in the 21st century!
3. Transportation problems (Last-minute mechanical problems will be excused.)
4. Watching YouTube.
5. Forgetting instrument and/or music.
6. Forgetting about a rehearsal or concert.

In order to encourage regular attendance at scheduled events, the following policies will take place.

1. Any absence from rehearsal without a note from the parent/guardian will be considered unexcused, unless prior arrangements have been made with the director.
2. Two unexcused absences for a series of rehearsals could result in the loss of performance privileges for the next performance event.
3. Attendance at all scheduled performances for the year is mandatory.
4. Failure to meet the attendance requirements for orchestra can result in a student losing the privilege of traveling with the orchestra on any extra-curricular trips,
5. Unexcused tardiness will result in a lowered grade for that rehearsal.

GRADES

Six weeks grades are based on the effort, ability, knowledge, and responsibility of each student as follows:

If KISD changes any aspect of the grading policy you will be informed immediately for the 2024-2025 school year.

50% Written and Playing Tests/ Performances

Some form of written or playing test will be given most weeks. Study, practice, and be ready! Consistent application of skills through effective practice strategies at home will result in higher playing test grades.

35% Class Participation & Preparedness

Be an active member of class performance and discussion. Be prepared to learn! Students begin with 100 participation points each week. Points will be deducted for the following:

- Unprepared when class begins
- Having phone out
- Supplies not brought to class (instrument, music, pencil, etc.)
- Disruptive class behavior
- Missing rehearsals/sectionals

15% Homework Grade

Students are expected to practice every day. At home practicing will be assessed in a number of different ways throughout the school year. A few examples of this would be practice cards, in class playing checks, quizzes, and daily observation.

Every Friday, beginning September 6th, we will have an in class tuner check. Students must have a WORKING Korg tuner and tuning clip to receive a 100 for that test. If you only have one of these items, your grade will be a 0. Come prepared!

Violins and violas are STRONGLY encouraged to take their instruments home daily for consistent practicing.

PRACTICE

Practice Guidelines for Parents

Your child's achievements in orchestra will depend greatly on the amount and quality of the practice sessions at home. You can help your child by using the following guidelines.

Schedule

Have your child set aside a time each day when he or she would prefer to practice. A half hour is the minimum time that should be scheduled. This practice time does not have to be the exact same time each day.

Environment

Practicing should be done away from any sort of distractions. Poor playing posture hurts your child physically as well as musically. Therefore, a music stand should be used during practice. Your child should practice in a well-lit area to avoid eyestrain. Younger siblings should be informed of the importance of this time and know not to bother big brother or big sister during practice time. Cellos should sit in an appropriate chair that is the correct height and without arm rests. Basses should practice on a stool that is the correct height for them. Violins and Violas should practice in a chair without arm rests or stand while practicing. Sitting in a rolling office chair, bed or sofa is not appropriate.

Feedback

Perhaps the biggest help you can offer your child is encouragement. Listen to your child practice and offer words of encouragement. Ask them to play a song for you occasionally. Learning to play an instrument is incredibly difficult and often frustrating. When you hear improvement, tell them. The best motivation comes from knowing that your hard work has paid off.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

A student shall be suspended from participation in all extra-curricular activities sponsored/sanctioned by the school district during the six-weeks period following a grade reporting period in which the student received a grade lower than 70 in any class on their report card. This ineligibility begins seven days after the end of the six weeks period. Events affected by this state law would include orchestra contests, solo and ensemble contests, region orchestra, and any off-campus performance, field trip, or performance where admission is charged. Ineligible students are required to participate in on campus concerts where no admission is charged.

*UIL Concert and Sight Reading Evaluation is exempt from this rule.

An ineligible student may regain eligibility seven days after the grading period ends or after the three-week evaluation period if all classes are passing with a grade of 70 or higher.

EQUIPMENT

The following will be expected of all orchestra members:

1. Personal instruments (violins/violas) & binders should be placed in your storage area. After class all instruments should be completely packed (end pins in and bows loosened) and stored in their assigned areas for safe keeping.
2. All instruments are to be in good playing condition. Proper maintenance is required. **Leaving your instrument at the repair shop is not a valid reason for lack of an instrument.** Most shops will provide a “loaner” instrument while yours is being repaired.
3. Students are expected to have rosin, shoulder rests, rock-stops, cloths, sharpened pencils, good strings, etc. Cellos & basses should have rock-stops at all times.
4. All instruments kept in the orchestra room during the day **MUST** have the student’s name clearly printed on the outside of the case.
5. Students are to purchase replacement strings immediately following a string breaking. In an emergency, strings may be bought at school but must be paid for within 24 hours after receiving one. **Lisle, Sam’s Strings and Katy Violin Shop can arrange to bring supplies (like strings) you purchase to school for no extra charge.** I would highly encourage this practice as it saves all of us a lot of time.

REPAIRS

String instruments are fragile. Keep your instrument in good repair. Carry extra strings in your case. Have your bow rehaired at least once a year. Instruments should not be put in repair without first being inspected by the director. Many times, minor adjustments can be made by the director which may eliminate a trip to the repair shop. The choice of repairman for school owned instruments is at the discretion of the director. Please do not attempt to repair the instrument yourself. Realize that neglecting a repair may lead to long term damage and depreciation in the value of your instrument.

TAYS ORCHESTRA SUPPLY LIST:

Certain supplies are necessary to play an instrument correctly and effectively each day. Please make sure your supplies are always at hand when needed.

1. INSTRUMENT

Correctly sized

Good Condition

Composite or wood bow recommended

Rosin

*Good quality strings on instrument (Dominant or better for violin/viola)

2. MUSIC BOOKS

First Year Orch	Essential Elements 2000 Book 1 (for correct instrument) Suzuki Book One (for correct instrument)
Camerata and Philharmonic	Essential Elements Book 2
Lyrical and Chamber Orchestras	Habits of a Successful Middle Level String Musician
Sinfonia and Chamber Orchestras	Habits of a Successful String Musician

3. BINDER

1" Black Binder (with pockets)

Sharpened pencils

3 ring pencil pouch

4. SHOULDER REST (violin and viola only)

Required for good positions and performance

Kun is a good overall solid brand that will last

8. ROCK STOP (cellists and bassists)

End pin strap

5. TUNER AND CLIP

Korg TM-50 with tuning clip. Amazon is a great place to purchase these items! I recommend buying two clips in case one breaks. Student's name should be clearly labeled on their tuner.

6. A DRY SOFT CLOTH

Cleaning cloth or piece of an old t-shirt

7. WIRE STAND

Collapsible wire music stand used for practicing at home and occasional school concerts. Student's name should be clearly labeled on their music stand.

9. CONCERT DRESS

Formal Concert Performances (see orchestra uniform)

10. TAYS ORCHESTRA T-SHIRT

Informal Concert Performances (order form late-September)

ORCHESTRA UNIFORM

Students will wear the uniform assigned to their orchestra for each concert, contest and yearbook pictures. Please speak to Mrs. Porter in case of any special financial circumstances. Students will receive a uniform grade on September 27th. This will be a canvas assignment. Please make sure your child has their correct uniform by this date.

***All orchestra students must have their fingernails at an athletic length. You should not be able to see the tips of the fingernails over your fingers. If this becomes an issue it will affect your daily participation grade. Thank you for your cooperation!**

Uniform for All Orchestras:

Girls: Solid black ankle-length dress or ankle-length black skirt or black trousers and long-sleeved black blouse with black dress shoes (covered toes and heels). Ankles should be covered with black hose or long black socks. No skin should be showing.

Boys: Solid black trousers/dress pants, long-sleeved button-down black dress shirt, black dress shoes and long black trouser socks.

- **When in doubt, make sure the black uniform is covering your torso, arms, legs, ankles, feet and toes.**

Guidelines:

All items should be completely black.

No jeans material or cargo type pants. No leggings.

Dresses and skirts must be ankle-length when seated.

Blouse sleeves should be $\frac{3}{4}$ length (below the elbow) or full-length.

Boys should wear long sleeved, button up, collared, black shirt.

No ankle skin should be showing. Students should wear long black trouser socks.

Some great websites to purchase these clothing items are:

Walmart, JCPenney, Kohls, Burlington Coat Factory, Goodwill, Target.

Informal Concert Dress

Tays JH Orchestra T-shirt with nice blue jeans and tennis shoes.

INSTRUMENT INFORMATION

PERSONAL INSTRUMENTS: It is highly recommended that all instruments be covered by the parent's homeowner's or renter's insurance. If coverage of the instrument on the policy proves to be cost prohibitive, there is a specific insurance available for a very reasonable premium.

*****SCHOOL -OWNED INSTRUMENTS:** All students using Katy ISD owned cellos and basses must pay a \$100.00 maintenance fee. Full payment is due on Friday, October 13th. This payment will be paid online in PayNGo. This fee is minimal but necessary for the upkeep of the instruments.

INDIVIDUAL COMPETITIONS

ALL-REGION JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRAS are made up of the finest junior high school students in the Houston area. Students audition each fall for a chance to perform with one of the two all-region orchestras. Those who are selected will rehearse and perform on a specified weekend of December and are featured in a special concert. This is an honor and an exciting experience for those participating. Even the students not selected will experience musical growth in preparing for, and participating in, a competitive audition.

SOLO CONTEST is held annually in the Spring Semester during our solo unit in orchestra. The contest provides an opportunity for each student to perform a solo and receive a rating and evaluation of their performance. Those students that earn a "Superior" performance rating will receive a medal.

ENSEMBLE UNIT is held in May. Students will prepare and perform an ensemble piece during class for a major grade.

YOUTH ORCHESTRAS

Houston is home to three excellent youth orchestras which provide students with a region level experience on a weekly basis. The Katy Youth Symphony (katyyouthsymphony.org), The Houston Youth Symphony, (houstonyouthsymphony.com) and Virtuosi of Houston (virtuosiofhouston.org), are all fine groups conducted by professional conductors and educators. Students are encouraged to audition for one of these fine ensembles. Please visit the websites for more information.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY ACCOUNT FEES (\$50) Payment is due on *Friday, September 6th. Parents may pay on your child's pay and go account.*

2024-2025 TJH Orchestra shirt	\$10
Contest fees	\$15
Repair, replace equipment	\$10
Guest Conductors/clinicians	\$15

TECHNOLOGY

Check our website for updates: www.taysorchestras.org

PRIVATE LESSONS:

Private lessons are offered by the Katy ISD Fine Arts Program to instrumental music students that are interested. Most of the lessons run through a high school nearby. These teachers' dedication and service to our orchestra program is exemplary and worthy of your consideration. We highly recommend private lessons for all students. The Katy ISD private lesson rate is \$18.50-\$24.50 per half hour to be paid directly to their teacher.

There are also instructors in the area who we recommend that do not teach in the Katy ISD Fine Arts Program. These fine teachers may request you travel to their home. In any case where the lesson does not take place on a KISD campus payments are scheduled between the student and the instructor.

If you are interested in private lessons, please refer to our website, www.taysorchestras.com to find an updated list of approved private lesson teachers.

Although your child receives valuable instruction in our classes private lessons provides:

- 1) Students with an opportunity to deal with the unique challenges of their instrument one on one with an expert teacher. This will allow him/her to progress at their own level at all times rather than at the rate of the class.
- 2) Review and reinforcement of class assignments when necessary.
- 3) Earlier exposure to techniques such as vibrato, advanced bowing, shifting, and intonation.
- 4) Expanded opportunities for advanced solo and ensemble instruction.
- 5) Greater confidence in their individual performing because of the individual attention private lessons provides.
- 6) Enhanced opportunity for success at individual competitions such as All-Region Orchestra, and Solo & Ensemble contest.
- 7) Heightened standard for group endeavors such as concerts and contests.

Private lessons are not required but are one of the best investments in a student's success!

The Importance of Music in Our Schools

George W. Bush, Former President of the United States

"The study of music is an important part of a complete education. It engages students in individual and group activity, develops creativity, problem solving, and critical and evaluative skills. Music education helps students acquire talent in the production and performance of music, as well as an understanding of history and culture."

D.T. Kearns, Chairman & CEO of the Xerox Corporation

"The purpose of education is not simply to inform but to enrich and enlighten, to provide insights into life as it has been led and as it may be led. No element of the curriculum is better suited to that task than arts education."

Richard W. Riley, Former U. S. Secretary of Education

"I believe arts education in music, theater, dance and the visual arts is one of the most creative ways we have to find the gold that is buried just beneath the surface. They (children) have an enthusiasm for life, a spark of creativity, and vivid imaginations that need training training that prepares them to become confident young men and women. The creativity of the arts and the joy of music should be central to the education of every American child. "

Gregory Anrig, President, Educational Testing Service

"The things I learned from my experience in music in school are discipline, perseverance, dependability, composure, courage and pride in results ... Not a bad preparation for the work force."

Barbara Jordan, Former Texas Congresswoman

"The arts are not a frill. The arts are a response to our individuality and our nature and help to shape our identity. What is there that can transcend deep difference and stubborn divisions? The arts. They have a wonderful universality. The arts have the potential to unify. They can speak in many languages without a translator. The arts do not discriminate. The arts can lift us all up. "

Richard Dreyfuss, Star of Mr. Holland's Opus
In a speech to the 1996 American Federation of Teachers Convention

"Perhaps we've all misunderstood the reason we learn music, and all the arts, in the first place. It is not only so a student can learn the clarinet, or another student can take an acting lesson. It is that for hundreds of years it has been known that teaching the arts, along with history and math and biology, helps to create the "well-rounded mind" that western civilization and America have been grounded upon. We need that "well-rounded mind" now, for it is from creativity and imagination that the solutions to our political and social problems will come. "

Texaco Foundation

"We are especially interested in the role that music plays in improving children's educational achievement, particularly in math and science. To advance the understanding in this area, we are funding school programs for very young children that explore the link between music education and math and science. "

Ernest L Boyer, President, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

"Music is a universal language, one that affirms so authentically the rich diversity of human experience across cultures. But music also unites the human family, revealing in a language all can understand profound experiences common to all. Music stimulates the mind, opens the eyes to inspired vision, and stirs the deepest yearnings of the human spirit. Music is the language of young children, and if civility is to be sustained introduction to music in all its richness surely must be at the very heart of the core curriculum in every school. "