

Wortham Intermediate School



2025 - 2026

Mr. Joseph Geller, *Wortham Director of Orchestras*
Mr. Nikit Desai, *Director of Scoggins MS Orchestras*
Mrs. Sandra Mour, *Director of Emerson HS*
Orchestras
Ms. Michelle Campos (Krenowicz), *Harp Instructor*
Mr. Michael Thomas, *Principal*
Mr. Preston Hazzard, *FISD Fine Arts Director*
Mr. Chris Cansler, *Assistant Director of Fine Arts*

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Wortham Intermediate School Orchestra Handbook

“[Music] is the inexpressible in human communication. It supplants everything, and it gives us depth, raises our consciousness, and gives us hope”.

- Van Cliburn

Introduction

I am thrilled to welcome you to the Wortham Intermediate School Orchestra family. Music plays a transformative role in the lives of students, and I firmly believe it provides three essential benefits:

- A creative outlet for self-expression
- A path to build meaningful, lifelong connections
- A source of enduring inspiration

At Wortham Intermediate School, we are committed to achieving excellence in every aspect of our orchestra program. Success depends on the collective dedication of students, parents, and teachers working together toward a shared vision. By becoming a member of the Wortham Orchestra, you commit to upholding the expectations outlined in this handbook. If you have any questions or need further information, please don't hesitate to reach out via email or phone. Should you wish to meet with me during the school year, please contact me in advance to schedule an appointment so I can provide you with my undivided attention.

Let's make this an incredible year filled with growth, learning, and music!

Joseph Geller - Orchestra Director

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Orchestras

All students will be learning the basics of string playing and music this year. Here are our goals and learning concepts

Individual Goals and Learning Targets

- Care and handling of instruments
- Posture and playing position
- Instrumental technique
 - Develop tone and intonation
 - Develop right and left-hand techniques
 - Develop rhythmic skills
 - Develop the ability to phrase musically
 - Develop dynamic control
 - Develop articulation
- Music Literacy Skills
 - Develop hand-eye coordination
 - Interpret musical symbols and terms from the printed page to create sound from the instrument
 - Develop musical fluency: the speed at which students read music successfully
- Musical sensitivity through performance and listening
- Evaluation of musical performance quality
 - Self-reflect to evaluate progress toward self-established musical goals
 - Evaluate solo and group rehearsals and performances
 - Recognize quality of sound, pitch, style, tempo, rhythm, blend, balance, phrasing, dynamics, and articulation
- Self-expression
 - Express oneself in every performance experience
 - Explore different career options

Ensemble Goals and Learning Targets

Students will develop and demonstrate the following skills and concepts daily:

- A high degree of music performance encompassing correct rhythm, stable tempos, instrument-specific techniques, dynamics, precision, tone, and the ability to be versatile and adjust to any given musical circumstance
- The ability to work cooperatively with others toward the performance of music in and with the ensemble
- The knowledge of standard orchestral literature
- Quality artistry through individual musical awareness, control, and technical facility
- Self-discipline, self-confidence, responsibility, and dependability
- Respect for others, loyalty to the ensemble, and pride in the organization
- Respect for and proper use of equipment
- The ability to comprehend and utilize higher-level thinking skills

Rehearsal/Performance Schedules

Participation at sectionals, rehearsals and performances is required and will be integrated into the student's grade which is in accordance with the TEA UIL guidelines. Regularly scheduled sectionals, rehearsals, and concerts are curricular and have no academic eligibility requirements. A schedule of activities and events will be provided to students and parents in the first week of the new school year. Supplemental schedules are provided as needed to students and parents allowing a minimum of one week's notice of a new or updated activity or event.

Daily Supplies: Instrument and Supplies for your instrument

- Own Rosin
- Own Cleaning Cloth
- Shoulder rest (violin/viola) or rock stop (cellos/basses)
- 3-ring Binder to be used for ORCHESTRA ONLY
- 2-3 Pencils
- Metronome/tuner

Instruments

Personal Instruments

A quality program requires quality musical instruments. One advantage to owning an instrument of investment quality is that in contrast to "starter" instruments, which can depreciate in value, quality string instruments actually gain value as they age. If a purchase is needed, please talk to Mr. Geller or your private instructor. We would be glad to make recommendations and consult with students and parents in order to avoid an inappropriate purchase. We would also like to help you obtain the best possible price for a good instrument.

All personal and school instruments are recommended to be insured by a homeowner's policy or private company. The school district will not assume liability for maintenance, repair or damage of personal instruments on school property.

School Owned Instruments

The school has a limited number of instruments for rent. The rental fee is \$100 per year. The student is responsible for the upkeep and care of the school issued instruments. This includes strings, bow repairs, etc. Students must provide their own personal accessories such as rosin, shoulder rest, or rock stop. The student is responsible for maintenance, damage and repair while the instrument is in his/her possession. The instrument will be inspected at the end of the year for damage and the student must pay for any repairs.

Parents and students should understand that FISD does not provide insurance coverage for damage/theft on school instruments and it is the responsibility of the parents and students for the full replacement value of the instrument should it be lost, stolen or damaged while issued to the student. It is strongly recommended that the instrument be insured through your homeowner's or renter's insurance company.

To apply for a School instrument, please visit wsstrings.com/resources and click the "Financial Aid" link.

Attendance Requirements

Participation at rehearsals and concerts is required and will be integrated into the student's grade, which is in accordance with the TEA/UIIL guidelines. An orchestra performs at its optimum level when all members are present. Orchestra is a co-curricular class that extends outside of the regular class day.

Students' orchestra grades are important, but equally important are the orchestra family members that depend on each member to do their part in order to achieve the best performance possible. This is truly a group effort! Therefore, all students are required to attend all rehearsals and concerts unless excused by the director. A yearly calendar is given out at the beginning of the year. Dates will be changed and added, and advanced notice will always be given to the students. Rehearsals will be announced as far in advance as possible. Good communication between students, directors, parents, and teachers will help.

Organization is key to preventing last-minute conflicts. Read the following rules and contact the director with any questions.

Eligibility and Makeup Work

- All material must be mastered. Therefore, if a student fails any part of a test, quiz, or playoff, they are given five (5) school days to master that section and must reassess in order to remove the failing grade from the gradebook.
- It is the student's responsibility to arrange for reassessment. Students should approach their learning with a growth mindset and work to achieve mastery through multiple attempts as needed.
- Maintaining a high grade in an elective course such as orchestra is very important.
- The "No-Pass-No-Play" rule affects advancement contests such as Mav Fest Contest, All-Region auditions and/or performances. If you fail any course in any given nine weeks you will NOT be eligible to participate in any advancement orchestral activities until the next eligibility check. The activities listed above are spaced out over the year in such a way that it is possible to NOT BE ELIGIBLE for any or all of them, depending on when a course is failed. Thus, PLEASE KEEP UP YOUR GRADES.

Absences, Conflicts, and Notification Procedures

- Check your calendar for conflicts prior to the date of the event. If your calendar contains conflicts, follow the procedures below to ensure your director has adequate notice.
- Notify your director of an emergency as soon as you are aware of it. This is the only instance where absences will be excused the same day.
- Notify your director in advance of religious holidays or conflicts with religious beliefs. These are excused absences only if you provide advanced notice.
- Avoid scheduling medical appointments during rehearsals and concerts. If you cannot reschedule, provide your director with a doctor's note the next day.
- Communicate with your director about conflicts between orchestra commitments and other activities.
- Orchestra is a UIL activity, so it takes precedence over non-UIL activities except in extenuating circumstances.
- If there is a conflict with another school activity (band, football, etc.), you must notify the directors of both activities in advance.
- Failure to communicate will result in an unexcused absence.
- Other examples of unexcused absences include but are not limited to:
 - Forgetting instrument and/or music
 - Forgetting about a rehearsal or performance
 - Private lessons. Although lessons have a positive impact, you should make every effort to reschedule them when they conflict with a rehearsal or concert.

- Homework. Please manage your time so that you can take care of homework before or after rehearsals and concerts.
- Do not rely on another student to notify your director of your absence.
- Unexcused absences are a zero in the gradebook.

Attendance at Social Events

Any student who attends a social event, either on or off campus, is expected to arrive and be picked up at the end of the event ON TIME. Schedules with precise times will be shared with students and parents when the event is announced. The director cannot leave until all students have been picked up – please respect the director’s time by being on-site early so that your student can leave as soon as the event ends.

***Any student not picked up within 15 minutes of the event ending will not be welcome at any future social events without a parent chaperone present**

Conduct

Students enrolled in the orchestra program are expected to display exemplary behavior at all times. At every performance as an orchestra member, you represent your family, Wortham Intermediate School, the FISD, and Frisco, Texas. Make sure that your actions prove that the Wortham Orchestra is a class act in every way.

Class Procedures and Information

- Be in your seat with all materials when the bell rings.
- You are expected to help tune quickly and quietly. Always be respectful of others while they tune. Play open strings only.
- Do not talk or practice out loud during the tuning process. Fingering silently or shadow bowing is always encouraged.
- Keep fingernails cut to an appropriate length to allow proper position and playing habits to develop.
- Show good rehearsal etiquette by being a good team player. Study your part quietly or shadow bow while the director works with another section. Remain on task at all times; do not talk or interrupt the focus of the rehearsal. You are expected to show respect to the director and others at all times. You are also expected to show a positive and willing attitude.
- Good posture and playing positions are expected. If you look like a pro, you will sound more like a pro.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions or seek answers to questions that come up. Raise your hand and ask, or feel free to ask for a conference in the office. IF you don’t tell us about something you don’t understand it is hard for the directors to help you work through the situation.
- Be supportive of your classmates and try to encourage each other. We are trying to be the best orchestra that we can be. Please try and show a winning attitude in ALL that you do.
- Do your best to turn your work in on time. You are expected to practice and learn your individual part so that the entire group will benefit from your efforts in and out of class. Remember you are a part of a team that counts on each other to do a great job.
- No food, drink, candy or gum may be eaten in class
- **Disorderly behavior and abusive language will not be tolerated**

Private Lessons

All students are encouraged to participate in private music lessons. WIS Orchestra works hard to collaborate with the best teachers in our area. These are qualified music teachers who will come to the school to teach lessons during the student's orchestra class period.

These lessons are \$24 once per week. Mr. Geller will help students get in touch with a private teacher, and after that, *all* correspondence, scheduling, and payment will go directly through the private lesson teacher. This is their livelihood; it is imperative that the student notify their private lesson instructor **at least 24 hours in advance** if the student will not be in class on the day of your lesson (testing, sick, doctor, etc.). Teachers will still charge for a lesson if they have not been notified by the 24 hour rule. Private lessons are a full year commitment and payment shall be made throughout the entire school year.

Dismissal from the organization

One or more of the following procedures will be used to discipline students who choose not to abide by the rules and guidelines set forth in this handbook:

- Student is suspended immediately from all orchestra activities, rehearsals and performances until a final decision is reached by the orchestra director, principal, and parents.
- Conference with a combination of the following present: student, director(s), principal(s), and parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Student placed on a contract.
- Student dismissal from the program

Orchestra: Your Choice

Orchestra is an elective. Students are not required to take it. Therefore, it is expected that students in orchestra want to be in the class and want to meet the expectation of the directors. Students who choose not to meet these expectations will have a student/parent conference with the teachers to reassess their goals and possibly assign a behavior modification contract. Students who continue to be unsuccessful in meeting these expectations after two conferences will be asked to choose an elective in which they can be successful.

Grades

Standards Based Grading

Students will have a minimum of 6 grades for each 9 weeks. Students will no longer receive minor and major grades however there will be a mix of “Weighted” and “Unweighted” grades in their classes.

What is Standards-Based Grading?

Standards-based grading (SBG) is an intentional way for teachers to track their students' progress and achievements while focusing on helping students learn and reach their highest potential. It is based on students showing signs of mastery or understanding various lessons and skills.

Standards your child will be evaluated on:

- Rhythmic Reading
- Pitch
- Sight-reading
- Group Singing
- Note Identification
- Concert Performance
- Concert Etiquette
- Breathing Technique

By using standards-based grading, I as the director, will be able to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of each student and can put a plan in place to strengthen weaknesses and continue to enrich strengths.

Eligibility

The orchestra adheres to all eligibility rules and regulations as stated by TEA and FISD. Any student who records a grade lower than 70 (in ANY class they are registered in) at the end of a three-weeks grading period shall be suspended from participation in extracurricular activities for at least the following three weeks. If at the conclusion of that three-week grading period, the student is passing all courses, he/she can regain their eligibility. However, if at that time the student is failing any course, the eligibility is lost for the remainder of the next three weeks. The orchestra director will firmly enforce these policies. Students who lose their eligibility are still required to attend ALL rehearsals as well as participate in curricular activities (concerts).

Booster Club

A booster club exists under each middle school orchestra. The main objective of the booster club is to support and enhance the orchestra program and to provide program communication to students and parents at all levels of participation. All parents are members of the booster club. Participation is encouraged and no dues are required to be a member. Meetings will be announced throughout the year. Attendance at all performances and meetings is encouraged.

Fundraising

Orchestra students are encouraged to participate in one or two fundraising activities each year. We fundraise for additional activities and financial support for our program. Fundraising activities allow students to share the responsibility of funding our program beyond what the district provides. Therefore, it is important for these fundraisers to be as successful as possible. These fundraising activities are group efforts that go into a group account that supports our orchestra program. These activities also nurture a spirit and unity in the group as a result of the group efforts. All information regarding the specifics of the fundraising will be communicated to students and parents at the time of the activities. Donations to the booster club in support of our program are always welcomed and appreciated.

Uniforms

Our performance uniforms will consist of the Wortham Orchestra Shirt and blue jeans. Advanced notice will be given.

Registration Fees

All Orchestra students will need to pay a yearly registration fee. This fee can be made all at once or in payments. Fee is \$80 for the entire year. Registration payment needs to be received prior to the first Orchestra Event. Make checks payable to “**Scoggins Orchestra Booster Club**” and turn in to Mr. Geller. Please see Mr. Geller if you need to work out a payment schedule.

Orchestra Registration Fee pays for:

- Please refer to wsstrings.com/registration

PRINT THIS SHEET AND RETURN TO THE ORCHESTRA OFFICE BY THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

Wortham Orchestra Handbook Signature Page

Signature below indicates that I have received, read, and understand the Wortham Intermediate School Orchestra Handbook AND Calendar.

WIS Orchestra Field Trip Permission Form and Emergency Medical Release

My child, _____ (PRINT FULL NAME), is permitted to travel to ALL scheduled Orchestra functions FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR as listed on the Orchestra Calendar (contests, Field trips, performances, etc.) Transportation will be provided by Frisco ISD School buses or by an approved adult chaperone where applicable.

Frisco ISD Required Release of All Claims & Parental Permission for Educational Trip(s)

RELEASE made _____ by _____
(date) (parent/guardian's name)

In consideration of permission granted the above-named student by the Frisco Independent School District of Frisco, Texas to attend field trips to ALL LISTED Wortham MS ORCHESTRA EVENTS AS LISTED IN THE ORCHESTRA CALENDAR FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR hereby release and discharge the above-named District, its agents, employees, and officers, from all claims, demands, actions, judgments, and executions which I may have or which my heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns may have, or claim to have against the above named School District its successors or assigns for all personal injuries, known or unknown, and injuries to property, real or personal, caused by, or arising out of, the above described educational trip. I further hereby authorize a representative of the School District to consent to medical treatment of the above name student in the event of an emergency on the trip. I, the undersigned, have read this release and consent to medical treatment and understand all its terms. I execute it voluntarily and with full knowledge of its significance.

Medical conditions for which we should be aware (i.e., diabetes, asthma, allergies, etc.):

(Signature of parent/guardian)

(Date and year)

Parents (Home) Phone # _____ Parents (Cell) Phone # _____

Emergency Contact Name _____

Relation to Student _____

Emergency Contact Phone # _____

PLEASE PRINT NEATLY