



Mount Vernon High School

Orchestra Handbook

2014-2015 Academic Year



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2014-2015 Orchestra Calendar

September

- 16 Back to School Night
- 19 Program FEES DUE
- 23 CHIPOTLE Fundraiser Night! 5-8 pm

October

- 20 After-School Rehearsal 2:15-3:30pm
- 21 Fall Orchestra Concert (6:00pm call) 7:00pm concert**

November

- 7 Field Trip to Kennedy Center for *Katie Ernst: Little Words*
- 18 District X Orchestra Auditions @ Lee HS**
- 20-22 VMEA Conference in Norkfolk, VA

- 27-30 Thanksgiving Holiday

December

- 8 After School Rehearsal 2:15-3:30**
- 15 After School Rehearsal 2:15-3:30**
- 16 Winter Orchestra Concert – 6:00pm call, 7pm concert**

January

- 5 School Resumes
- 8-10 District X Junior and Senior Orchestra @ Falls Church HS

February*

- 23 After School Rehearsal 2:15-3:30 (35 minutes per orchestra, precise order TBA)**
- 28 All Virginia Band & Orchestra Auditions @ JMU

March*

- 2 After School Rehearsal 2:15-3:30**
- 3 Pre-Assessment Concert, 6:00pm call, 7:00pm Concert**
- 6-7 District X Orchestra Assessment @ West Potomac HS**

April*

- 17-20* MVHS Orchestra & Choir Spring Trip (tentative dates)

*Additional rehearsals will be required of those attending the spring trip

- 9-11 All Virginia Band & Orchestra @ Christopher Newport University
- 24-25 District X Solo & Ensemble @ Key MS

May

- 26 After School Rehearsal 2:15-3:30 pm**

June

- 1 After School Rehearsal 2:15-3pm full orchestra; 3 – 3:30 soloists remain**
- 2 Spring Orchestra Concert & Awards Ceremony - call time 6pm, concert 7pm**

***Notes** This calendar is subject to change.*

Class Expectations and Objectives

1. **Respect** for classroom, instruments, materials, teacher and one another makes this classroom a safe environment for everyone. NO GUM, drinks other than water, or food is allowed in the classroom as a general rule.
2. **Practice.** Consistent, diligent self-guided practice at home is essential to successful involvement in the Mount Vernon High School orchestra program. Plan to practice a minimum of 3 hours a week at home, and consider the value of investing in private lessons with a local teacher.
3. **Commitment to growth.** Continued development of proper playing position and technique are the results of practicing wisely and accepting feedback. Always reach out to peers and Mrs. Hennessy if you aren't gleaning the same musicality that you're putting in to your practice. Chances are, you can up your "practicing wisely" game for better results. 😊
4. **Responsibility.** Come to rehearsals informed, prepared and with all needed supplies. Keep up with your email and Blackboard accounts. Turn things in on time. Prepare in advance for transportation, auditions, tests and everything else in life!
5. **Professionalism.** A positive attitude toward risk-taking is necessary when learning new music and new skills. Be kind to yourself and others as we try new things, no matter the results. **The practice of reacting to challenges with equanimity, kindness and bravery is known as professionalism.**
6. **Follow the rules.** Compliance with everything stated in this handbook will ensure that you're doing your part as a member of this fantastic ensemble.

Communication, Blackboard and Remind 101

Due to Mrs. Hennessy's itinerant (travelling) teaching position, it is best to contact her via EMAIL at ahennessy@fcps.edu. This email address is checked several times a day, and you will have a response within 24 hours. Please note that email is generally not checked after 4pm on weekdays. If you would like to have a phone conversation, please put your phone number and availability in an email to her. If your parents do not check email regularly, please notify me so that we can arrange phone communication.

Detailed class information, assignment instructions, materials, news and useful tools will be made available 24/7 on FCPS blackboard, at <http://fcps.blackboard.com>

Checking Blackboard and email is an essential element of your responsibility as an orchestra musician.

You are strongly encouraged to sign up for Remind 101, a free text message service that is used for last-minute updates and regular reminders for assignment due dates as well as after school rehearsal and concert information.

To use Remind101, **go to your App Store and download the Remind 101 app. At the prompt, enter the phone number (571) 465-9913. The class code is: mvhso1415**

Electronic Device Policy

NO CELL PHONES or similar devices are to be used visibly in class. If a student is seen with her/his cell phone, they will be asked to put it away immediately. If they do not comply, they will receive a written referral as per MVHS policy.

Mrs. Hennessy may ask students to use their phones from time to time, in order to tune, or to use as a metronome, or to find a video or song. It is expected that in such cases as the students are requested to use their phones in a specific way, that they use the phones ONLY to do what is asked, and then put the phone away.

Grading

MVHS Grading Policy

- ◇ Mt. Vernon High School has a consistent, school-wide policy stating that homework shall be no more than 10% of a student's grade.
- ◇ Mt. Vernon High School supports extra credit that is content-based only.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0
A-	90-92	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	64-66	1.0
F	53-63	0.0

Late work

We expect that all students will complete all of their work one hundred percent of the time. Teachers expect students to complete and turn in assignments even if they are late. If work is late for any reason other than an excused absence, students have the opportunity to turn in late work for a half-letter grade or 3.33% deduction for each school day that it is late until the date set by the teacher prior to the end of the quarter or until the grade reaches 53% (F).

Late work interventions can include:

- ◇ After 2 assignments are missed in a bi-weekly period, the teacher will notify the parent via progress report, e-mail or phone call.
- ◇ When a pattern of missed assignments is observed, the teacher will contact his administrator and/or counselor for further intervention.

Re-Take Policy

All students have the additional opportunity to show mastery of content through reassessments on the summative assessments given in each curricular area. In order for a reassessment to be provided, students are expected to complete all material related to the content of the unit as stipulated by the subject CLT. Additionally, students will need to demonstrate that they have completed all necessary preparation, including homework and classwork, to be successful on a reassessment. The teachers in the CLTs will determine the additional preparation needed, which may include content review during Major Time or after school, test corrections, etc., and will communicate this information to the students.

Breakdown of Grading in Performing Arts Classes

<i>Rehearsal technique and effort</i>	<i>10 weekly points</i>	<i>40%</i>
-Daily rehearsal etiquette		
-Behavior		
-Positive Attitude		
-Adequate practice		
<i>Performance</i>	<i>30%</i>	
-Full participation in all concerts and after-school rehearsals		
-Playing evaluations		
<i>Assignments</i>	<i>20%</i>	
-Listening assignments		
-Written assignments		
<i>Final Exam</i>	<i>10%</i>	

EXTRA CREDIT: The following actions may result in extra credit. Please consult Mrs. Hennessy to arrange extra credit points. No extra credit will be given in the case of concert absence.

- *Concert Sound Recording – Bring, set up, record and share video or audio of a concert. Provide a written account of your recording process, and a brief critique of the recording quality.*
- *STAGE Management– Prior to and following rehearsals/concerts in the Little Theater (this can happen during lunch on select days). Student will be responsible for submitting a mock-up design for approval and setting up chairs and stands according to their design.*
- *TUTORING TUESDAYS – You may sign up to tutor an elementary string student on YOUR instrument. Please see Mrs. Hennessy for details.*
- *Write a 2 page essay on some aspect of string playing, a composer biography or paper on musical history that relates to our repertoire. Approve topic with Mrs. Hennessy first.*
- *Arrange a popular tune for string orchestra (4 or 5 parts) using Finale or Sibelius.*

- *Accept a “personal challenge song” and master it – assigned by Mrs. Hennessy*
- *Preparing and playing a solo in a performance piece (non-principal players may take advantage of this option during rehearsal!)*

Homework and Late Work

- Assignments are due on the due date specified on written instructions or written on the whiteboard in class. It is the student’s responsibility to write down any and all due dates.
- Assignments not submitted by Close of Business (5:00 p.m.) of the due date shall be considered late.

Attendance Policy

General Expectations

As a member of a performing ensemble, each student is expected to attend all class sessions and after school rehearsals and performances. Students are required to practice on their own at home. Without this self-discipline, it is impossible for any student (no matter how “gifted”) to improve their performance of the orchestra repertoire. All students must adhere to the MVHS policy as discussed in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.

Electronic devices will not be allowed during the rehearsal. Students are expected to place all activities and assignments in their school planner or calendar. Orchestra demands a team effort from each individual, and each student’s participation affects the group performance. Each musician plays a valuable role in the process of rehearsing and preparing for a performance.

Whenever you are absent from a rehearsal, you miss valuable opportunities for musical growth, both individually and corporately with the ensemble. Attendance guidelines are important to support the learning process for both the individual and the ensemble. These guidelines help you gain self-discipline and time management skills.

FCPS Policy on Co-Curricular Activity Absenteeism – PLEASE READ.

- Orchestra is NOT an extracurricular activity like school athletics, where no grade or credit is given. **Orchestra is a co-curricular class, in which you are expected to attend both in-school and after-school rehearsals and concerts.** Your grade depends on attendance and participation in after-school rehearsals and performances. Attendance also affects the way that your fellow musicians will come to see you as a responsible and caring contributor to the ensemble.
- **Conflicts should be addressed with Mrs. Hennessy well in advance of the concert.** Please read on to find out more about guidelines and consequences of failing to attend orchestra rehearsals and events.

Tardies:

- Per MVHS rules on tardies, the orchestra room door will be closed and locked when the bell rings. Please see your subschool to get a time-stamped pass to enter the classroom. As per the

SR&R, arriving to class more than 5 minutes after that time-stamp will result in a referral for cutting class.

- In addition to being inside the door by 12:40, you are expected to be in your seat, with your instrument and sheet music, either tuning or practicing at the bell.
- Being tardy from class will result in a deduction of weekly “Rehearsal Skills” points. Each week, a student has the opportunity to earn 10 points simply by showing up on time with their instrument and music. **Each tardy will result in a 3 point deduction.**

Absence from Class:

Unexcused absences from class will result in deduction of 5 (out of 10) weekly rehearsal skills points. In addition, Mrs. Hennessy reserves the right to require a make-up assignment of her choice.

Excused absences will not be subject to point deduction or make-up assignments. However, students are expected to practice throughout the week as usual.

After School Rehearsals

~After school rehearsals are treated in the same manner as a regular class session. Attendance is required, and all FCPS regulations are in effect.

~After school rehearsal dates appear on the orchestra calendar. Please make note of these dates and plan around them. In some cases, such as preparation for the Spring Trip or Assessment, Mrs. Hennessy may require additional after-school rehearsals. Attendance at ALL after-school rehearsals is mandatory.

~Rehearsals will start on time and finish on time. In order to receive full credit, students must arrive on time with your instrument tuned and ready to play at the call time.

~As with class, **late arrival will result in a deduction of 3 weekly rehearsal skills points, and unexcused absence will result in a 5 point deduction.**

~Pre-arranged absences from after-school rehearsals will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require **parental notification well in advance.**

Concerts and Other Performances

Call time for all school concerts is 6pm.

Late arrival will result in a deduction of 5 points from weekly rehearsal skills points.

Missing a concert should only happen due to **extreme** circumstances, such as a hospitalization, severe injury or accident. **In terms of conflicts with sports, MVHS teachers and coaches understand that concerts take precedence over practice and regularly scheduled games.** State championships and other exceptional sporting events may take precedence over an orchestra concert, HOWEVER this scheduling conflict must be made clear to Mrs. Hennessy by the student, the student’s coach AND the student’s parent in order for the concert absence to be considered excused.

In those RARE cases, the student must make up the event in the manner outlined below. A student may not participate in a concert if they are absent from school that day or are serving an “out of school” suspension.

Making up for a missed concert:

All students who have missed a concert, whether excused or unexcused, will be required to video record themselves performing the entire concert AT PERFORMANCE TEMPO. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain recording equipment make the recording and submit the recording in one of three ways. Students must demonstrate that their chosen method of delivery works for full credit (ie: they must stay a few minutes after class to test the link or DVD).

- 1) YouTube video (may be made private and shared just with aehennessy@fcps.edu)
- 2) Google Drive video shared with aehennessy@fcpschools.net)
- 3) Burned to DVD

Excused concert absences must be made up within a week of the student returning to school after the event they missed. Students with unexcused concert absences must submit their make-up video ON THE DAY OF THE CLASS FOLLOWING THE CONCERT. Late submission of this video will be subject to a deduction of a half letter grade per class day that it is not turned in. Video files that do not open for Mrs. Hennessy are considered late until the issue is resolved (yes, I update my plug-ins regularly!).

CONCERT CRITIQUES: All students are required to write a concert critique following the concert. Often we will view a video of the concert or listen to a recording of the concert during the class following a concert. If a student misses class the day the recording is viewed/listened to, the student will need to watch/listen on their own time and make up the written assignment before the next class period.

Students who miss the concert for any reason are also required to complete this critique.

Consequences

Students failing to abide by these policies will be subject to any and all of the following disciplinary actions:

1. Warning
2. Comment on progress report
3. Direct email home
4. Call home
5. Disciplinary referral to sub-school counselor
6. Dismissal from class

Lockers/Instrument Storage

Instrument storage will be assigned at the start of the school year. Students are to use ONLY their instrument for all rehearsals and understand that use of the lockers and locker room is a privilege that can be revoked in the event of inappropriate use.

Instruments

Option 1: Students are STRONGLY encouraged to provide their own personal instrument for orchestra. This can be done through local music stores and instrument vendors. All offer instruments for purchase, rental and “rent-to-own” payment plans.

I highly recommend the following independent, local string/music stores:

1. Day Violins – Herndon **703-391-944** www.dayviolins.com
2. Potter Violin Co. – 4706 Highland Ave. Bethesda, MD 20814
3. Music & Arts Center-Springfield **703-451-0875** [www. Musicarts.com](http://www.Musicarts.com)
4. Brobst Violin Shop - Alexandria, VA **703-256-0566**
5. Foxes Music Co. - Falls Church, VA **703-533-7393** www.foxesmusic.com

Option 2: A limited number of school instruments are available for a yearly rental price of \$92. Each **cellist and bassist** who owns their own cello/bass AND who rides a school bus daily will be required to rent a school instrument due to county regulations prohibiting the transport of large instruments on school busses. The charge for this will be \$46 for the year. **Cello and Bass students will bring their home cello/bass for any combined performances or rehearsals.**

Students on free or reduced lunch may rent violins and violas via the “Instruments For All” program – please see Mrs. Hennessy.

Required Materials

Violinists and violists:

1. Instrument and Bow
2. **Black 1” Ring Binder**
3. Rosin
4. Pencil
5. Soft cloth for cleaning
6. **Shoulder rest** (!?)
7. Extra set of strings

Cellists and Bassists:

1. Instrument and Bow
2. **Black 1” Ring Binder**
3. Rosin
4. Pencil
5. Soft cloth for cleaning
6. Rock stop or chair anchor
7. Extra set of strings

Uniforms

Considering the evolving standards for concert dress in professional orchestras, MVHS allows flexibility in “traditional” gendered uniform expectations. Students may choose from two options depending on their preference, but must adhere to the following guidelines.

Option 1: Formal uniform dress, closed toe black dress shoes, dark socks and/or stockings. Students will be fitted for a dress in the beginning of the school year. It is your responsibility to **FIX A NAME TAG** to your dress or dress bag and clean the dress during the entire school year.

Option 2: Tuxedo or tux equivalent

Black dress shoes, black dress socks and a full tuxedo (tux pants, jacket, shirt, black cummerbund and black bowtie).

Gentlemen may elect to rent a tuxedo from the orchestra OR choose to wear their own tuxedo. Please ensure that your tux is complete and is properly fitted.

Ladies choosing the tuxedo option do not have the opportunity to rent at this time. This may change in the future, but for now the orchestra owns no ladies' tuxes. Therefore, female students choosing this option must provide their own dress slacks, standard black blazer (no rounded collars, frills, buckles, etc.), and tuxedo shirt. The orchestra will provide you with a bow tie and cummerbund. Please bring your suit to class prior to concert day for approval by Mrs. Hennessy.

General Guidelines: **On concert days, please wear your orchestra T shirt to class!*

Shoes - Black dress shoes are required. Tennis shoes, casual shoes and sandals are prohibited.

Also - If you can't dance in them, you probably can't maneuver in and out of your stage placement in them. Please keep this in mind while considering the vast, alluring world of high heels.

Jewelry –

The wearing of RINGS is strongly discouraged, especially on the left hand. If you are in the habit of wearing a simple thin ring, that is fine. Thick rings or rings with large stones are prohibited. Consider the standards of professional string players – many elect to not wear any jewelry, or even switch their wedding bands to the right hand!

NO long earrings, thick necklaces, or bracelets will be worn. Necklaces are discouraged because of interference with the instrument. However, you may wear a single small pendant on a thin chain.

Rentals - A rental fee of \$20 will be charged **as an addition to the normal orchestra participation fee** at the start of the school year to cover a borrowed uniform dress or school-owned tuxedo. This fee provides for the school-owned parts of the uniform, lost items, up-keep and eventual replacement. All items must be returned in good condition at the end of the school year. If they are not, the student assumes responsibility for the replacement cost(s). This replacement cost will appear on the "student obligation" list if not reimbursed to the orchestra directly via check.

Students/parents will need to provide their own dress shoes, socks, stockings or hosiery. They are also allowed to provide other parts of the uniform, pending approval from Mrs. Hennessy.

Lettering in Orchestral Music

Any orchestra student may letter in music by earning 100 points. Details about how points are earned are listed below. Letter points do not carry over from year to year, but students are awarded extra points for consecutive years of participation.

All orchestra students are encouraged to maintain a high standard of excellence within the program. Students who accumulate 100 points or more per year through their efforts will earn a Mount Vernon Letter. If the student has already earned a MVHS music letter, they will receive an orchestra pin to add to their letter. A pin will be added for each consecutive year when the students earn 100 points. Points do not “roll-over”: every student starts at zero in September.

The following is a representative list of tasks through which orchestra students may earn their letter through orchestra at Mount Vernon High School. Also, every hour of service to the music department will earn them 2 points toward their letter. **YOU** are in charge of keeping track of your points in the MVHS letter point binder.

Activity	Points
District Orchestra Audition	10 points
District Orchestra Participation	30 points
Honor Orchestra Audition (Fall)	20 points
Honor Orchestra Participation	30 points
All State Orchestra Audition (February)	10 points
All State Orchestra Participation	30 points
2 or more consecutive years in orchestra	10 points
Section Leader	10 points
Original composition	10 points
Audition for solo in class	2 points
Perform a solo in concert	10 points
Student volunteer hours	2 points/hour
Regular String lessons	10 points
Regular Piano or Instrumental lessons	10 points
Audition for the Spring Musical	10 points
Participate in the School Spring Musical	30 points
Participant in Community String Ensemble	10 points
Attend the Spring Orchestra Trip	10 points
Serve as an usher at concerts	2 points/hour
Membership in Tri-M Honor Music	10 points

If you have any questions about the attendance policy, a grade, the choral calendar, or financial assistance, please do not hesitate to call or email:

Mrs. Anna Hennessy
703 619-3241
aehennessy@fcps.edu

or Mary Elizabeth Harrison Cunningham
703 619-3302
MEHarrisoncu@fcps.edu

Program Fee

Each student involved in a music class at MVHS must contribute an annual of \$60 to cover basic program expenses including an orchestra T-Shirt, strings, rosin, cleaning cloths, bridges, and instrument supply maintenance. If you are renting a school-owned uniform (dress or tux), please add \$20 to the basic fee for a total of \$80. The uniform fee will not be refunded if a student changes their mind about rental options after September. Please discuss with your child as to their uniform of choice (Option 1 or 2).

Students on **FREE & REDUCED LUNCH**: Students on free or reduced lunch are **NOT** required to pay the combined program/uniform fee. Status must be made known to Mrs. Hennessy and confirmed by Ms. Nardos King, MVHS Principal.

Students having applied for, or on, free or reduced lunch are eligible to rent a violin or viola for an annual fee of \$20 from the "IFA, Instruments For All" rental program. Status must be made known to Mrs. Hennessy and confirmed by Ms. Nardos King, MVHS Principal.

MVHS ORCHESTRA BOOSTER ASSOCIATION

Boosters are a VITAL part of successful orchestra programs. Be a part of the change at MVHS Orchestra, and sign up to volunteer a bit of your time to:

- help raise orchestra funds (some fundraisers are specific to field trips, some are not)
- maintain uniforms
- provide a supportive presence at concerts and assessment
- chaperone field trips

It's a great way to get involved with the orchestra program *and* support your child in their musical development.

Please indicate your availability to VOLUNTEER for some upcoming dates for which we will NEED parent volunteers/chaperones. You will be contacted before the event to arrange details.

9/9 & 9/10 Uniform fitting – during class (12:40-2pm) _____

10/21 CONCERT NIGHT – Refreshments, Room Supervisor (6-8pm) _____

11/7 Chaperone for Kennedy Center Concert (9am-2pm) _____

12/16 CONCERT NIGHT – Refreshments, Room Supervisor, Recording _____

3/3 CONCERT NIGHT _____

3/6 OR 3/7 DISTRICT X ASSESSMENT _____

4/16-19 Spring Trip Chaperones (NYC) _____

6/2 CONCERT and AWARD NIGHT _____

Orchestra Contract Agreement

Please return to Mrs. Hennessy by September 19th WITH PROGRAM FEE PAYMENT

I, _____, agree with and will adhere to all the above stipulations for participation in the Mount Vernon High School Orchestra Program. I agree to be a reputable member of the orchestra in word and deed.

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

Contact Information

Name	Phone	Email	Preferred Method of Contact
Parent 1:			
Parent 2:			
Student:			

☐ **Check here if you would like to be on the list for *Orchestra Booster* volunteer duties. See reverse for list of duties!**

Fee Summary

Program Fee	\$60
Uniform Fee (if renting dress or tux)	\$20
Total for Program and Uniform Fee (combine in one check, please)	
Instrument Rental Fee – Annual rental of an instrument for home use	\$92
Annual rental of an instrument shared at school	\$46
IFA Instrument Rental (for students qualifying for free or reduced lunch)	\$20
Total for Instrument Rental Fee (separate check, please)	
Parent's Orchestra T-Shirt (optional) SIZE (circle one): S M L XL 1X 2X 3X	\$15 x #shirts=_____
Donation to the Orchestra for Supplies, Sheet Music and Concert Day Treats (optional, but immensely appreciated!)	
GRAND TOTAL	

Please make all checks payable to Mount Vernon HS.

Please double check this handbook and make payment for all applicable fees. Unpaid fees will go on the student obligation list. **Fees are due by September 19th.** Contact Mrs. Hennessy with any questions.

