

Dickerson Middle School Orchestra 2026-2027 Student/Parent Handbook

August 2026

Welcome to the Dickerson Middle School Orchestra!

It is our pleasure to welcome you to an exciting new year of making music. Students will learn the proper care and technique of playing a string instrument. Each student will learn to read music, as well as understand and apply music vocabulary. Students will work as individuals and as a team to experience the process of learning and performing music. To accomplish this, we will need the full support and dedication of orchestra families. Use the guide below to help get a head start on materials required for orchestra this year. We, along with the Dickerson Middle School Orchestra appreciate your commitment as a music parent. We are excited about our upcoming musical experiences.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a clear outline of the goals and requirements needed to succeed in the orchestra program. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. It is important that you read this guide and return the required forms as an indication that you and your child have:

1. Read and discussed this information together.
2. Familiarized yourself with the CLTS digital classroom.
3. Surveyed the orchestra website at www.dickersonorchestra.org

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Expectations

Students will learn music through string instruction. They will learn to read, count and perform music on their respective instruments. Students will perform in a variety of performances throughout the year as part of the music curriculum. Students will also learn music through music history, theory, listening, vocabulary, writing and guest artists.

Behavior

All students are expected to follow the policies set forth by Dickerson Middle School and the Cobb County School District, which can be found on the Cobb County Schools website.

Consequences

If a student has difficulty following the classroom rules the following consequences will result:

- 1st Offense Teacher acknowledgement and verbal warning
- 2nd Offense Loss of rehearsal skills points, behavior card is marked
- 3rd Offense Parent contacted; administration notified if necessary

Concerts/Performances

Orchestra is a team effort. If one person misses, the entire team is let down. You are expected to perform at every concert. If you are aware that you will be unable to attend a concert, give notice as soon as possible. Full concert credit is given when you arrive at the requested time, in required uniform, demonstrate expected concert behavior, and are prepared with the required materials. If a concert is missed, students have two weeks to perform the concert music on the orchestra iPad for a grade.

Seating

Seating is constantly rotated and is not according to playing ability. Student seating within the ensemble is based solely on the director's discretion. Students may be moved at any time throughout the school year. The goal is to have a balanced orchestra that works as well as possible for everyone.

Music Standards – Georgia Standards of Excellence for Orchestra

Creating: Improvise, compose, and arrange music within specified guidelines.

Performing: Perform a varied repertoire of music on instruments, alone and with others. Read and Notate music.

Responding: Listen to, analyze, and describe music. Evaluate music and music performances.

Connecting: Demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts. Understand music in relation to history and culture.

Grading

To be promoted to the next grade level of orchestra, students must demonstrate comprehension of classroom material as well as instrumental performance. This is done by maintaining a minimum 70% average each quarter. Grades are determined based on the following percentages:

25%-Performances

25%-Rehearsal Skills

20%-Class Assignments

30%-Playing Checks

Late Work Policy

- 1) Late work may be turned in up to one week after the deadline. Up to 10 points per day may be deducted from the assignment.
- 2) If a student is present in class and does not complete, turn in, or participate in an assignment, the student may receive a 0 for the assignment or a deduction from their Rehearsal Skills grade.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on an assignment, sharing/ distributing answers, or using class notes or other unapproved aids to complete an assignment. Consequences may include receiving a 0 on the assignment with the opportunity to resubmit the same or an alternate at the teacher's discretion.

Assignments/Playing checks

In-class assignments value will vary based on the material. Any assignments or quizzes will be out of 100 points. If students do not demonstrate a fundamental understanding of playing-check content, a zero will be assigned as the grade and a retake will only be available within one week. Grades greater than 60 or due more than one week ago may not be retaken.

Rehearsal Skills-100 points, twice per quarter

Each student begins with 100 points. Points are deducted for not meeting the expectations:

- Prepared with materials (including a charged laptop on digital-check days)
- Participating in class with correct posture, technique, and full effort
- Demonstrating appropriate classroom behavior

* If a student is unable to play due to an injury, a Dr.'s note is required, and rehearsal skills points are earned based on a written assignment that will be provided for the day's lesson.*

Before School Policy

Students must check in the cafeteria, make sure the orchestra tag is posted, and be on task practicing an instrument during this time. Students may lose this privilege if off task.

Binder/Folder

Notebooks (3-ring, 1-inch binder with 50 sheets of lined paper) are to be labeled with student's name, grade, instrument, and orchestra class. They are to be kept in the orchestra classroom and used only for orchestra. The orchestra notebook will be used to keep all papers and notes given out during the orchestra class period. Notebooks will be checked every nine weeks for a grade. It is crucial that each student keeps the notebook in order and to make sure they have all materials, especially if a day has been missed. Assignments will be graded accordingly. This binder can be reused each year or orchestra so students will leave the middle school program with a portfolio-type resource book.

Lockers: Students will be assigned lockers that are shared, school property. It is the responsibility of the students to keep track of materials store them properly. Students do not have permission to access any other student's locker. Locks are provided to each locker, but their use is optional. Any lock that goes missing is the student's responsibility and may be asked to pay a \$5 replacement fee.

Materials

All students will need the following: (Required for the first week of school)

-A **one-inch, 3-ring binder** exclusively for orchestra. Please label the notebook with student name, grade, instrument, and orchestra class.

-**50 sheets of lined notebook paper** (ruling is your choice)

-**Pencils** (No pens in music)

6th Grade Students

-Habits of a Successful Young String Musician, **Book 1** –appropriate instrument* Purchase at music store/ online (Return orchestra families, this is a new method book this year). **BLUE cover**

7th Grade Students

-Essential Elements for Strings, **Book 2** –appropriate instrument* (should have from previous year). *Purchase at music store or online

Music

Each student will be provided with a music folder and a copy of music to take home for practice. Extras copies for practice cannot be guaranteed. Please take care of music copies and folders.

Instruments

Violins and violas are expected to rent or purchase an instrument for their use. Instruments are expected at school every orchestra day unless told otherwise. Students needing to borrow an instrument from the school must sign it out for class. School instruments are not guaranteed to be available and alternate work may be assigned at the teacher's discretion. Students repeatedly missing their instrument will receive deductions from the rehearsal skills portion of their grade.

Cello and bass players may use school instruments. Students are expected to rent or purchase an instrument for home practice. School instruments are to be treated with the utmost respect and handling. If any abuse is noticed, disciplinary action will be taken.

If you would like any assistance with finding a rental or purchasing an instrument, please feel free to contact me.

Many times, a poor-quality instrument inhibits the progress of the student and costs a great deal of money to make it playable. PLEASE keep the following in mind:

Keys to finding a quality instrument:

1. **Rent to Own** Stores offer great services like free repair, upgrades, and trade-in policies. Please work with a store that has a **string specialist** and completes repairs in house and in a timely manner.
2. **Bring it in!** I would not recommend purchasing anything until I have had a chance to check it out. I would be more than happy to assist in trying out potential instruments.

3. **Go to a reputable dealer** Don't just look for a cheap price. All instruments should be played before purchase. Rental instruments are typically higher quality than cheap purchases and can eventually be upgraded.
4. **Absolutely no "internet specials."** Instruments deemed unplayable will be sent home. Ms. Hardy's favorite analogy: Could you run a foot race in flip-flops? Sure. Would you be more successful to run in a decent pair of running shoes instead? YES. Please trust your experienced experts, we know what we are doing and can produce a quality product with a quality instrument.

Required Instrument Supplies

Violins/Violas: Shoulder rest ****PLEASE consider comfort and obtain a genuine shoulder rest such as Everest, MUCO or KUN brands.** Sponges are tough for young musicians to maneuver (not recommended), Rosin, Clean Cloth (old clean rag), Instrument nametag
Cello/Bass: Rock stop, Rosin, clean cloth, Instrument nametag

The Cobb County School District does not have insurance or any other plan that will cover damage, theft, or loss of privately-owned equipment. If that equipment is to be covered, it must be through the parent's personal insurance, such as homeowner's policy, etc.

Performance Uniforms and Fees

Uniform dress is required for orchestra members to present an appealing stage appearance as an ensemble. Uniforms are aesthetically pleasing and reflect the formality of an orchestra performance. It also allows the listener and performer to focus on the beauty of the music and not be distracted.

7/8 Orchestra Concert Uniform

Ladies:

Concert dress ordered through school orchestra supply:

This dress should last students through 7th and 8th grade. Used dresses are available at a lower cost on a first come, first served basis.

-Black or nude flat dress shoes

***You are responsible for the dress alteration for appropriate length of ½" from ground when shoes are on.**

Gentlemen:

-Black tux shirt and tux pants purchased through school orchestra supply:

-Black dress shoes

-Black dress socks

***You are responsible for alteration of the pants to the appropriate length of ½" from ground when dress shoes are on.**

Other: One pair of small earrings only. No necklaces, bracelets, rings or anything "un-uniform" to other students. Hair should be styled appropriately and out of the face. Look professional.

6th Orchestra Concert Uniform

All sixth-grade students will wear jeans and the current year's orchestra T-shirt.

CTLS

All resources, communication, and assignments can be located on the CTLS class page. Keep up to date with the content on CTLS and check in regularly.

Orchestra Website

The Dickerson Middle School Orchestra's website serves as a source of additional resources, media, and community updates. All families and friends of the orchestra are invited to view keep up with the DMS orchestra program through this site:

www.dickersonorchestra.org

Orchestra Classroom Policies

Orchestra Room Expectations

1. Show Respect at All Times

Treat all adults, classmates, instruments, and classroom materials with care and courtesy. Do not touch anything that does not belong to you. Negative comments or disrespectful behavior toward others are not tolerated.

2. Follow Pass Procedures

Bathroom, water, and hall passes must be approved and signed by a teacher. Each student will have a limited number of times they are permitted to leave the classroom per quarter. This is tracked by signing out each time you leave the room in addition to writing a pass in the agenda.

3. No Food, Drink, or Gum

No gum, candy, food, or drinks are allowed in the orchestra room unless provided or approved by a teacher. This helps protect instruments and keep the space clean.

4. Take Care of Your Instrument

Handle your instrument and equipment with respect. Always store your instrument in its case or a protected area when not in use. Never leave it in extreme temperatures (in a car/ outside.)

5. Always Give Your Best Effort

Strive for excellence in everything you do—every day. Show up prepared, focused, and ready to grow as a musician and team member.

Handbook Contract

Dickerson Middle School Orchestra

By participating in this class, I agree to read and adhere to the policies outlined within the 2026-2027 Dickerson Middle School Orchestra Handbook and have reviewed them with my family. I understand that there may be extra rehearsals and performances scheduled outside the school day. I agree with the uniform requirements as stated in the handbook.

The policies set forth in this handbook are subject to change or amendment at the discretion of the principal or the orchestra director. I understand that I may contact a director if any questions or concerns arise regarding the orchestra program.