

# Director's Welcome Message

Dear Parents,

As a high school student, your child is beginning the preparation that will shape his or her future. I'm pleased that you and your child have elected to include involvement in music and the fine arts as part of this preparation.

The decision to continue with strings will be one that will have far reaching consequences for your child and will provide many advantages in today's very competitive world, regardless of the career path he or she chooses. Numerous scientific studies have shown a very distinct correlation between participation in the arts, particularly music, and child development. For instance, the average for standardized test scores including the SAT, are higher for students involved in music than the national average. Moreover, the longer the child's participation in music, the higher above the national average his or her score. Students involved in music also earn an average GPA higher than the national average.

Other studies have shown that music students tend to have higher degrees of self-motivation and self-discipline and increased time management skills. These students also have a more positive self-image and improved social skills. These are attributes that are absolutely necessary in today's work environment.

Additionally, the vast majority of college admissions boards give special consideration to students involved in music due to their high level of commitment and community involvement.

Participation in the string orchestra at Douglas S. Freeman High School will teach your child the benefits of teamwork, dedication, persistence and loyalty. Because of many opportunities, the performing arts programs in high school are more challenging than in the typical middle school program, and thus more rewarding. These opportunities will result in many wonderful experiences for your child. Welcome to another great year of music at Douglas Freeman High School!

Musically yours,

Rob Blankenship, Director

**Douglas S. Freeman High School**  
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Richmond, VA 23229  
673-3700

# I. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

## A. Daily Class Responsibilities

1. Students are expected to have the following items every day during class:
  - a. instrument, unless it is being repaired, in which case a written note must be provided
  - b. music – students are responsible for keeping up with their own music, folder,
  - c. any equipment or accessories needed for their particular instrument
  - d. A **pencil** with an eraser (pen should not be used to mark music at any time)
2. Students are to be completely in the room when the tardy bell rings (tardies will be handled as per school policy). Students then have five minutes to be seated with instruments **ready to play**. If a student is not ready to begin after five minutes, they will be marked as tardy.
3. Students are to be quiet, attentive and cooperative during all class times so as to ensure maximum productivity.
4. Food and drinks are NOT allowed in the band room at any time. Water is always permitted; **however, water bottles are to be discarded at the end of each class period. If empty bottles are left behind, water will no longer be permitted in the band room. Gum is NOT ALLOWED.**
5. At the conclusion of each class period, all instruments, folders and personal belongings are to be put in their appropriate places. The band room, including all storage areas, will be left neat and orderly.

## B. Rehearsal and Performance Participation

Rehearsals and performances outside of normal school hours are a common and necessary part of the program. Therefore, individual participation in these rehearsals and performances comprises a large portion of the overall grade. Points will be deducted from the student's grade for unexcused tardiness or absence (see section on Attendance Policies for further information). Parents, please be advised that, occasionally, performances will require early dismissal from school. On these occasions students will miss classes (orchestra and others) and will be required to complete all work for those classes, according to the makeup policy. **Students are encouraged to find out what assignments will be missed PRIOR to missing the class.**

To ensure productive rehearsals and, thus, successful performances, students should follow these guidelines:

- Be ready to start at the designated time. **That means all students should arrive 10 to 15 minutes prior to the start of a rehearsal.**
- Students are to always display a courteous and cooperative attitude.
- Students are not to talk during rehearsal time.
- Gum, food and drinks (other than water) are not permitted during rehearsals or performances.
- **Cell Phones (and other electronic devices) are not permitted during rehearsals or performances. If a cell phone is seen being used during a rehearsal or performance,**

**a grade of ZERO will be given for that rehearsal or performance. After the third offense, an administrative disciplinary referral will be written.**

- Students are to have all necessary materials such as instruments and related accessories, music, etc. for all rehearsals and/or performances.
- Each student will be expected to rehearse to the fullest of his/her ability at all times. Remember, we are a TEAM and each student depends on every other student 100% of the time.
- Regular home practice is expected of each and every student.

### **C. Grading**

Grading Scale – as set by HCPS

Grading Categories\*\*\*

- Rehearsals: Serves to assess attendance and proper participation during all rehearsals, both during class time and outside of normal school hours. This also serves to assess the degree of preparedness and the manner of participation during rehearsal time.
- Performances: Serves to assess attendance and proper participation during all performances.
- Playing Tests/Quizzes: This category encompasses playing assessments as well as written assessment of music theory concepts (major and minor scales, arpeggios, etc.). This category is also used to determine the degree to which students handle personal responsibilities in the form of spot inspections of instrument lockers, folders, etc.

**Performances – 35%**

**Rehearsals – 40%**

**Playing Tests/Quizzes – 25%**

### **D. Instruments**

1. All students are expected to keep their instruments in working order at all times. If a student's instrument must go to a repair shop, written notification from a parent or guardian must be submitted to the director.

2. Instrument repair is the responsibility of each student regardless of whether the instrument is checked out through the school or is the personal property of the student.

3. All school-owned instruments must be issued to a student through the director. Once issued to a student, the maintenance, care, and repair of that instrument (including any financial costs) are the responsibility of the student.

## **II. ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

As orchestra is a performance-based class that involves outside performances and relies on some outside rehearsals for the success of those performances, attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory. Excused absences and tardies include only the

following:

- 1) Severe personal illness
- 2) Family emergencies
- 3) Religious holidays

**WORK IS NOT AN EXCUSABLE REASON!** Proper arrangements should be made with employers and are the responsibility of the student.

#### **A. Absences**

Any absence from a rehearsal or performance must be approved by the director in advance except in the case of emergencies. Written notice from a parent or guardian is required. Any absence without such prior notice, except in the case of an emergency, will be deemed unexcused. Unexcused absences will adversely affect the student's grade and may result in expulsion from the orchestra. The director reserves the right to prohibit participation in any given performance due to excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused. If a student does not participate in a performance due to excessive excused absences, whether absent at the time of the performance or prohibited by the director, he/she may make up the grade through the completion of a written assignment. Failure to complete this assignment will adversely affect the student's grade. Any student who does not participate in a rehearsal or performance without an excusable reason will not be allowed to make up the grade.

#### **B. Tardies**

Students are expected to be punctual in arriving for all orchestra functions. This means that students are to be ready to begin at the designated time. In order to comply with this rule, students should arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the starting time of the rehearsal or performance. Any tardy must be approved by the director in advance when possible. Any tardy without such prior notice and approval, barring emergencies, will be deemed unexcused. The director reserves the right to prohibit participation in any given performance due to excessive tardies. If a student does not participate in a performance due to excessive excused tardies, whether tardy at the time of the performance or prohibited by the director, he/she may make up the grade through the completion of a written assignment. Failure to complete this assignment will adversely affect the student's grade. Any student who does not participate in a rehearsal or performance without an excusable reason will not be allowed to make up the grade.

#### **C. Notification of Extra Rehearsals and Performances**

When possible, at least two weeks' notice will be given for any extra rehearsals, performances, or other functions. Once this notice is given, all members are required and expected to attend.

#### **D. Conflicts with Sports and Other DSF School Sponsored Events**

If a participation conflict between orchestra and a Freeman-sponsored event arises due to postponement and subsequent rescheduling of either the orchestra or school-sponsored activity, it is expected that the conflict be resolved in the following manner:

- 1) An **athletic game** receives priority over an orchestra **practice**
- 2) An **orchestra performance** receives priority over an **athletic practice**
- 3) If a conflict between **two practices** arises, the **longer-standing commitment**

receives priority.

4) If a conflict between a **game** and a **performance arises**, the longer-standing commitment receives priority.

5) Resolution of a conflict must be communicated to the director and coach(es) at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled activities.

The above steps for resolution of scheduling conflicts pertain **only to school sponsored sports and orchestra events** that have been postponed and **rescheduled** on short notice. Other conflicts are to be resolved by the student, keeping in mind the attendance policies stated in this handbook.

**STUDENTS AND PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT ORCHESTRA IS CURRICULAR AND, THEREFORE, PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCES ARE GRADED. FAILURE TO PROPERLY RESOLVE A CONFLICT WILL RESULT IN THE ABSENCE/TARDY IN QUESTION BEING DEEMED UNEXCUSED, THUS ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE STUDENT'S GRADE.**