

O'Connor High School Orchestra

2026-2027 STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK



Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and X

Visit our website- www.ocorchestra.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OC ORCHESTRAS.....	3
STUDENT MUSICIAN EXPECTATIONS.....	3
ATTENDANCE POLICY.....	3
OUTSIDE CLASS REHEARSALS.....	4
GRADING POLICY.....	4
TESTS & EXAMS.....	4
REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS.....	5
CELL PHONE/DEVICE POLICY.....	5
MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES.....	6
SCHOOL INSTRUMENT LOANS.....	6
UNIFORMS.....	7
MUSIC.....	7
PRACTICE.....	8
PRIVATE LESSONS.....	8
COMPETITIONS.....	8
EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.....	8
OUT-OF-TOWN TRIPS.....	9
ELIGIBILITY.....	9
EMERGENCY PLACEMENT OR EXPULSION.....	9
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.....	9
COMMUNICATION.....	10
ORCHESTRA FEE.....	11

OC ORCHESTRAS

The O'Connor Orchestra is divided into four performing orchestras: SYMPHONY Orchestra (Varsity), PHILHARMONIC Orchestra (Junior Varsity), CONCERT Orchestra (Sub Non-Varsity) and PREP Orchestra (Beginning). Group placement is audition-based in addition to student progress demonstrated throughout the year. Citizenship, effort, and conduct are also large factors in the director's final decision in determining personnel.

STUDENT MUSICIAN EXPECTATIONS

O'Connor orchestra students will:

- Continue to improve in overall performance skills.
- Arrive on time to class and rehearsals.
- Maintain a good attitude toward other students and director.
- Display willingness to accept comments that are designed to help students improve.
- Display willingness to help with daily functions of the orchestra.
- Maintain a spirit that is positive toward the image of the orchestra program.

Any member of Symphony or Philharmonic Orchestra who cannot meet the musical expectations or follow the rules of the O'Connor Orchestra and O'Connor High School may be removed or placed in a different group. Freshman, please understand that because of the high-level nature of these groups, students must demonstrate exceptional performance skills to be eligible for membership into the OC Symphony Orchestra.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Orchestra activities are planned so that the least number of activities will conflict. All students are expected to participate in mandatory orchestra rehearsals, performances, and events. Please remember that a grade is given for each event, including before or after school rehearsals. The 2026-2027 Orchestra Calendar can be found on the orchestra website: www.ocorchestra.org
All dates are subject to change or cancellation.

For students in more than one extracurricular activity, please consider the following:

If there is a game and a practice going on at the same time, students are expected to be at the game.

If there is a concert and a practice going on at the same time, the student is expected to be at the concert.

If there is a rehearsal and a practice going on at the same time, the student may divide his/her time.

It is the students' responsibility to discuss any scheduling conflicts with both the coach and director.

Since orchestra is a performance-based class, attendance to all rehearsals and performances is mandatory. Unexcused absences will result in a "zero" for a major grade. Please provide a written excuse or parent email if failure to attend is a result of a family emergency or extreme personal illness on the next school day.

All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be made up and it is the student's responsibility to obtain the makeup assignment. Only excused absences will be given full credit.

Remember that not having a ride or being scheduled to work do not qualify as excused absences. Please plan accordingly and pre-arrange your schedule to be at all mandatory orchestra events. The director will send reminders via email and the Band App. Check your schedules carefully and if a conflict occurs, contact us within 2 weeks of a scheduled event.

OUTSIDE CLASS REHEARSALS

Since some groups meet during separate class periods each day (i.e. Varsity Strings/Band), it is necessary to have some before and after school rehearsals. These rehearsals are the only time we can rehearse as a full group in order to prepare for concerts. Varsity Symphony Orchestra rehearsals will begin immediately after the football season is over. Please see the orchestra calendar for exact days and times. If anything changes, students and parents will receive communication about upcoming rehearsals/concerts in class, via email and the Band App. **All rehearsals are mandatory in order to perform.**

In order to make last minute adjustments and preparations for concerts, we may need to hold dress rehearsals. While it is not necessary to wear uniforms to these rehearsals, a final run-through and final polishing of the music will be the purpose of these rehearsals. Again, these are required functions.

GRADING POLICY

Each student will be awarded points based upon the following scale. Formative grades are 50% of the overall orchestra grade and Summative grades are 50%. This is the NISD district standard for Fine Arts.

ACTIVITY	MAX. POINTS	CATEGORY
Class Performance (This grade includes an assessment of daily performance in class as well as having necessary supplies and equipment, etc.)	100 per week	Formative
Rehearsals	100 per event	Summative
Concerts and Performances	100 per event	Summative
Playing Tests	100 per event	Summative

TESTS AND EXAMS

Playing tests and exams, generally assigned every other week, consist of an assigned excerpt from current orchestral repertoire. Playing tests may be recorded or live in class. After assigning the test section for recorded tests, students must adhere to due dates. Late points may be assessed if students do not adhere to deadlines.

Re-tests are encouraged. A student can make an appointment during FLEX to complete retests. Retests are not given during class. Students will receive the higher of the two grades. Retests do not affect or change a student's concert seating.

EXPECTATIONS

Classroom expectations are designed to be simple and easy to follow. They are effective in keeping order during class and rehearsals only when each member of the orchestra chooses to follow them.

1. **Place cell phone in bin at the door. All other devices must stay in backpack including headphones and earbuds.**
2. **When the bell rings, be in your seat with your instrument ready to play, orchestra binder, music, pencil, and any other necessary equipment on your music stand.**
3. **No eating is allowed during class rehearsals. If you absolutely need to eat, please excuse yourself to the hallway.**
4. **Please be sure to throw away personal trash at the end of each class in order to keep the room clean. Breakfast and lunch trays must be thrown away in the hallway.**
5. **No food or drink items allowed in lockers. Please keep lockers clean and tidy.**
6. **Respect the property of the school and other individuals. This includes instruments as well as music. You do not have the permission to use anyone else's instrument or materials. Please do not assume that you do.**
7. **Be respectful to everyone in the room -- that includes when and how you talk.**

Rehearsal expectations are specific to behavior needed during a class rehearsal.

1. **Begin tuning as soon as the tuner is on. Return borrowed tuners and turn them off.**
2. **Have your instrument, binder, and pencil out.**
3. **Participate to your fullest.**
4. **No plucking or talking while director is teaching.**
5. **Collaboration is encouraged, but do so in a manner that does not distract.**
6. **Help each other always.**
7. **Mark music frequently, even without being asked.**
8. **Silent practice while others are being heard.**

Most discipline problems can be handled through the student and director, beginning with a verbal warning or conference with the student. Depending on the situation, the following consequences may be needed: phone call or conference with parent, before/lunch/after school detention, or discipline referral to an assistant principal.

CELL PHONES/PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

In an effort to maintain academic learning time and eliminate distractions, students will not have access to their Personal Electronic Devices (cell phones, iPads, earbuds, smart watches, etc.) during class time. All students will be required to check-in their cell phones as soon as they enter the classroom in the designated phone bin. Every classroom has a landline phone. Messages can be sent from the front office in the event of a family emergency. All students are issued a district chromebook. Chromebooks should be used for academic purposes only. Students are not permitted to use the chromebook to search or distribute inappropriate content. Chats and emails should only be sent to further one's pursuit of academic success. Students are not permitted to spam groups, NISD organizations, or peers with nonessential information. Violators are subject to consequences, including confiscating the property. Furthermore, students are also strictly

prohibited from using their phones and other electronic devices as video cameras to film activities that have not been approved by campus administration. Filming fights or prohibited activities on campus are considered just as disruptive or prohibited as the activity itself, and likewise will receive the same disciplinary consequences. For further questions about personal devices, please check the information on the NISD O'Connor page about HB1481.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

INSTRUMENTS

- ☐ School-owned instruments - There will not be a district fee to use a school instrument. However, we will still issue an instrument loan agreement to be signed and returned.
- ☐ Rental or owned instruments - Each student will be assigned a storage locker for his/her instrument. Instruments should be maintained and kept clean. Label the case with your name. Ask Mrs. Johnson for a tag if you don't have one.

Recommendations for rentals and supplies:

Terra Nova Violins

6983 Blanco Rd.

San Antonio 78216

210-349-4700

<https://www.terrانovaviolins.com/>

Antonio Strad Violin

7530 Bandera Rd Ste.108

San Antonio, TX 78238

210-349-3029

<https://www.stradviolin.com/>

Texas Violin Shop

924 Coronado Blvd.

Universal City, TX 781481

210-900-7609

<https://www.texasviolinshop.com/>

Hillje Music Center & Alamo City Strings

1654 Bandera Rd. Ste.109

San Antonio 78250

210-696-0039

(closest Alamo City Strings is inside Hillje)

<https://hilljemusic.com/> &

<https://alamocitystrings.com/>

ACCESSORIES

- ☐ Shoulder rest - Required for all violin and viola students. Allows for more playing comfort. Recommended brand is *Kun*.
- ☐ Rockstop - Required for all cello and bass students for concerts and rehearsals on stage.
- ☐ Stool - Required for bass students only. Used for home practice.
- ☐ Rosin - All students need their own rosin. There will be rosin available at school for school instruments. For bass rosin, we recommend *Kolstein*, *Carlsson*, or *Pops* bass rosin.
- ☐ Soft rag - Used for wiping the instrument and strings. A small piece of an old t-shirt or microfiber cloth works great.
- ☐ Folding music stand - For home practice. It will be used occasionally for outside school performances.

SUPPLIES

- ❑ **Black** binder - 1 inch 3-ring binder w/clear view covers (dividers encouraged)
- ❑ Pencil - Required in class everyday! We use pencil in orchestra, not pen.
It is suggested that students keep a pencil pouch in binder.
- ❑ Metronome/Tuner – Use for home practice. Find your favorite app! There are many free apps, however, we recommend Tonal Energy. It is only \$6.99.
- ❑ Identification - Please label all items with the student's name, especially your instrument case.

SCHOOL INSTRUMENT LOAN & INSURANCE

There are instruments available to borrow from OC. Students will be given an instrument loan form to sign and return. It is the students' responsibility to provide general upkeep and that the instrument stays in proper playing condition. For home instruments, it is highly recommended to insure your instrument. Many families will insure their instrument through their home or renter's insurance, however, we also recommend Anderson Group International, LLC.

www.anderson-group.com

UNIFORMS

For all concerts, students wear a formal uniform issued by the school unless otherwise told to wear the orchestra shirt or optional costume. If there are any alterations needed to make your uniform look better, you may have them done provided that they are *temporary* alterations and no fabric is cut. Do not wear tennis shoes or open-toed shoes with the formal uniform.

Informal uniform: Current orchestra shirt, blue jeans, and close-toed shoes

Formal uniform option 1: Black dress, black stockings/dress socks and black close-toed shoes

Formal uniform option 2: Black long-sleeved button up shirt, black tie, black socks (no ankle or white socks), and black dress shoes (no tennis shoes)

MUSIC

All music performed by the OC Orchestra is provided by the school district. Any music used for private lessons or other purposes is to be provided by the student. Originals are the property of the OC Orchestra. Students are expected to take good care of the music, if borrowed, and return in a timely manner. Photocopied music needs to be kept in a black three-ring binder, provided by the student. The school provides only one copy of the music. Any extra copies need to be paid for by the student at 25 cents per page. After each performance, all photocopies should be destroyed.

Each student is expected to have his or her own personal copy of the music at every class and/or rehearsal. Even when a stand partner's copy of the music is being used, each student needs their personal copy of the music to make markings. From time to time, there may be an unannounced grade given for your work in marking your music.

PRACTICE

Individual home practice is an integral part of any musician's learning process. It is very important to the state of the orchestra that effort is being made by each student to be responsible for learning their part outside of the classroom. Class rehearsals are not to be used as a practice session, but as a time to improve the ensemble as a whole.

The O'Connor Orchestra is a highly successful orchestra because of the quality teaching you have received in the early years of your musical education. It becomes a superior orchestra when all of its members work diligently and consistently in the preparation of their individual parts. Just as in any other class, if there is a problem in the music that you cannot handle, please seek assistance from your director. FLEX is the best time for extra help.

PRIVATE LESSONS

Private lessons are highly encouraged, especially at the high school level. With private lessons, participating students can have the luxury of extra help on a one-to-one basis. Private lessons are offered in school for a short 20-minute session or 45-minute session. Since longer lessons tend to be more beneficial for students of this level, students may elect to enroll in forty-five minute or sixty-minute lessons outside school. For longer lessons, it is recommended to study outside of school, not during class. Remember, your growth as a player will be significantly affected by individual study with a specialist on your particular instrument. A private lesson request form will be given out at the start of school.

COMPETITIONS

All students are encouraged to participate in competitions outside the scope of the orchestra experience. The O'Connor Orchestra has been represented well in these types of contests and has enjoyed the successes of individual as well as collective performances. Varsity members are required to learn the All-Region etudes, however, are not required to audition. However, all varsity members are required to perform a solo and/or an ensemble for the region Solo & Ensemble Contest in April.

Many students elect to participate in UIL (University Interscholastic League) events, such as solo and ensemble and state solo and ensemble contests. TMEA (Texas Music Educators Association) sponsors auditions for the Region 29 All-Region and All-State Orchestras. There are also outside solo and ensemble competitions. Please come see your director if you are interested.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities is a *privilege* extended to the students of NISD. Participation in extracurricular activities places a student in a position of recognition and often bestows the position of role model upon the student participants. Any student who elects to accept the privilege of participating in extracurricular activities must recognize that he/she/they are a representative of the school and district and will be held to a higher standard of conduct than that applied to other students. **This applies to both school-related and non-school related activities.** The student is subject to state law, school district policies, school rules and regulations, the organization's requirements, and University Interscholastic League

(UIL) rules (if applicable). Failure to adhere to policy will result in the student being removed from the Orchestra program.

OUT-OF-TOWN TRIPS

During the spring, the OC Orchestra plans a trip to an out-of-town destination (depending on health status). Some of the more popular destinations in the past years have been Florida, Colorado, New York, and other in-state cities. More information will be provided on our trip for this school year as soon as it is approved including travel costs and activities. This is definitely one of the highlights of being in a high school orchestra. We strongly encourage those that can to take advantage of this opportunity.

ELIGIBILITY

It is very important that each student maintain passing grades in all classes in addition to orchestra. Most orchestra activities are *curricular*. However, any student that is not passing all classes may not participate in any *extra-curricular* activity of the orchestra during that nine-week grading period. If you are having trouble passing a class, please notify your director. We can get you extra help, if not from a teacher, from a fellow student. We expect each member of the O'Connor Orchestra to do all the work necessary to pass all his or her classes. Fortunately, since orchestras do not have the ability to advance to state, the performance is considered an evaluation, not a contest. Therefore, all students may participate in Orchestra UIL.

EMERGENCY PLACEMENT OR EXPULSION

Texas Education Code, Section 37.019 states that a student may be removed if the behavior is so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interferes with a teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class, with the ability of the student's classmates to learn, or with the operation of a school or school-sponsored activity. In addition, a student may be removed for action that is necessary to protect persons or property from imminent harm.

Acts of hazing will NOT be tolerated in the Northside ISD. The Texas Education Code (TEC) provides criminal penalties for students and organizations that engage in or have association with acts of hazing, "occurring on or off the campus of an educational institution." Hazing is defined as: "Any intentional, knowing, or reckless act by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, or holding office in an organization."

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Parents, you will receive an email soon after the start of school pertaining to parent volunteer needs. Please consider volunteering your time if it is available. We do have a Booster Club Executive Board; however, we do not want all the work to fall on them. Thank you in advance for all your help this year!

COMMUNICATION

NISD and O'Connor will continue to utilize **Schoology**. Any recorded playing tests will go through Schoology and any electronic assignments will be posted as well.

Our **O'Connor Orchestra website** is www.ocorchestra.org. Please visit our website to find dates and program information. Pass on this website to anyone interested in our program. This is a great way to recruit new students.

Email blasts will also be sent out using the database in our Teacher Access Center (TAC). Be sure your information is up to date in HAC. If you are not receiving emails, please check your spam folder.

We will also use the **BAND APP** to text out information about events. Instructions on how to sign-up for the Band App are below. Please join to stay connected with the orchestra!

VARSITY STUDENTS- 2nd period

<https://band.us/n/ada8bfe0wb634>



PARENTS ONLY- ALL GROUPS

<https://band.us/n/a1a1b476jaAb0>



PHILHARMONIC STUDENTS- 3rd period

<https://band.us/n/a2a6b6ee49a7p>



CONCERT STUDENTS- 1st Period

<https://band.us/n/aeacb4e731Z24>



PREP STUDENTS- 7th period

<https://band.us/n/afa8b8ef44gcj>



Follow us on our **Social Media** platforms. We are on **Facebook, Instagram, Twitter** and soon to be on Tik Tok!

ORCHESTRA FEE

The annual orchestra fee is \$150 and covers the following items:

1. Formal uniform rental
2. Casual uniform- Orchestra T-Shirt
3. Clinicians for Region, All-State, and UIL
4. Orchestra equipment and supplies
5. UIL fees and related expenses
6. Booster Club Membership
7. Field trip bus fees

We understand that for freshmen students this is a new concept, however, there are many more activities and events involved at the high school level, therefore a program fee is required. **Parents, please contact Mrs. Johnson if installments are needed.**

Thank you for your time in reading this handbook. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Brenda Johnson
brenda.johnson@nisd.net
210-397-4759
www.orcorchestra.org

Music can change the world. ~Ludwig van Beethoven