

# 2025-2026 Elementary Orchestra Handbook



Dubuque Community School District - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Elementary Orchestra

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# Welcome to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Orchestra!

Dear Parents,

If you are receiving this letter, it is because your child has shown interest in joining the orchestra for the 25-26 school year! You've done the registration, acquired the instrument and supplies, and the fun is ready to start. We are very excited for what this school year holds and cannot wait to get working with your student!

At registration, you completed the "5<sup>th</sup> Grade Instrumental Commitment Form." We also provided some information about DCSD's 5<sup>th</sup> grade instrumental program at the various parent nights. Now that orchestra is in full swing, we wanted to provide you with a hard copy of that information for your records or to refer to throughout the year. This handbook will also provide all the concert dates for the year (3) and to further communicate the expectations and procedures of orchestra and our rehearsals. Please keep this packet to reference throughout the year.

As a parent, you have an especially important role to play in your student's music education and in our district's music program. Without your support, our concerts, festivals, rehearsals, honor ensembles, field trips and much more would not be possible. Thank you for all you do!!

We can't wait to begin working with your kids!

Feel free to contact us with any questions regarding the handbook or orchestra in general.

Sincerely,

The 5<sup>th</sup> grade Elementary Orchestra team

Haley Nicholson

(Bryant, Carver, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Lincoln, Table Mound)

Kate Arnold

(Irving, Prescott)

Leticia Gomez

(Audubon, Marshall, Sageville)

## **Communication via Parent Square and Seesaw**

Throughout the year, information will be communicated through Parent Square, Seesaw messages, and newsletters sent home with students. Please ensure that you are signed up to receive messages through one or both platforms to stay informed about what is happening in orchestra.

## **School Day Lessons and Rehearsals**

- Students will have one 15-20 minute lesson during the school day each week. During this time, students will learn how to play their instrument and work out of their method book.
- Students will have one 30 minute rehearsal which will take place before or after school one day a week. These days and times will be communicated with students and families once the teachers have a better idea of how many students they have. During this time, students will practice music for the concerts.
- You must communicate with your teacher if the student will have to miss rehearsal or if your student will have a continuous conflict with their rehearsal time.
- On the day of a lesson or rehearsal, students will need to remember to bring their instruments, music, stand, and all other supplies to school. Students are responsible for remembering their lesson time. A reminder of time and day will be posted in their classrooms. It is up to the individual instrumental teacher whether they will call or come get students from their classroom.
- Please see the **Rehearsal and Lesson Checklist** for what else to bring!

## **Concerts Dates: Mark Your Calendars**

There will be 3 concerts this year:

1. December Informance: Student's first concert!  
**Thursday, December 4, 2025 @Hempstead Auditorium, 6:30 PM**  
**Student Arrival time: 5:30 PM through the Events Entrance**  
**Please bring instrument, folder/method book, and a folding stand**
2. Zone Festivals: More info to be communicated on which concert your child will be participating in. For now, please add these dates to your calendar.  
**Tuesday, March, 17, 2026 6:30 PM Nora Gym (Senior) OR**  
**Tuesday, March 24, 2026 6:30 PM Moody Gym (Hempstead**  
**Please bring instrument, folder/music, and a folding stand.**
3. Spring Concert- Combined 5<sup>th</sup> grade Band and Orchestra concert  
**Monday, May 18, 2026, Senior High School- Time TBD**  
**Please bring instrument, all music, and a folding stand.**

## **Concert Expectations**

- Concerts are an extremely important part of being a part of a musical group. Not only do they allow for the students to show off their hard work and newly developed skills, but they also help to build self-confidence, and etiquette skills in different settings than the students may be used to.
- **While orchestra is an elective, students are expected to attend every concert.** If you see a conflict with a concert date, time, or trouble getting transportation for your student, please address these concerns **at least 2 weeks prior to the concert.** Your director will be happy to assist you in making alternate plans.
- Orchestra is a team activity where all students play an equally vital role in the group. Please make every attempt to put concerts first before other extracurricular practices, as concerts only happen 3 times a year. We understand if there is an occasional conflict, and we appreciate your communicating that with us in advance!

## **Concert Dress Code**

- Dark or black pants/jeans (No rips please.)
- Tee shirt- Students will put district provided tee-shirt over top (to be given out at the concert)

## **Rehearsal and Lesson Supply Checklist:**

Each week, students should come to class prepared with these items:

- Instrument
- Pencil
- Music Folder (To be distributed)
- String Basics Vol. 1 Book
- Folding Stand
- Supplies in case: Rosin, Rock stop/Rock strap (Cello), Shoulder Rest or Sponge (Violin/Viola)

## **Practicing:**

- Students should practice 60-100 minutes each week for consistent progress on their instrument. We recommend students practice 20 minutes a day 4-5 times a week.
- How can parents support practicing?
  - Help them find a quiet space to practice in. Like other subjects, a quiet distraction free place is where the best learning happens.
  - Help establish a practice routine. (Ex. 4pm, after supper, etc.)
  - Listen and encourage. (Ask questions about what they are working on.)
  - Treat practicing like you'd treat reading; there is always an assignment to work on.
- What should students practice?
  - Students should practice the songs out of their method book or their concert music. Your student's teacher will communicate what they would like the student to practice.

## **Instrument Care and Maintenance:**

Whether the instrument belongs to you or the school, it is the student's responsibility to take good care of their instruments. Here are some important tips for students:

- String instruments are very weather sensitive and made of wood. Please make sure to not keep instruments in your car overnight, or expose them to extreme heat/cold (playing outside etc.) Environment changes like this can cause the wood to crack or in the case of heat, fall apart.
- Keep it clean and functional by wiping down the strings, not putting unnecessary items in the case etc.
- This is a big responsibility, so it is up to YOU (the student) to keep it safe.
- **If your instrument is not playing well or needs a repair, let your teacher know as soon as possible, or if renting from West Music/Schultz, let them know as well so that they can bring you a loaner instrument.**
- **Please do not try to fix the instrument at home.** Household tools can bend or scratch the instrument.

## **Grading:**

- During the trimester, each director will be teaching on a variety of music standards with the goal to help your child grow musically, while also to help develop their responsibility and social/emotional skills. For many students, this will be the first time that they have been expected to take this level of responsibility for their own learning. From practicing on their own each week to learning to remember their own pull-out lessons, students will gain a lot of important skills this year.
- Orchestra students will receive comments on their report cards for the first two trimesters. These comments will give insight on where they are at in their learning and areas where they can improve. At the end of the third trimester, students will receive a grade of Met/Not Met for each of our music standards.
- During conference time, more information will come out about how to meet with your teacher. Conferencing will be available virtually or in person. We look forward to meeting with you!

## **Give us a Follow!**

We have a Facebook page! You never know when we will post something...

Our Facebook is mostly for documenting the ins-and outs of our class with pictures and progress updates. There will also be occasional reminders of upcoming concerts and other musical community events.

DCSD Elementary Orchestra on Facebook 

# **Instrumental Commitment Form**

## **2025-2026 School Year**

(For your records-Electronically submitted through registration)

### **As a member of band or orchestra, I understand that...**

1. Each week I have a required lesson and a required rehearsal. This means that I will bring my instrument/music/supplies to school on the day of my lesson, and that I will attend all rehearsals. If a conflict arises, I will let my teacher know I cannot be there.
2. Being a part of a musical group is a team effort! I understand that the work I put in affects myself and others around me. I understand that to be a team player, I need to practice my lesson assignments outside of class. (The goal is 15-20 minute practice sessions a few times a week.)
3. Band and orchestra have the same expectations and consequences as a normal class. I understand that one of the most important contributions I can make as a team player is to be positive and respectful to my peers, my teacher, my instrument, and myself. I understand that I am accountable for my own actions and will do my best to keep a positive and respectful attitude in the classroom.
4. Concerts are a required part of being in band or orchestra. I understand that as a member of a musical group I will attend all concerts throughout the year. If there is an issue getting a ride to and from the concert, I will communicate this to my teacher at least 2 weeks prior to the event.
5. Following through on promises is important. I understand that joining orchestra means committing to being enrolled throughout the 2025-2026 school year. If I realize that orchestra or band are not for me, I understand that I commit to staying in the group at least through the next performance.