

L.D. Bell High School Orchestras

Handbook



Director

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The administration, faculty, and staff at L.D. Bell High School take pride in being able to offer a full and varied instrumental music program. The orchestra courses offered include the Concert, Philharmonic, and Symphony Orchestras. All students, regardless of ability, are welcomed and encouraged to participate in these ensembles.

Though we consider participation in instrumental music programs a basic right of all students enrolled at L.D. Bell High School, it is understood by the director and the administration, that selection to and participation in the orchestra is a “privilege” and not an automatic right. This privilege is earned by the student showing:

- 1) Responsible Behavior
- 2) Dependability
- 3) Musical Excellence
- 4) Dedication

It is the goal of the director to produce an outstanding orchestra. It is also the belief of the director that students learn more and develop better self-discipline and responsibility, and take more pride in outstanding orchestras than in poor ones. To produce an outstanding orchestra requires that each student accept certain responsibilities.

The following pages will outline the basic requirements for the Concert, Philharmonic, and Symphony Orchestras. Please return the last page of this handbook to the school with the requested information completed. This will indicate your notification and acceptance of the policies of the L.D. Bell High School Orchestras. Please retain the remainder of the handbook at home so that you may refer to it when necessary. If the student does not return the signed page, this will be considered an indication that the student and/or family finds the responsibilities contained herein unacceptable. In this case, the student will be placed willingly, and without prejudice, in another class.

Purpose

The orchestras at L.D. Bell High School are legitimate classes that meet regularly during the school day. The nature of each class requires the development of skills, concepts, and attitudes to be learned in class. These must, however, often be demonstrated outside of class by many and varied forms of public performance.

Member Selection

Placement in the Concert, Philharmonic, and Symphony Orchestras will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) The orchestra's instrumentation needs
- 2) The playing ability, attitude, and dedication of each individual student
- 3) Band Director's recommendation (for wind and percussion members)

Continuing Enrollment

The continuance of each student in the orchestra program will be evaluated on a year to year basis by the director. Selection for one year does not guarantee the same for the next. Students must meet the following requirements to maintain their membership in the orchestra program:

- 1) Maintain a "C" average or higher in orchestra
- 2) Demonstrate mature conduct in class, at performances, and on trips
- 3) Demonstrate loyalty and dedication to the group at all times
- 4) Receive **no** Unexcused Absences from rehearsals and/or concerts
- 5) Display increased proficiency on their individual instrument

Conduct

Being that the conduct of the L.D. Bell Orchestra student reflects not only on himself, but all other orchestra students as well as the school, each student is required to follow these rules:

- 1) Common courtesy
- 2) Mature conduct
- 3) Rules as outlined by the orchestra director (Written and Verbal)
- 4) School rules and policies as outlined by the L.D. Bell Student Handbook and the HEB ISD Student Code of Conduct

Students guilty of improper conduct will be dropped from the class.

Attendance

The orchestra cannot perform at optimum with members missing. Therefore, students are required to participate in all rehearsals and performances unless excused by the director (see excused absences). It is understood by the director that these dates will be announced as far in advance as possible. A list of confirmed dates will be given to all students at the beginning of the school year. The list is not meant to be complete, but to give you as many dates in advance as possible. All other dates will be posted in the orchestra room and on the orchestra website as they are arranged. No further written notice will be given! It is the responsibility of each student to convey this information to his/her parents. Please check calendars carefully to avoid any problems.

Extra Rehearsals

Rehearsals outside of school time will be called only when absolutely necessary. If string sectionals are needed, these will be held during class, before school, or after school hours. There should be no need for these if each student practices their part at home. However, sometimes this does not happen and the quality of the group cannot be sacrificed. Sectional rehearsals are required of all sections who have not mastered the required music.

The Symphony Orchestra will hold after school rehearsals throughout the year. All students are required to attend to maintain their membership in the Symphony Orchestra. Symphony Orchestra students who fail to communicate and attempt to resolve conflicts may be placed on probation and moved to another class at the end of the trimester.

Extra Performances

On occasion, requests are made to have only part of the orchestra program perform at a certain event. Rules of attendance apply the same for these events.

Extra Help

If extra help is needed to master the necessary skills required, the director is available to help the students free of charge. Due to scheduling, it is the student's responsibility to contact the director and make this arrangement.

Excused Absences

The following qualify as excused absences:

- 1) Illness
- 2) Death in the family
- 3) Family emergency
- 4) A previously scheduled conflict which the director **has approved in writing** no later than 7 days before the announced date. All absences will be considered **unexcused** until approved by the director.

Important: In the event of a conflict, **the student** has the responsibility of submitting an online Absence Request form. This form is available on the orchestra website at www.ldbellorchestra.com. Forms that have not been submitted prior to one week before the orchestra event may not be considered. This form does not automatically excuse an absence. Each case is considered individually and privately according to its circumstances.

In the case a rehearsal or performance is missed with an excused absence it will be the **student's responsibility** to obtain the make-up assignment from the orchestra director. This assignment will be due **one week** from the date of the missed rehearsal or performance. Full credit can be earned for an excused absence.

Unexcused Absences

Never assume an absence will be excused! Although it would be impossible to include a complete list, the following identifies examples of unexcused absences:

- 1) Homework
- 2) Transportation problem
- 3) Working at a job
- 4) Birthday celebration
- 5) Oversleeping
- 6) Forgetting instrument and/or music

Care of Music

Students are responsible for all music they receive. Missing or damaged originals of music must be replaced or a \$5.00 fine per sheet must be paid, unless the music is a rental not owned by the school. Prices for rental music are set by the rental company. A missing folder will result in a fine of \$20.00. Whenever seating is changed, each student is responsible for checking the new folder. Any missing or damaged music must be reported at that time. The following will be considered damage:

- 1) Torn pages
- 2) Extraneous markings
- 3) Writing in ink or magic marker
- 4) Any other markings or damages which might hamper future use of music

Equipment

The following is a list of required supplies (other than your instrument):

- 1) Extra set of strings
- 2) Mute
- 3) Rosin
- 4) Shoulder rest (for violins and violas), rock stop (for cellos and basses)
- 5) Tuner with a vibration clip
- 6) Pencil

All instruments are to be in good playing condition. Proper maintenance is required. Students are expected to have shoulder rests, rock stops, rosin, etc., at each rehearsal and performance. A student will be allowed one day of class time because of a broken string. After that time, each day of class time missed will result in 20 points being deducted from their daily grade.

All instruments at one time or another will need to be repaired at a music shop. When a student is unable to participate because of a broken instrument, a note is required from his/her parent. Only a reasonable amount of time for repair will be allowed. Students are also required to keep fingernails short, as this results in an inability to properly play an instrument.

Uniforms

The Concert, Philharmonic, and Symphony orchestras all wear professional black for performances. This includes a long black dress for the girls and a tuxedo for the boys. Students may use their own tuxes or they may use one from the school. However, all uniforms must be consistent with the school uniform.

Fingernail Policy

Students are expected to maintain their fingernails and keep them short for optimal playing ability. Any synthetic or gel/dipped nails must be kept short and maintained. Nails that extend past the pad (tip) of the finger are considered too long and must be trimmed for all rehearsals and performances. It is the sole discretion of the director to determine whether fingernail length and shape are acceptable for optimal playing condition. Special events will be given consideration for up to two days (Friday and Monday).

Fees

Each student in the L.D. Bell Orchestra Program will pay an \$120.00 fee at the beginning of each school year. This fee will cover the following:

- 1) Uniform dry cleaning at end of the year
- 2) One Orchestra T-Shirt
- 3) All-Region Entry
- 4) UIL Solo and Ensemble Entries (region entries only)
- 5) Some student social expenses (i.e. Fort Worth or Dallas Symphony trip, Baylor Trip, pizza, etc.)

Orchestra Trips

On selected years, the L.D. Bell Orchestras will participate in some form of extra-curricular trip. The destination of the trip, and the contest or exhibition entered, will be decided on by the director. Students will be responsible for all costs pertaining to this trip. Since not all students are financially able to handle the cost, fund raising projects will be offered to help defray some of the expenses.

Since the trip involves the representation of the school during some form of performance or competition, should any factor become involved that would result in a poor reflection of the students and the school, the director retains the right to cancel the trip. (Example – Too many students not able to make the trip due to cost or grades.)

More information will be given to the students concerning the trip as it is confirmed. (Cost, time, place, etc.)

Grades

Grades will be determined by the following criteria:

- 1) Quality of performance
- 2) Knowledge of music
- 3) Daily preparation
- 4) Daily participation
- 5) Conduct and attitude
- 6) Attendance at rehearsals and concerts (students are expected to be present for the entire concert, not just their individual performance.)
- 7) Written examination
- 8) Playing examinations (live and recorded)

Students desiring an "A" should do the following:

- 1) Demonstrate good posture and position at all time
- 2) Master the required music
- 3) Make an effort to improve deficient areas
- 4) Have all music properly marked
- 5) Have proper equipment and music for each class
- 6) Keep fingernails trimmed to an appropriate length
- 7) Be attentive during class
- 8) Demonstrate proper conduct during class (no gum, no talking while tuning and rehearsing, etc.)
- 9) Be on time for all classes, rehearsals, and concerts
- 10) Prepare for playing and written tests
- 11) Turn in all playing exams taken through Charms and turn in appropriate extra credit if needed

Students are encouraged to check with the director at any time regarding the status of his/her grade.

Playing Exams

All minor playing exams over regular orchestra music are taken online and at home. Minor playing exams are usually scheduled on Friday, due by Monday before school. Students will lose 20% of their test grade for each day their test is late in being turned in until they may no longer earn credit for the test. Students having difficulty recording their tests may schedule a time to take them with the orchestra office. Failure to show up at a scheduled test time will result in a loss of 20% of the total grade for each day the test is late.

Extra Credit

Every student in orchestra should aspire to have a grade of 100% every six weeks. Students are therefore highly encouraged to earn extra credit. Students may earn extra credit throughout the year by the following methods:

- 1) Practicing at least 2 ½ hours for any one week period on the instrument they play in orchestra
- 2) Auditioning for All-Region or All-State Orchestra
- 3) Performing at the UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest
- 4) Attending an approved performance by another orchestra. The director's approval is required.
- 5) Performing as a member of an ensemble such as the Fort Worth or Dallas Youth Symphonies
- 6) Other extra credit as approved by the director.

All extra credit forms must be turned in to the director by the last day of the six weeks grading period in which the extra credit took place. Extra credit may be used to replace minor grades with a 100, provided the student made an attempt at the original grade. If a student receives a "0" on a playing exam because they did not turn in the exam, they may not replace the grade with extra credit.

**** AN UNEXCUSED ABSENCE FROM A PERFORMANCE WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT FAILING THE SIX WEEKS IN WHICH THE PERFORMANCE OCCURRED!**

Grading Scale	
<u>Activity</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Major Grades	60%
Required Concerts In-Class Performance Evaluations	
Minor Grades	40%
Playing Examinations Daily Performance/Participation in Orchestra Rehearsals and/or Sectionals Having Necessary Equipment (instrument, pencil, etc.)	

**It is the student's responsibility to check with the director regarding any item that may result in the loss of points.

Eligibility

Texas has a “no pass, no play” law which states that in order to be eligible to participate in extracurricular events, students must maintain a grade of 70 or above in all classes. Orchestra students must remain eligible in order to compete and travel with the orchestra. Eligibility is a major consideration when selecting Symphony Orchestra members. Symphony Orchestra members who are consistently ineligible may be removed from that orchestra and placed in the Philharmonic Orchestra.

Discipline Plan

- 1) A student must follow instructions the first time they are given.
- 2) Students must have their instruments and music in class every day.
- 3) Students must be in the rehearsal room before the bell rings. Each student will have one minute to get their instruments out and be seated in their chairs ready to play. Students late in the room or not ready to play on time will be counted tardy.
- 4) Students are not to leave the rehearsal room without permission from the director. This includes during and after daily rehearsals.
- 5) No talking, whispering, throwing objects, playing on cell phones, etc., during the instruction period.
- 6) No gum is allowed in the orchestra room or during performances at any time!
- 7) No student will be allowed to laugh at, attempt to embarrass, ridicule, or belittle any other student.

If a student chooses to break a rule:

- 1) 1st infraction – warning
- 2) 2nd infraction – warning and call to parents
- 3) 3rd infraction – referral and call to parents

**If a student’s parents cannot be reached, a student may be referred to their assistant principal

Director’s Philosophy

The director of the L.D. Bell High School Orchestra program believes that each student is capable of making a contribution to the group and growing in knowledge and appreciation. The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook provide an accurate method of assessing each student’s progress. The personal and musical progress of each student is the ultimate goal of this organization.