



Orchestra Handbook

LAKE BELTON HIGH SCHOOL

Jenna Burchell
Director of Orchestras

Letter from the Director

Dear Orchestra Families,

Welcome to the Lake Belton High School orchestra program! You have chosen to be a part of an outstanding organization. By enrolling in orchestra, your entire family has signed up for a truly unique experience.

Students are learning more in orchestra than how to play an instrument. They are also developing the life skills of discipline, teamwork, responsibility, self-confidence, and critical thinking. As you continue your venture into the orchestral world, I hope to share the love of music while providing a strong foundation in music education.

As we begin this year together, it is important to address that communication and understanding, as well as parent/guardian involvement, is critical to our success. By being the parent/guardian of an orchestra student, you have automatically become a part of the Lake Belton Orchestra family. Please take the time to read through this handbook as a family. It contains the various policies and procedures concerning the orchestra program, as well as the calendar of events for the year. If we follow these expectations, we are certain to have a fantastic year.

Parent/guardian involvement and interest in their child's musical growth can be the single most important factor in their total musical education. When families are actively involved in their child's musical education, the chances for success are exponentially greater than for the students whose families show little interest.

If I can ever be of any assistance to you, please feel free to contact me. We are going to have a great year as we continue to build a rich tradition of excellence in the Lake Belton High School Orchestra program!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenna Burchell".

Jenna Burchell
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2025-2026 Calendar of Events

	Event	Time	Location
<u>August</u>			
28	Fees & Forms due		
<u>September</u>			
27	All-Region Auditions***		College Station HS
<u>October</u>			
7	Fall Concert*	7:00 PM	LBHS PAC
6	All-State Area Recording^	TBA	TBA
<u>December</u>			
13	All-Region Clinic & Concert^		Baylor University
16	Winter Concert*	7:00 PM	LBHS PAC
<u>January</u>			
31	UIL Solo & Ensemble^		Harker Heights HS
<u>February</u>			
2	Pre-UIL Concert**	TBA	LBHS PAC
25	UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Contest**	TBA	Belton HS
<u>March</u>			
28	Belton ISD Solo & Ensemble Contest*		Belton HS
<u>May</u>			
12	Spring Concert*	7:00 PM	LBHS PAC
13	End-of-Year Banquet	6:30 PM	Tenroc Ranch

*Required event for all LBHS Orchestra members (BISD Solo & Ensemble not required for Chamber)

**Required event for all Concert and Chamber Orchestra members

***Required event for all Chamber Orchestra members

^ Specific students only

Class Policies and Objectives

Three Simple Rules of the Lake Belton Orchestra Program:

1. Always do things the right way.
2. Be professional in everything that you do.
3. Remember, everything you do represents you, your family, your school, your community, and the Lake Belton High School Orchestra program.

Orchestra Objectives

Students in Orchestra will develop the following skills and concepts:

1. Self-discipline, self-confidence, responsibility, and dependable behavior.
2. Respect for others, loyalty to the ensemble, and pride in the organization.
3. Respect for and proper use of equipment.
4. The ability to work cooperatively with others toward the performance of music in large and small ensembles.
5. A high degree of music reading encompassing: correct rhythm, appropriate tempo, right and left hand technique, dynamics, precision and the ability to be versatile and adjust to any given musical situation.
6. A high level of quality artistry through individual musical awareness, control, and technical facility.
7. The knowledge of a wide variety of orchestral literature.
8. A functional knowledge of music history, theory, and terminology.

Class policies continued on following page.

Rehearsal Expectations

- All students should be in their seats with their materials when the tardy bell rings, and should be unpacked and ready to tune no later than 3 minutes after the bell rings.
- When the conductor or concert master stands on the podium, stop what you're doing, and wait for tuning instructions.
- Respect your classmates and the orchestra rooms.
- Listen and remain silent for the entirety of the rehearsal. If you have a question, raise your hand.
- Have YOUR instrument, music, pencil, and all required equipment at your chair.
- When the conductor stops, immediately stop playing and wait for instructions.

Rehearsal Facilities

- Food, drinks, gum, and candy are not allowed in the orchestra room without permission of the director. (Bottled water is acceptable)
- Instrument lockers are to be kept clean and free of trash at all times.
- Keep the orchestra room clean. If you see trash, pick it up and throw it away, or notify the director.
- Chairs and stands will be properly stored when not in use.
- The orchestra rooms and practice rooms are for instrument storage and music practice only.
- Only authorized students are allowed in the storage rooms, office, and the music library.
- Non-orchestra members are not allowed in the orchestra room unless they have the consent of the director.

Music

- Music will be passed out one time only. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to pick it up outside of rehearsal time from the director or student librarian.
- All music must be kept in a *black* 3 ring binder.
- All music must be at every rehearsal with its owner. Do not assume your stand partner will bring theirs.
- Write bowings, fingerings, etc. immediately when you are given the information. Bring a pencil!

Cell Phone Policy

Orchestra students are expected to adhere to the following concerning cell phone use: students are not permitted to use cell phones during warm-ups, sight reading, and rehearsal of concert repertoire. When a student is not in compliance with these expectations, a single warning will be given, and five points deducted from their daily participation grade. Upon a second infraction, another 5 points will be deducted, and the phone will be collected for the remainder of the class period. The phone will be returned when the class period is over. Students may have their phones out when specified by the director, such as during announcements to take note of any upcoming events and/or dates. If a student should need access to his/her phone due to a medical necessity or family emergency, the director should be notified at the beginning of the class period before rehearsal begins.

Grading and Attendance Policies

Grading

Success in Orchestra, as in any other activity, can be equated to the amount of effort put forth by each student. Therefore, our grading system rewards improvement and effort. It penalizes poor performance and lack of dedication.

Major Grades – 65%

- Playing tests
- Concert participation & etiquette (TWO major grades for each required concert event as scheduled)
- Before or after school rehearsals/sectionals (this is one cumulative grade every nine weeks)
- Chamber Orchestra members are required to attend one outside performance per semester. (An outside performance may include the Temple Symphony or other professional performance approved by the director)

Minor Grades – 35%

- Musicianship grades (see below)
- Playing assignments, quizzes, worksheets

Daily Participation Grade

Students will be given a weekly musicianship grade. All students who actively participate in rehearsals and bring all of their materials receive a 100 for this grade. Some examples of musicianship grade deductions are:

- No instrument and/or music– 20 points per day
- Long Nails – 10 points per day
- Disruptive behavior or talking during rehearsal – 10 points per day

Homework/Practice

Homework is not officially given on a daily basis. However, it is understood that throughout the semester each student should take the initiative to practice on a daily basis outside of the classroom. There is always something to practice whether we are preparing for a performance or not.

Assessment Retakes

All performance assessments may be retaken as many times as the students wishes in order to receive the highest grade possible (100). These retakes must be scheduled with the director in advance and must take place within the grading period in which the assessment took place.

Make Up Assignments for Missed Rehearsals and Performances

It is impossible to recreate the rehearsal or performance environment that takes place. It is *imperative* that all students are present at these events. Therefore, the only circumstances that allow for 100% of the grade to be achieved are excused absences. In the case of an excused absence, students may request a make up assignment from the two options below. These assignments must be requested through the orchestra director within the grading period in which the rehearsal or performance took place. **Students who miss a concert with an unexcused absence will receive a zero.** Please see the concert attendance and absence policy sections for more information.

Option 1 – Video of focused practice session for the amount of rehearsal/performance time missed.

Option 2 – Written review of orchestra performance as assigned by the orchestra director.

Attendance

Concert Attendance

Orchestra is a performance-based course. Therefore, students are **REQUIRED** to attend performance events listed on the Calendar of Events. Students will receive **two major grades** based upon attendance and etiquette. This grade will be based purely upon the level of participation and demonstrated concert etiquette. It is expected that students stay for the entirety of the event to receive credit. Most concerts begin at 7:00 PM, and students must arrive dressed in formal attire at the call time specified in advance by the director. **Students who miss a concert with an unexcused absence will receive a zero.** Forgetting about the concert, not having a ride or uniform ready, etc. will not be considered excused absences. Alternate assignments will **NOT** be given to any student with an unexcused absence from a concert. Concert grades cannot be made up.

Rehearsal and Sectional Attendance

Sectionals and rehearsals are a huge part of our success as a group. Students must attend all sectionals and rehearsals scheduled for their ensemble/instrument. During this time, we will work on All-Region audition music, playing technique, music for performances/contests, and Solo & Ensemble repertoire. Students will be notified in advance as to specific times/dates when their orchestra will be attending these rehearsals or sectionals. Students will receive a major grade based upon attendance. Please see the absence policy below.

Absence Policy

All students are to attend all sectionals, after school rehearsals, and performances. We realize that some situations warrant an excused absence from events. ***Excused absences will be considered for the following reasons:***

- Medical Emergency
- Death in the family
- Religious Holiday
- Excused school absence
- One time family event such as a wedding (Must be approved, **in advance**, by the director)

Excused absences are granted at the discretion of the director. Please adhere to the following timeline when requesting excused absences:

- Rehearsal outside of the school day – at least 3 school days in advance
- Concerts and Major Performances – at least 10 school days in advance
- Contest or Festival – *at least* 1 month in advance

All absences require communication through the **conflict notification form** posted on Schoology. ***Verbal or written excuses from students are not acceptable.*** Submitting this form does not guarantee approval. If you have an unexcused absence from either a rehearsal or concert, you may not be eligible to attend non-mandatory orchestra trips.

Please see information regarding other activities during scheduled orchestra events on the following page.

- *Tutorials* - If at all possible, please try to arrange to attend any needed tutorials at a time that does not conflict with your sectional. If you must attend a tutorial during sectional time, be sure to communicate with your director ahead of time as this may affect what is covered during the sectional. When communicated well in advance, a student will always be allowed to attend tutorials when needed, but he or she is responsible for making up work done during the missed sectional.
- *Other performing groups* – A student has one free absence from a sectional for these types of activities (but you must communicate with the director ahead of the sectional).
- *Athletics* – Students must communicate conflicts well in advance so that the director and coach can work together to alleviate the conflict.
- *Family emergency* - You must turn in a parent note to your director the next time you are in orchestra class following the missed sectional.
- *Clubs* - Club meetings are not excused. If there are extenuating circumstances, see your director and we can most likely work something out.
- *Sports outside of school* - Non-school related sports (clubs, Little League, etc.) are not excused unless permission is requested in advance and approved by the director.

UIL Eligibility

Rehearsals, sectionals, and concerts, and concert and sight-reading contest are considered co-curricular activities, and Orchestra members may attend these events regardless of the academic standing. All-Region Auditions/Concerts, UIL Solo & Ensemble Contest, other concert contests/festivals, as well as trips are considered extracurricular. A student receiving a grade below 70 in any class during a nine-week grading period will be ineligible for any extracurricular activity the orchestra takes part in until the next progress report or report card shows that they are passing ALL of their classes.

This policy has been a part of Texas State Law since 1984, and there can be NO exceptions made for any student, so be sure to keep up with your grades in all classes. The most common cause for student failure in a class is failure to turn in assignments.

In addition to UIL eligibility requirements, students must meet other criteria before attending orchestra events outside of school such as playing tests, music pass offs, at home practice, and sectional attendance.

Definition of Extracurricular Activity

19 TAC §76.1001, Subchapter AA

(a) An extracurricular activity is an activity sponsored by the University Interscholastic League (UIL), the school district board of trustees, or an organization sanctioned by resolution of the board of trustees. The activity is not necessarily directly related to instruction of the essential knowledge and skills but may have an indirect relation to some areas of the curriculum. Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to, public performances, contests, demonstrations, displays, and club activities, with the exception of public performances specified in paragraph (2) of this subsection.

Required evening concerts are considered curricular, so they are mandatory regardless of a student's eligibility status. All students (eligible or ineligible) in Concert and Chamber Orchestras are required to participate in the University Interscholastic League Concert and Sight-Reading contest in the spring semester. UIL takes precedence over all school activities. Students will not be penalized by other organizations for attending the UIL orchestra contest or rehearsals. Students will receive two major grades for their participation in the UIL contest.

Instrument and Equipment Policies

Instruments

All students must acquire an instrument to participate in orchestra. Students will not be provided with a school-owned instrument for at-home practice. As students enter the High School Orchestra Program they should begin to explore purchasing an instrument that will last the student throughout high school. It is recommended that the instrument be purchased from the string shop where the student previously rented (such as Lisle Violin Shop). By doing so, you are allowed to apply all of your previous rental payments towards the purchase of a step-up instrument.

Cello/Bass

Cellos and Bases are required to have an “at home” personal instrument. However, Belton ISD will provide the student with an instrument to use at school. Your personal instrument will then become your “stay-at-home” instrument. You will use this for at-home practice and some performances. This policy is in place to reduce the need to transport large instruments on a daily basis. It is very important that each student has his or her own personal instrument in order to complete the necessary at home practice. The student is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the school-issued instruments, including string replacements and bow re-hair. Students must also provide their own personal accessories such as rosin, mute, or rock stop. Each student will pay a fee of \$50 for “at-school” instrument use. The instrument will be inspected at the end of the year for damage and the student must pay for any repairs above normal wear and tear.

Violin/Viola

All violin and viola students are expected to bring their personal instrument to school every day they have rehearsal. They will be provided with a locker for their instrument to be stored in during the school day. Violin and viola players are also expected to bring their instruments home on a daily basis and avoid leaving them at school overnight.

Instrument Repair

All instruments should be kept in excellent playing condition. This includes regular bow re-hairs and string replacement. If your instrument is in need of repair, please contact your director immediately. *Do not try to repair the instrument yourself!* If an instrument is put in the shop, the student needs to give his or her director a note describing the circumstances no later than the first class day of the occurrence.

Buyer Beware

If you are thinking of purchasing an instrument please consult your director before doing so. It is our pleasure to accompany you on your instrument search. We are professionals and we want to make sure you get the most from your money. Please avoid purchasing instruments online/through eBay. It is very important to play on the instrument prior to purchasing. Online purchases do not allow you to do this.

The quality of instrument on which your student plays affects not only their personal progress and ability but also the overall sound of the orchestra. There are many companies selling string instruments that are marked “Stradivarius” or “Teacher Recommended.” Real Stradivari instruments cost millions of dollars and anyone can say they are a teacher online. A large percentage of these instruments are poor copies that are machine manufactured and NOT recommended by teachers. Many are “kits” put together in a sweat shop style facility where the workers know nothing about how the instrument is supposed to perform. As professional string teachers, it is our job to help you select a quality instrument that does not have built in flaws that will hinder your child’s progress. There are many different ways to go, but we recommend renting an instrument for a year or two before you purchase. There are several reputable companies that rent acceptable instruments for your child to learn on. (Please ask us for information on these companies.)

Every child is not the same size, so the instrument they play on must be scaled down to fit their particular needs. Students who play on instruments that are too large for them can significantly slow down their learning process. Please do not consider purchasing a full-sized instrument until your child is physically ready. Please trust our decision in recommending instrument sizes for your student. We have their best interests in mind. When you are ready to

purchase an instrument, we WANT to be involved in the process to make sure you are receiving a quality instrument that is worth the money you are spending on it.

We highly recommend renting from our primary vendor: Lisle Violin Shop.

WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT PURCHASE AN INSTRUMENT FROM THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

1. Pawn shop
2. Internet auctions
3. Department Stores
4. "Big Box" Stores
5. An online company that does not allow returns.
6. Anyone who has kept the instrument in an attic, garage, or any other non-climate controlled environment.

Required Supplies

- Instrument
- Black, 1 inch, 3-ring binder
- 2 Pencils (1 pencil on music stand at all times)
- Instrument cleaning cloth
- Rosin
- Shoulder rest (violin/viola), Two Rock Stops (cello/bass)

Instrument Locker Policies

- All violin and viola students will be assigned an individual instrument locker for their use. Cello and bass lockers may possibly be shared between students.
- Place your instrument in the correct storage area each day and attach a nametag so we can properly identify it.
- Keep your supplies locked up when not in use. If locks are lost, then students are responsible for replacement.
- Your director will keep a record of all lock combinations. It is the responsibility of the student to use their lock properly.
- You may not touch or use another student's instrument.
- Play school-owned instruments *only* if that instrument has been checked out to you.
- Keep your locker clean and free of all trash and non-orchestra related items (shoes, food, etc.)

Practicing

Practicing faithfully is vital to being a responsible member of the orchestra. The following section explains what and how you should practice.

Goals

Strive for the following when you practice:

- Controlled steady tempo
- Rhythmic accuracy
- Good intonation
- Good articulation
- Rich tone
- Clean sound
- Good dynamics
- Musicality
- Good reading skills

Uniforms

When you perform with the orchestra, you will need to wear a uniform and follow certain guidelines that differ in some ways from what we do during rehearsals.

Attire

You must comply with uniform guidelines and instructions before a performance to be allowed to perform. Your director has the final say as to whether your performance dress is appropriate. Please inform your director AT LEAST two weeks prior to an event if you have an extreme hardship in meeting the uniform requirement.

Informal:

Lake Belton High School Orchestra T-shirt, blue jeans, and tennis shoes.

Formal:

Option 1 - *Black orchestra dress, black shoes (closed toe, no heels for cello players)

Option 2 - *Tuxedo jacket, *tuxedo pants, tuxedo shirt, *bow tie, *vest, black dress shoes (no sneakers), black socks

*provided through Belton ISD

Private Lessons

The private lesson program in Belton ISD is a great resource for students of all ability levels. As teachers, we try to individualize instruction as much as possible. However, we cannot recreate the environment that takes place in a private lesson setting.

When enrolled in private lessons, students will be placed with an expert on his or her instrument. They will then meet with their teacher during orchestra rehearsal or after school on a weekly basis (depending on the private teacher's schedule). During this time the teacher will focus on the individual needs of that student.

A common misconception is that private lessons are only for those students who are behind. This is not true!

Private lessons are an outstanding way to increase your ability level no matter where you're at now!

What private lessons cover:

Lessons concentrate on position (left and right hand), muscular refinement and control, intonation, and tone production. Private teachers use scales, arpeggios, etudes, and solos to achieve maximum results.

In orchestra class, we work on all of the above—sometimes as individuals, but most of the time as a group and section. You need individual attention to correct any bad habits and to push your technique to the next level.

What you need and when they're offered:

The average half-hour private lesson cost is set by BISD and ranges from \$18 - \$25 per half hour lesson. If you take lessons at a teacher's home, you will pay his or her set rate. You will need to purchase any music that the teacher requests—usually a scale book and perhaps a solo book (around \$20). You will be able to use these books for some time, depending on how quickly you progress through the material.

Expenditures

Payments to the LBHS orchestra program may be made with cash, check, or money order. If you are paying by cash, please send the exact amount. Checks and money orders must be made out to Lake Belton High School. Please send payment with students in a labeled envelope or attached note with the student's name.

Organizational Chart

We know parents/guardians and students may have questions or concerns regarding the Orchestra Program from time to time. To assist you in resolving these issues, please follow the organizational chart below.

LBHS Orchestra Staff

Jenna Burchell

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Lake Belton High School
254-316-6245
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Start here and work down	Jenna Burchell, Director of Orchestras
2nd	Your student's Assistant Principal
3rd	LBHS Principal
4th	BISD Director of Fine Arts

This concludes the 2025-2026 Lake Belton High School Orchestra Handbook.