

Orchestra 101

Westridge Middle School

Director – Curtis Mulvenon
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Website – www.prestowest.org

Grading – Grades are based on three categories of scores: daily rehearsal points (DRP), playing and other assignments, concert performance.

Grade weighting:	DRP	40%
	Assignments	40%
	Concerts	20%

DRP- Points are awarded for on time attendance, having all materials, and daily improvement on assigned music. 5 points are possible each rehearsal. Unexcused tardy will result in loss of 2 points. Not having instrument will result in loss of all points.

Assignments – Assignments may be in written or playing form. Point value will vary depending on the assignment. Any assignment may be turned in late, up to one week past the original due date, for a maximum 50% credit. Assignments that were turned in on the original due date may be redone to achieve the desired grade. No point loss will occur with assignments that meet this criteria.

Concerts – Attendance at all concerts and performances is mandatory. Any missed concert, that is not excused, will result in an immediate 20% grade reduction for the quarter. If a concert is missed due to illness or family emergency, the parent or guardian must notify the director. No grade reduction will occur for an excused absence. Points may be deducted for any student not in proper concert attire.

Concert attire:

Gentlemen:	White dress shirt	Ladies:	Black dress (or)
	Tie		Long black skirt
	Black dress slacks		White blouse
	Black socks		Hose
	Black dress shoes		Black dress shoes

Practice – Daily practice is expected for all musicians at Westridge. Set a weekly schedule so that you are assured adequate practice time (between 20-45min. a day is a good place to start). Consider this self-directed homework for orchestra class. Each practice session should have short and long term goals. Don't just sit down and start playing. Ask yourself, "What am I trying to accomplish with this practice?"

Warm-up – Play through a couple of scales. Play a difficult bowing from the music on easier notes, etc.

Once you are warmed up, get out the hard stuff and work on it. Some tips for improving as fast as possible:

- Don't practice it wrong! Don't play wrong notes, leave notes out, or play wrong rhythms. This just teaches you to play it wrong. If it's too difficult to play right, slow it down enough that you can play

all the notes in rhythm, correctly, no matter how slow this is. When you can play it correctly slowly, start speeding it up, but never practice it at a speed that you can't handle.

- Don't just play through your music. Skip the easy parts; they're easy! Find the hard parts, slow them down, and practice them until you can play them right at the right tempo.
- If there's something you just can't play at all (a high note, for example), make it part of your warm-up. Find an exercise that makes it easier to get to that note and do it *every day the easy way*. Eventually it will start showing up in the harder music, too.

Evaluate your practice. What went well? What didn't go so well? What questions can you ask to help your understanding? How does this practice session affect what you will work on in your next session?

Instrument Supplies and Upkeep – To give us the best chance of success, each instrument should be kept in top playing condition. I will notify you if the instrument or bow is in need of attention. Strings should be replaced, at a minimum, once a year. Bows should be re-haired on the same schedule.

Required Supplies:

Violin/Viola:

Rosin
Extra set of good strings (see below)
Shoulder rest
Soft cleaning cloth
Music Stand (kept at home)
Tuner/Metronome (see below)

Cello/Bass

Rosin
Extra "A" string (cellist only)
Endpin stop
Soft cleaning cloth
Music Stand (kept at home)
Tuner/Metronome (see below)

Strings: Good strings have a synthetic core with a metal wrap. Steel strings are not acceptable. Good brands to get are: Thomastik Dominant, D'Addario Helicore, Pirastro Evah Pirazzi. There are many other good brands. Please contact me with questions or see the PRESTO website. **DO NOT BUY:** Super-Sensitive Red Label. Never buy any music supplies from Wal-Mart. Target, Ebay. These are cheap imitations of musical equipment.

Tuner/Metronome: There are many good tuner/metronome combinations out there. Any music store will have these for less than \$20. There are also great apps for android and iPhone. See the website for more information.

Private Lessons – Private lessons are encouraged for all students. Please contact Mr. Mulvenon with help finding a good private teacher. This is not a remedial thing. Private lessons are a chance for one-on-one guidance from a professional musician. All of my students that achieve at the highest level study privately.

P.R.E.S.T.O – (People Really Enthusiastically Supporting The Orchestra) is my parent booster group at the high school. Please visit the web page, www.prestowest.org for anything having to do with orchestra. All calendars, etc. are available on this web site.

Instrument Fees – Any student using a school owned instrument, must pay a rental fee. This fee is \$50 for the school year and \$25 for the summer months. Rental contracts will be sent home the first week of school (for school year) and at the beginning of May (summer contracts).

Odds and Ends – We are a character first organization. All students that are willing to give their personal best, are kind to others, and respectful of rehearsal skills, will do well in my program. Bullying, not being prepared for class, frequent lateness are not tolerated. Possible consequences include: Meeting with parent or guardian, loss of DRP's, removal from the orchestra.

Fingernails must be kept short to play in orchestra. You cannot perform correctly on any string instrument with long fingernails. If this is deemed an issue, DRP's will be deducted.

Some students have two instruments, one for school, and one for home. If this is your situation, please have your student bring home their school instrument over any extended breaks. Temperature in the buildings is not always well regulated over breaks, which can cause damage to instruments.

Instruments are to be stored either in, 1) The student's hall locker, or 2) Instrument storage cabinets located in the orchestra room.