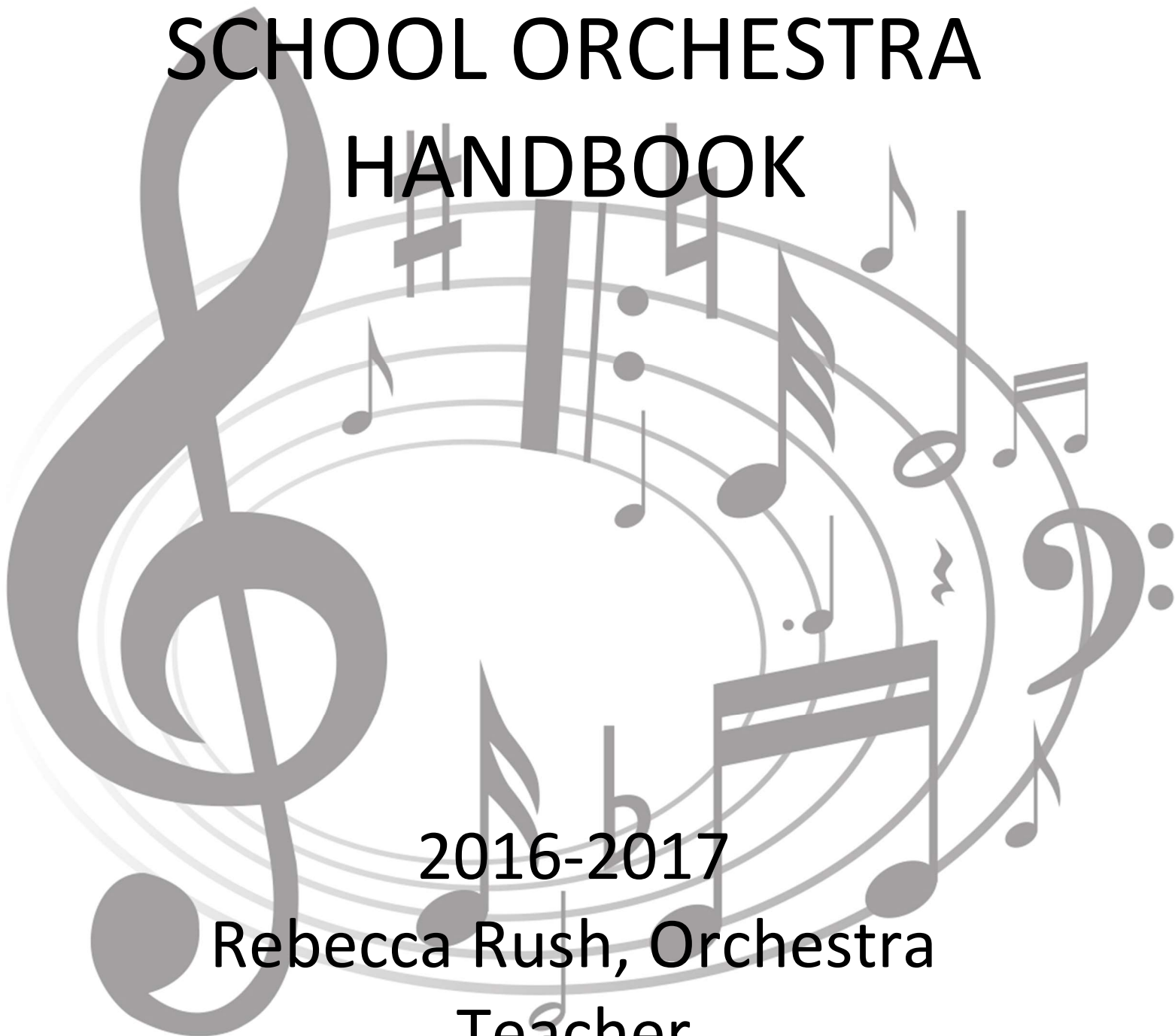


# WILSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ORCHESTRA HANDBOOK

2016-2017

Rebecca Rush, Orchestra  
Teacher



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**Welcome to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Orchestra at Wilson Elementary School!** I am excited that you have chosen to participate in this group. Learning to play an instrument takes patience, hard work, dedication, and practice at home. This can result in rewards for you both this year and later as you progress through the many different levels of musical opportunities. You will have lessons twice a week on Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings in a small group setting.

The goal of 5<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra is to provide you with a well-rounded musical education. We focus on building a solid foundation of musical knowledge and technique. While in lessons, we will focus on individual playing and playing in a larger ensemble. Through playing your instrument, you will learn and develop: self-expression, teamwork, coordination, technique for your instrument, and self-discipline. The skills that orchestra students acquire are directly related to skills necessary not only for succeeding as a musician, but also in life.

Students that take part in orchestra at Wilson are challenged to grow personally and musically, and are encouraged to achieve their highest potential. We always need to be working together to raise our level of performance. It is important to realize that orchestra is unlike any other class you that you will take. Although you will receive a grade in orchestra, as in your other classes, your effort not only affects you individually, but also the entire group. You need to be willing to work together as a team in order to achieve our goals. I have very high expectations for my students and know that with hard work, each student can meet those expectations.

I encourage all parents and students to contact me at any time if you have any questions. Again, I am incredibly excited that you have chosen to be part of the Wilson orchestra, and I look forward to seeing and hearing each student develop into talented young musicians.

Musically Yours,

Becky Rush

## CONTACT INFORMATION

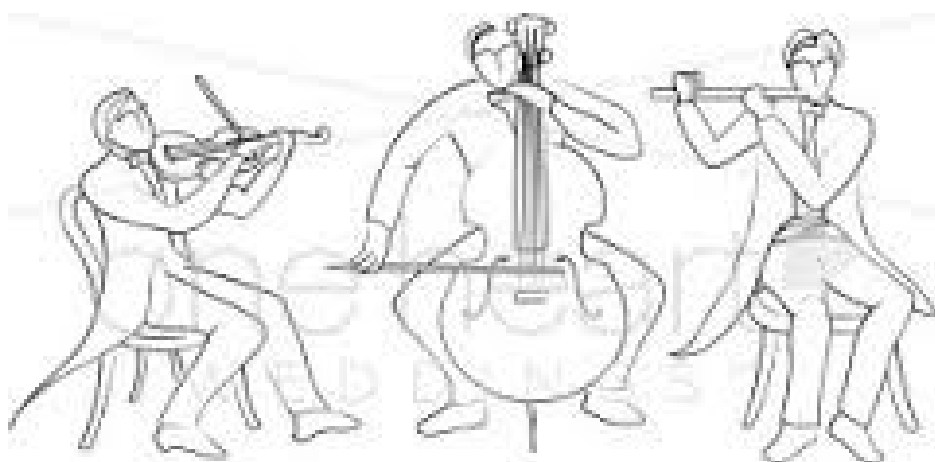
As a teacher, I believe that it is important to have an open line of communication with parents, families, and students. Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns about orchestra or your student's progress at any point throughout the school year.

Phone: 608-743-7175 (Van Buren number, but where I am most easily reached)

Email: [rrush@janesville.k12.wi.us](mailto:rrush@janesville.k12.wi.us)

## WISCONSIN MUSIC STANDARDS

- Students will sing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Students will play, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Students will improvise music
- Students will compose and arrange music
- Students will read and notate music
- Students will analyze and describe music
- Students will evaluate music and music performances
- Students will relate music to the other arts and disciplines outside the arts
- Students will relate music to history and culture



## **DAILY CLASSROOM PROCEDURE**

The success of our group is dependent on your individual self-discipline. We must be willing to follow the following procedures if we give 100% effort. Playing in harmony can only be accomplished by working in harmony. When you come to your lessons, this is what I expect:

- Read the board for the day's activities
- Take out your instrument and music
- Be seated and ready to start with your instrument, book/music, and a pencil
- Try your hardest on the music minute or other assessments
- Listen and play to the best of your ability
- I will inform you when you should put your instrument away. Make sure you have cleaned it and put it away correctly.
- I will dismiss you from your lesson. Make sure you take everything with you.

## **ORCHESTRA RULES**

First and Foremost: Respect yourself, Respect Others, and Respect Your Instrument

Along with the school rules and general common sense, please be aware of the following expectations:

- Absolutely no food, drink (other than water) or gum will be allowed in the orchestra room during orchestra lessons
- Respect other people's instruments as if they were your own
- Do not talk or play when I am talking. Questions will be answered when you are called on
- Do not talk while I am directing. You should be playing!
- Stop playing when I stop conducting
- Follow directions the first time they are given
- Instruments should only be played in the proper manner—no blasting, honking, or making strange sounds

# PERFORMANCES

Performances are the culmination of what we are working towards every day. They are more than just performances—they are an extension of the music classroom and an important component of what we do. Through orchestra, students learn about contributing to a group, something bigger than themselves. Please mark down the dates on the back of this handbook. It is very important that each student is present for each performance.

**Students are required to attend all performances unless a written excuse from a parent is given to Mrs. Rush at least two weeks before the event.**

Exceptions are always made for an emergency situation, however, in order to have an excused absence due to an emergency or illness, a parent or student must call or email Mrs. Rush *before* the concert.

There is no way for a director to duplicate a performance for the student who is absent. There is no other way to make up the unique thrill of performing, feeling the reaction from the audience, or the excitement of knowing that the hard work you put in was worthwhile. Students with unexcused absences will have to do a make-up assignment for partial credit.

## PERFORMANCE RULES

- Arrive on time. I will always give you a specific time to arrive.
- Make sure you have everything you need. This includes proper attire, music, instrument, rosin, etc.
- Do not go wandering around the school before a concert starts.
- The concert is not always done when you are finished playing. You are expected to stay to watch and listen to the other music groups

*Grades for each performance will be based on the following: Punctuality, proper dress, following instructions, and staying for the entire performance.*

## CONCERT DRESS

Concerts are a chance for us to show everyone how hard we have worked. It is important that we all look nice and “professional” whenever the orchestra performs. Please follow the suggestions below when you are getting ready to come to a concert. If you are wondering if something is okay to wear, just ask Mrs. Rush. *The key is to look nice. Don't feel like you need to buy any new clothes just to perform in a concert. \*\*You don't need to dress up for Mini Pep Band\*\**

**Concert Dress is Nice Clothing:** Slacks or khakis are preferred, but jeans are okay if necessary, so long as they have no holes. Sweat pants/athletic pants are not acceptable. Girls choosing to wear dresses or skirts need to make sure they are at least knee length. Shirts should be dressy—no t-shirts or athletic shirts.

**Mrs. Rush's Contact Information:** If there is ever an emergency or illness that keeps you from a performance, you must contact Mrs. Rush and let her know before the performance begins.

Phone: 608-743-7175

Email: [rrush@janesville.k12.wi.us](mailto:rrush@janesville.k12.wi.us)

# GRADING POLICY

The following are the criteria that will be used for your grade in orchestra. Like your other classes, you will be graded on the 1-2-3-4 scale. There are four different standards that you will be graded in for each trimester. A grade for orchestra will be on your report card, and you will periodically get progress reports from me throughout the school year.

## **Standard One: Performs with good posture and bow hold**

4—You play in each lesson with feet flat on the floor and back straight. Hands should be in the correct position on instruments and bows. During playing quizzes, stand.

3—You play in each lesson with feet flat on the floor and back straight. Hands should be in the correct position on instruments and bows. During playing quizzes, sit the same way you do in lessons.

2—You are slouching or crossing your legs. Hands are not in correct playing position.

1—You do not have your instrument.

## **Standard Two: Reads and Performs using standard notation symbols**

4—You can apply note reading/music reading concepts that we are working on to things beyond what we are doing in class. Be able to apply what you know to understand additional ideas/concepts.

3—You can read the notes we have learned in class, and play them on your instrument.

2—You struggle with reading and playing the notes we are actively working on in lessons.

1—You are not able to play a majority of the notes we are working on in lessons.



**Standard Three: Describes specific music events using appropriate terminology**

4—You can apply the concepts and vocabulary we have learned in class to understand additional ideas/concepts. You can apply things we have learned to other areas in school.

3—You can describe concepts we have worked on in class and apply them to songs we are playing.

2—You struggle with the concepts we are actively working on in lessons.

1—You do not understand the concepts we are working on lessons.

**Standard Four: Demonstrates the elements of music on an instrument**

4—You can play everything we are working on in lessons, along with some songs we have not learned yet. You are comfortable sight-reading new songs.

3—You can successfully play the songs we are working in in lessons.

2—You have difficulty with the songs we have worked on in lessons, or you cannot produce an accurate tone on your instrument.

1—You cannot play the songs we are working in in lessons or you cannot produce a tone on your instrument.

# PRACTICING

A major part of success in orchestra is practicing at home. At the beginning of each trimester, you will be given a practice sheet. This is a tool to help you keep track of what songs you need to practice and what your weekly homework assignment is. I am not requiring you to practice a certain number of minutes; instead, you are expected to practice however long you need to in order to get 3s and 4s on your playing quizzes. I suggest you have a goal of practicing 100 minutes each week. An ideal way to achieve these 100 minutes is practicing 5 nights a week for 20 minutes each.

## Practicing Tips

Practice, like homework, is an essential element in any skill-related class. The only way to improve your abilities is to play on a regular basis—more often than just at your lessons. A consistent practice routine is essential to developing good habits.

- Warm Up—Play something slow and easy first
- Practice silently:
  - Count and clap rhythms before playing them
  - Look at the notes and make sure you know how to play them
- Start slowly, and then get faster
- Practice songs in small chunks, then, when you feel comfortable with each measure, put the song together
- Repeat the songs, especially if you are struggling with them. Make sure you are always playing correct notes and rhythms.

## **HOW PARENTS CAN HELP**

There are many ways that a parent can help their child enjoy the benefits of being in orchestra. Here are some things you can do as a parent to help your child succeed in band:

- Show an interest in the music study of your child. Ask them to play for you on a regular basis and give them compliments, even if it doesn't sound that great to you at first.
- Encourage your child to perform for others when the opportunity arises.
- Keep a record of your student's various music activities and achievements.
- Notify Mrs. Rush if your child is going to be absent to performances.
- Teach your child to be punctual.
- Help your child to keep up with their lessons and practicing.
- Call Mrs. Rush if you have any questions.
- Attend concerts and other events involving your child.
- Show your support!

## **INSTRUMENT CARE**

Each student will be given instructions for taking care of their instrument. If your instrument breaks or is not working properly, please show it to Mrs. Rush before your lesson. I can do minor repairs on instruments, but if I am not able to get it fixed, you will need to take it to a music store to get repaired. Broken instruments need to be fixed in a timely manner so students can return to playing as soon as possible.

# ASSESSMENTS

Assessments are a key part of me knowing how well your student is doing in orchestra. Most of our lessons are spent playing in a group, so it is sometimes difficult for me to see exactly how a student is doing. By having your child take short, yet frequent assessments, I can quickly and easily see how they are doing and what they might need extra help with.

## **Music Minute**

The Music Minute is a weekly note-reading assessment. Our goal with the Music Minute is to increase our speed at note-reading. To play our instruments successfully, we need to be able to recognize notes quickly without thinking. There are 60 notes on each music minute, and the goal is to name as many of those notes in 60 seconds. Once a student reaches 40 notes in that minute, they will receive a 3. If a student finishes the music minute in the allotted time, they will receive a 4 and get to start practicing on a more difficult music minute. I will only use their best score when determining their final grade. This falls into the second standard on their report card.

## **Music Theory Packet**

This is your student's weekly homework. They will receive a packet each trimester, and usually will be assigned one page each week. The page will be assigned at their first lesson and will be due at their second lesson. Each assignment ties into what we are working on in lessons and what will be on their assessments in lessons.

## **Playing Quizzes**

Playing quizzes will occur two to three times each month. For each playing quiz, a student will play an assigned song from their book for me by themselves. Students will know what song their quiz will be on a week in advance. They will get a grade for both the first and fourth standards for each playing quiz. Students who would like to get 4s should stand up for their playing quiz, and play the required song by memory. Students who are successful on their playing quizzes are practicing at home on a regular basis.

### **Written Quizzes**

Written quizzes will usually be given each week at their second lesson. The quizzes will be about the same concepts that their homework was on that week. Students who are successful on their written quizzes are doing their homework each week.

### **CBAs**

Just like in each other class, orchestra students will take a CBA each trimester. Each CBA has a written portion and a playing portion. If a student is practicing on a regular basis and doing their weekly homework they should be successful on each CBA.



## WHAT IF MY STUDENT DOESN'T LIKE ORCHESTRA...

There may come a time in 5<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra that your student decides they don't like being in orchestra, or they don't like playing their instrument. When this happens, there are a few things that can happen.

First, every orchestra student occasionally goes through a period when they don't like orchestra because they feel like it's just too hard. It is important to remember that they are learning a brand new skill, and that it is going to be difficult for a while. As they put in more time and practice, it will become easier and most likely your student will enjoy it again.

Secondly, if a student really enjoys being in orchestra, but they think they chose the incorrect instrument, sometimes we can work around that. If a student is a hard worker who practices consistently and does their homework each week, I will consider letting them switch instruments. However, they need to understand that if they switch to a different instrument, they will need to catch up to the rest of the group as quickly as possible. This will usually require more practicing than the student was previously doing for a while.

If it comes down to a student being very miserable and truly not wanting to stay in orchestra, I am not going to force them to continue if they are unhappy. However, a few things need to happen before a student can drop the class.

- First, the student or parent should talk to me to see if anything can be done to help them enjoy orchestra more. As the year progresses, orchestra usually becomes more fun as we get to have more performances. I strongly suggest that a student stays in orchestra until their first concert. This is usually in December.
- If the decision is made to not continue in orchestra, a parent must have a conversation with me, either over the phone or email, so I am aware that, and why, this decision is being made.
- A student cannot drop out of orchestra until the end of a trimester. They must keep coming to lessons and working hard until the trimester ends. Then I can drop them from the class for the new trimester.

## CONCERT DATES

The following are dates that your child will perform. If there is not a specific date listed, it means there is not a set date yet. As soon as a date has been determined, I will share that information with you.

5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Concert (at Franklin)	December 12
All City Strings (at Parker)	April 5
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Concert (at Franklin)	May 31
End of the Year Concert (at Wilson)	May/June



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, parent, have read the orchestra handbook with my student. If there is anything that I need clarified, I will contact Mrs. Rush. I have written down the concert dates so I can plan for them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, student, have read the orchestra handbook with my parents. I understand that I need to practice and do my homework on a regular basis and will work hard to be successful.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**\*\*Please return this acknowledgement sheet to Mrs. Rush as soon as possible.  
Once it is returned, your child will receive 2 Dojo Points\*\***