

# *Veterans Memorial High School Orchestra & Mariachi Handbook*



**Every Student \* Every Level \* Every Minute**

*Mrs. Rabago, Orchestra & Mariachi Director*

## Welcome to the Veterans Memorial High School Orchestra!

I am excited to be at Veterans Memorial High School and I'm looking forward to working with all the string musicians. My musical objective is not only to make each student the best string player they can be, but to teach the real joy of music. No matter what your future career ambitions might be, music can be a great addition to your personal and professional life.

By becoming a member of this ensemble you have made not only a great musical choice, but an academic one as well. Nationally, students that participate in music ensembles have higher GPAs and standardized test scores. In orchestra you will learn the important life lessons of **dedication, commitment, cooperation, accountability, perseverance**, and on top of all that I hope you just have a lot of fun! Because what can be more fulfilling than playing classical, pop, world, fiddle, or even rock music with your classmates and having opportunities to share that music and fun with your friends, family, and community.

This handbook contains vital information about the orchestra program and it is important that **ALL** orchestra members and parents read it in its entirety. Please put this in a safe place so it will be easy to refer to later if needed.

Please feel free to come and talk to me about questions, concerns, or life in general. I will be available during my conference during 2nd period and after school. If you need to get a hold of me at school you can reach me at 210-619-0220 ex18172. You can also contact me by email [arabago@judsonisd.org](mailto:arabago@judsonisd.org)

Looking forward to a great year!

Amy Rabago  
Orchestra & Mariachi Director

# BAND APP

Dear Parents,

I'm excited to announce that this year our school will be using BAND to communicate. This will help us stay on the same page and not have to deal with emails and texts cluttering our inboxes.

## **What is BAND?**

BAND is a free group communication app. The group we created is a secure group that non-school members cannot join. We'll be able to communicate privately and share files, forms, and videos and photos of what is happening in school.

Even if you don't have a smartphone, you can access BAND on your PC at <https://band.us>.

\* IMPORTANT: You MUST use the link or QR code below to join the group.

Smartphone: Scan the QR code below to download the app. You will be asked to create an account and will be asked to accept the invite to our BAND group.

PC: Before going to the website, please be sure to copy/paste or type in the invite link below to your chrome, safari, or other internet browsers. You won't be able to join the group unless you use this invite link. In case you've already created a BAND account, simply copy & paste the link to your browser.

**<https://band.us/n/a7a55cRbAcf29>**



## **How We're Going to Use It**

We'll share announcements, schedules, last minute changes, alerts, and important school news.

All group information will be at your fingertips, so you won't have to rely on me or anyone else for information. Not sure about something? Check the Band first.

Thank you,

*Amy Rabago*



## How to access parent/student information in Charms

- Log on to [www.charmsoffice.com](http://www.charmsoffice.com), and click “ENTER / LOG IN” in the upper right corner.
- Locate the “PARENT/STUDENT/MEMBERS LOGIN” section of the web page.
- Login to your student’s program account using the following School Code:

### VMHSO

- This will bring up the main “Public” page. This will allow you to look at the “public” calendar for your organization, event list, and handouts and other “publicly shared” files, as well as a few other options.
- The first time you go here, enter your child’s ID NUMBER (provided by your Director) into the ***Student Area Password*** field. You will be directed to the Change Password screen, to set a personal password different from the ID, for future use. You may also be directed to create both a unique Username and Password for the student. There are also mechanisms to recover/reset a lost Username/Password – when you create your new password, create a “hint” as well.
- Whenever you enter using this Username/password, another more detailed screen appears, with various button options for you to access areas in the Charms account. What appears here is partially up to the Account Administrator or Head Director.
- Two areas in which you can help the director/administrator maintain his/her records:
  - **Update Personal Information** – if the director has allowed it, you may help make changes to your and your child’s student information page (such as updating phone numbers / cell carriers and email addresses if they change) to help them communicate with you more effectively. You may also be able to indicate which parent volunteer/resource groups you would like to participate in, if this feature is activated. Click ***Update Info*** to save changes.
  - **If your program has set up online credit card payments, you can make credit card payments for fees, trips and deposits to your student’s account.** Click ***Finances*** -- if credit card payment is activated, you will see blue buttons in the four main areas of the financial statement indicating your ability to make online payments.
- You may also see links to enter ***Practice Logs***, view ***Grades***, and use the ***Recording Studio*** if the teacher has enabled these options.
- The ***Calendar*** may list events, rehearsals, and volunteer/RSVP opportunities.
- Most importantly, the parent page assists both you and the teacher to communicate with each other. Stay up to date on what’s going on with your student!
- You can also download the Charms App to your smartphone – search your App Store for “Charms Parent/Student Portal” (or “Charms Blue”). It’s the way to stay in touch on the go!

## VMHSO Ensembles

The Veterans Memorial HS Orchestra Department consists of four Patriot Orchestra Ensembles:

- **Prelude Orchestra:** All students that have never played a stringed instrument.
- **Intermediate Orchestra:** Students who have more than a year's experience and are at the appropriate playing level for the Intermediate Orchestra. Primarily freshman, but open to upperclassmen.
- **Junior Varsity Orchestra:** All students who have met, completed, and passed off on the requirements for the Intermediate Orchestra. Students are encouraged to audition for the Region 11/12 Orchestra and Solo & Ensemble Contest. This orchestra will compete at UIL.
- **Varsity Orchestra:** This is the highest level and therefore is a group in high demand. Students in the Varsity Orchestra will be expected to perform more frequently than the other ensembles and every single member must be a strong contributor. All students will learn the Region 11/12 music and are expected to audition. This ensemble also competes at UIL.

## GRADING

### *Grades are earned---They are not given*

**60% - Participation/Progress/Daily Grade** includes having your instrument ready when class begins, having all needed supplies (binders, pencils, all sheet music etc...), correct marking of music, care and maintenance of instruments, individual and group assignments, punctuality to rehearsals, attendance at rehearsals, appropriate length of fingernails and NO GUM. This grade will reflect a student's behavior and conduct. Also included is progress and quality of performance.

**40% - Concerts, Performances, Rehearsals, Quizzes/Tests.** Since we are dealing with a performance-oriented art, it is important to understand that the results of the hard work the students put in day after day will culminate in the form of concerts. This includes participation in ALL performances, sectionals, rehearsals. Occasionally, a final rehearsal after school may be necessary.

**Tests/Playing Test: ALL LATE PLAYING TESTS WILL BE PERFORMED LIVE IN CLASS REGARDLESS OF THE WAY IT WAS ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED TO BE SUBMITTED. STUDENTS HAVE 3 DAYS FROM THE DAY THE TEST WAS MISSED TO PERFORM THE TEST. EVERYDAY AFTER THE DAY OF THE MISSED TEST IS A 10 POINT DEDUCTION IF THE STUDENT FAILED TO SUBMIT A RECORDING ONLY IF THAT WAS THE WAY THE TEST WAS COLLECTED. IF THE TEST WAS IN-PERSON AND THE STUDENT WAS ABSENT, THEY CAN PERFORM THE FOLLOWING DAY WITHOUT THE 10 POINT DEDUCTION.**

## SECTION REHEARSALS

Varsity sectional rehearsal for each section will be determined collectively by the section. Each section will agree on a consistent date and time to meet. Options will be given by the director. **Sectional rehearsals are vital to the success of this program and allow for more individualized attention.**

## CONCERT ABSENCES

Students who enroll in other school activities such as athletics, choir, band, drama, etc., need to plan ahead to avoid schedule conflicts. The orchestra director will work together with the other teachers, coaches, and directors of various activities to give each student every opportunity to be part of other groups. **NON-SCHOOL SPONSORED** activities, teams, organizations, and student jobs may not conflict in any way with the practice/performance schedule of the orchestra.

The orchestra is dependent on ***all*** its members. Unlike other classes where individuals may succeed or fail by themselves, orchestra student successes depend on the full participation of all members. The following attendance policies will affect the student's grades:

- 1) An unexcused absence from a rehearsal or performance may result in the removal of a student from future performances. Excuses are accepted only in the event of absence from school or documented family emergency. Absences can be made up with a performance of concert literature for the director during class time. **Doctor appointments are not considered excused and therefore should not be scheduled during your regular sectional or class rehearsal time. Not having a ride is not an excuse.**
- 2) In-class performance will take place the next class day after the concert. Points will be deducted for a "late test grade" and for any mistakes during the performance. Once again, unexcused absences will result in a ***M for missing translating to a Zero*** in the grade book.
- 3) If students are 10 minutes late for "call time" 15 points will be deducted. Anything later will constitute a 50 point deduction. So don't be late!
- 4) Examples of an excused absence: death in the family or medical emergency.

It is important to know **that eligibility does NOT affect concert activities.** A concert is considered co-curricular, which means it is mandatory. However, extra-curricular activities such as off campus field trips, contests, and evening activities other than concerts or rehearsals require that a student is passing either on their last report card or their last mid-six weeks progress report to participate. The key is to complete and turn in homework on time, study for tests, and seek tutoring if necessary.

## ELIGIBILITY & FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Most of the work that our students do is either curricular or co-curricular and not subject to eligibility. Curricular and co-curricular activities include free concerts, section rehearsals, and concert rehearsals.

Students who participate in extracurricular activities must meet T.E.A. (Texas Education Association) and U.I.L. (University Interscholastic League) eligibility requirements. **Students who fail any single class become INELIGIBLE.** Ineligible students may regain eligibility the following grading period if he/she is passing all courses. Semester grades are not used for eligibility. Activities that are classified as extracurricular for which TEA, UIL, and JISD Eligibility requirements apply include:

1. Any event for which admission is charged
2. Any event that is inter-school competitive.
3. Any event where ratings are awarded.  
- Only exception is UIL Concert & Sight-Reading.

Students who become ineligible for Extracurricular function, are still eligible (and required) to attend Curricular or Co-Curricular functions. Ineligible students will be given alternate assignments during contest preparation time. Students who have chronic eligibility problems will become non-performing members of the ensemble. Alternative assignments will be given.

**Refunds for any and all events related to orchestra/mariachi will NOT be given due to ineligibility nor will there be refunds of any kind for students/parents who decide not to go on a trip after the initial deposit. No refunds for Orchestra/Mariachi Fee or Instrument Usage Fees.** No refunds period.

## ORCHESTRA STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

- **Respect yourself and other people (and the director!) in the room at all times.**
  - This includes instruments and all other personal belongings.
- Listen to directions the first time they are given
- Be quiet when the director is:
  - on the podium
  - tuning
  - talking
  - playing.
  - NO EXCEPTIONS!
- Come to class prepared with music, pencil, **appropriate length of fingernails** and instrument. Be ready to start class 3 minutes after the Tardy Bell rings.
- You must raise your hand for questions or feedback.
- No profanity in the Orchestra room at all times.
- Maintain correct posture when playing.
- Make the best music possible at all times!

## CLASSROOM RULES

Success in performance requires a positive and productive attitude in the daily learning environment. Your child's willingness to learn will ensure that the classroom environment will be conducive to learning.

1. **Be Prompt**
2. **Be Prepared**
3. **Follow directions**
4. **Participate Actively**
5. **Respect others and their property**

As always, **BE RESPECTFUL, BE SAFE, AND BE RESPONSIBLE.**

## MISCONDUCT GUIDELINES

All members of the Veterans Memorial High School Orchestra will behave according to the JISD code of conduct. Examples of misconduct that will not be tolerated include, but are not limited to:

- Use of drugs, alcohol, or any tobacco product
- Fighting (physical and verbal)
- Harassment of other students
- Profanity
- Public display of affection at any official orchestra function, orchestra hall, or buses
- Disrespect of instructors (including substitute teachers), fellow students, or any of the Veterans Memorial HS School Faculty
- Violation of orchestra room expectations, classroom procedures, or disruptive behavior during class or after school rehearsal and functions

## CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

- Check the board for any announcements or specific instructions.
- All students must be in their assigned seat with their instrument, music and a pencil 3 minutes after the tardy bell rings.
- Cell phones must be on silent mode and out of sight. Charge your phones in the locker room ONLY.
- Violin and Viola cases will be stored to the right of your chair.
- When the director steps on the podium, all talking will stop. Your full attention is expected to be given to the director.
- All students must participate in the tuning process. No talking as this is a very important part of learning.
- If you have a **relevant** question, raise your hand. Do not be afraid to ask questions if something is unclear to you. However, if the question can wait till the end of class, please be courteous and wait.
- **Students will not be allowed to do other schoolwork during Orchestra rehearsals.**
- Cell phones **will not be allowed** out in class OR during after school rehearsals, unless Mrs. Rabago tells you to use them.
  - If students have trouble complying, a phone call will be made to parents/guardians.
- Come to Orchestra with a positive attitude and ready to do your best.



## INDIVIDUAL COMPETITIONS

**Region Mariachi: Sept.**

**Region Orchestra: Oct.**

Philharmonic String Orchestra  
Symphony Full Orchestra

**UIL Solo & Ensemble: Feb.**

**TSSEC (Texas State Solo & Ensemble: May**

The ultimate goal of our program is the development of the individual musician to the limits of his or her potential. To assist in reaching this goal, we strongly recommend participation in the individual, and group competitions offered during the school year.

All-Region tryouts involve the finest students from schools from our region. Region & UIL Solo and Ensemble participation is highly encouraged for all Varsity Orchestra students and highly recommended of all eligible orchestra students. These events will result in ratings, medals, personal, school and district recognition.

## ORCHESTRA & MARIACHI SHIRTS

All VMHSO students must purchase a T-shirt. This will come from the Orchestra/Mariachi Fee.

## CONCERT UNIFORM & TRAJES

### ORCHESTRA FORMAL UNIFORM:

Students will be issued a formal orchestra uniform.  
Students must supply their own dress shoes.

**Black Dress Shoes** for young men  
**Black closed toe dress shoes** for ladies

### ORCHESTRA INFORMAL UNIFORM:

VMHS Orchestra shirt, blue jeans, tennis shoes

### MARIACHI TRAJE (UNIFORM):

Varsity Mariachi - Blue Traje  
JV Mariachi - Black Camisola, black pants

Black Botines or black shoes

### MARIACHI INFORMAL UNIFORM:

VMHS Mariachi shirt, blue jeans, tennis shoes

## APPLIED PRIVATE INSTRUCTION

Private string instruction is **highly beneficial** to your student's orchestra success and is a great supplement to school rehearsals. Private teachers are able to work more "one on one" and therefore are better able to help your student achieve proper playing technique, intonation, and overall better tone quality. If you are interested in pursuing this option, please see me and we can discuss the possibilities.

## USE OF SCHOOL OWNED INSTRUMENTS

Instruments for beginning orchestra members will be assigned by student choice, suitability, availability, and present need of instrumentation. The decision of the director is final.

A checkout form will be sent home for parent/guardian signature at the beginning of each school year, which describes the condition of the instrument at that time. It is the responsibility of the student/parent to check over the instrument at that time and understand that the instrument must be returned in the same condition at the end of the year. The instrument usage fee for the entire school year is **\$60**.

If you at any time choose to **rent** or **purchase** an instrument, please, please, please seek the guidance of your director first. Under no circumstances should you purchase an instrument off of the internet. The majority of "online" instruments are not set-up to industry standards and will not be beneficial to the musical education of your student.

### PROPERTY CARE

It is very important from the beginning to take care of instruments and supplies because they are so expensive. Please **DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE**, including family members, to play with an instrument. Many instruments have been accidentally damaged by people who did not know how to use the instrument properly. Also, do not place sheet music, books or notebooks in the instrument case. This will damage the instrument. If there is anything wrong with the instrument, **DO NOT TRY TO REPAIR IT** on your own. *Please bring it to me directly.*

If, in the opinion of a JISD director, a school-owned instrument is not being properly maintained or cared for at any time of the school year, it is the director's prerogative to remove the instrument from the student's care.

If there is damage to the instrument, the student can be charged for the repair or the cost of the instrument.

**Please complete the attached contract if you are interested in using a school instrument. First come, first served as we are limited. Instrument usage fee is \$60 or two \$30 installments at the start of each semester.**

**All instruments that are student owned or rented through a vendor must be wooden. No colored (pink, black, purple etc.) or electric instruments will be permitted.**

## EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Certain supplies are necessary to play an instrument correctly and effectively each day. Please make sure that these items are always at hand when needed. A list of recommended vendors will be handed out. I strongly suggest calling and comparing prices since they will vary from store to store.

### VIOLIN/VIOLA:

- Appropriate sized shoulder rest. I recommend the following brands; Artino, Mucco, Everest, Fom, Kun, Wolf, or the plastic Mach One. Please consult me before investing in other brands.
- Soft, lint-free cloth. These can be purchased or a clean piece of an old t-shirt or handkerchief will do fine.
- Metronome/Chromatic Tuner (suggested). This will help make the best of your students' practice time and help them to be more consistent musicians.
- Folding music stand (suggested).
- Set of "Quality" Strings (optional). The use of better strings can greatly improve the sound of your students' instruments. Recommended brands are as follows; Prelude, Pro-Arte, Zyex, Helicore, or Tonica. If you're not sure, just ask ☺

### CELLO/BASS:

- Rock stop/ Endpin stopper for home use. There are a variety of brands available. Some examples that I recommend are; xeros, slipstop, superstop, or the fermata endpin anchor. I have no preference for color.
- Soft, lint-free cloth. These can be purchased or a clean piece of an old t-shirt or handkerchief will do fine.
- Metronome/Chromatic Tuner (suggested). This will help make the best of your students' practice time and help them to be more consistent musicians.
- Folding music stand (suggested).
- Set of "Quality" Strings (optional). The use of better strings can greatly improve the sound of your students' instruments. Recommended brands are as follows; Prelude, Pro-Arte, Zyex, Helicore, or Tonica. If you're not sure, just ask ☺

## HOME PRACTICE

Home practice is essential to student success in Orchestra. Parents, the more you can be involved in your child's practice efforts, the more your child can benefit from the time spent. The overall achievement through practice is extremely rewarding. Always encourage your child and stay positive as they continue to grow as musicians. Here are tips that will help achieve more efficient practice:

- Maintain a quiet, comfortable practice place
- Practice with good acceptable posture
- Don't just "play through" the music. Go into a practice session with a goal in mind. Try not to start from the beginning and work through a challenging section.
- Set a routine practice schedule

## Orchestra PHILOSOPHY

By signing the forms at the end of this handbook you make the following commitments:

1. *to be a member of the orchestra for the entire school year;*
2. *to give your best effort to improve as a musician; and*
3. *to maintain a progressive, positive attitude toward orchestra and school throughout the year.*



**Veterans Memorial High School Orchestra**  
**Information Sheet**  
***Please Print***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student ID

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Home Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student T-Shirt Size (Youth or Adult?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mother/Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone & Provider (AT&T, etc...)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mother/Guardian Email Address(s )

\_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Father/Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone & Provider

\_\_\_\_\_  
Father/Guardian Email Address(s )

\_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation

**PLEASE READ THE HANDBOOK CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING BELOW**

***"We have read the VMHS Orchestra Handbook and our student has permission to participate in orchestra and all orchestra activities within the guidelines as stated."***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**GENERAL RELEASE**

I the undersigned, for the purpose of enabling \_\_\_\_\_, a minor, to participate in the following school functions: **ALL VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA ACTIVITIES AND TRIPS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR**, do hereby release and authorize the Judson Independent School District, its employees, representatives or agents as follows:

1. You are hereby released from any and all liability or claims, present or future, known or unknown, of every kind, character or description, that may be created by or arising out of, either directly or indirectly, said school function.
2. In the event accident, injury or illness necessitates medical attention, you are specifically authorized and give sole discretion to obtain such medical attention at such place and from such person or persons as your sole judgment shall determine necessary.
3. You are further authorized and given sole discretion to administer such disciplinary action as you may determine necessary within school policy, including but in no way limited to your authority to return said student home at any time during the duration of the trip.

**I have read this release and understand its terms. I execute voluntarily with full knowledge of its significance, and with the intention of binding myself.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_