



HIGHLAND ORCHESTRAS

2026-2027 Orchestra Handbook

Dear Highland High School Orchestra Members and Families,

Welcome to the 2026-2027 school year. We are very excited for another great year and can not wait to get started. We are so fortunate to be able to make music together and we will strive for excellence both individually and as a group to enrich our lives and the lives of others. Please review the materials in this handbook as a family. Ninety percent of the information you need to have a successful year is in this packet. Please make sure to put all the dates and other information in your family's calendar and we thank you for the opportunity to teach your students.

Early due dates

Friday, August 7, 2026 - Uniform fees and Handbook forms are due.

Friday, August 21, 2026 - Symphonic Strings Retreat fee due.

Communication

Craig Ghormley
Director of Orchestras
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Amy Bennett
Orchestra Director
Highland High School
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Highland High School Orchestra Office- (480) 497-3119

Website- highlandorchestras.org

Booster Email- highlandorchestras@gmail.com

Facebook- "Friends of Highland Orchestras"

Instagram- @highlandorchestras

All students should be members of our Google Classroom. See registration info below:

Google Classroom

Starlight Serenade - tae3uxmc

Concert Orchestra - w43m5td7

Symphony Orchestra - nxpy5kdd

Sinfonia - z64fe3sb

Chamber (6th Hour) - n42mupun

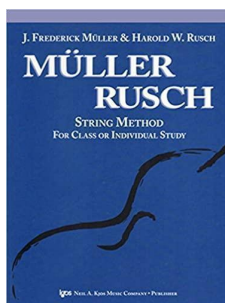
Chamber (7th Hour) - vd5kgabn

Required Materials

- Folders and music – these will be assigned, in most cases, two students per folder. Music is NOT a disposable item. **Students are responsible for replacement costs for lost or damaged items.**
- Instrument (in good working shape – violins/violas need to have 4 fine tuners on their instrument – these are necessary for students to be able to tune themselves quickly).

Violins/Violas with two instruments need to bring in a handwritten note signed by a parent saying that they have a quality instrument at home and will **practice daily**. Please turn these notes in to Mr. Ghormley by Friday, July 31, 2026.

- A small soft cloth for cleaning instrument
- Rosin – Please write your name on the box and the rosin. [For all bass players – We require Pop's or Kolstein Rosin]
- Shoulder Rest (for violins & violas) [We recommend a “KUN” or “Everest” - they are the most durable]
- Permanent Luggage/ID tag (with name and phone number clearly written on the tag) [“Highland Orchestras” ID tags are available for \$2.00.]
- Pencil
- Music stand, metronome, and tuner for home practice
- **Strolling Strings** -1 inch Black Binder needed by Friday, July 31, 2026
- **Concert Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra** -Muller Rusch Book 4 (Blue) needed by Thursday, August 6, 2026



- Performance Mute - rubber mutes are the cheapest! (2 Hole mutes will not fall off your instrument)



Lockers

Students will be issued instrument storage lockers. Lockers provide minimal security, and the Gilbert Unified School District is not liable for losses. Students are not to leave valuable personal items or money in these lockers. Lockers are for instrument storage only.

School Instruments

In some cases, school instruments may be made available for individual students' use. An “Instrument Usage Form” must be filled out and completed in order for the student to use the school instrument. Students using school instruments are responsible for any damage that may occur due to their fault or negligence. Students or parents should be sure to communicate with the orchestra director if they have any concerns about their instrument.

Financials

Student fees, credits, and balances will be once again kept in *My Music Office* - mymusicoffice.com. Returning families will use their same account as last year. New families should have received an email with instructions on Friday, July 24, 2026. Please let us know if you did not receive this or have any questions.

Gilbert Public Schools charges class fees for orchestra of \$25 for each semester. This is paid along with other school fees through the bookstore and Infinite Campus. **These fees are not paid through the orchestra boosters and are a completely separate funding source. These fees will be used to cover ABODA festival fees, transportation costs, and other items at the directors' discretion throughout the year.**

All other payments will be made through the Orchestra Boosters. No cash will be accepted. You can deposit money the following three ways.

1. VENMO- Our account name is @highland-orchestras. You will need to put your student's name and performing group in the memo section.
2. Checks should be made out to Highland HS Orchestra Boosters. Please put the student's name on the memo line and enclose it in an envelope. The front of the envelope should have the student's name and performing group.
3. Fees can also be paid using the Arizona Tax Credit (form attached). Information and form are also available online at gilbertschools.net/taxcredit.

Uniforms

All students must have an Orchestra T-Shirt to be worn to school on performance days and when we travel. All orchestras wear the same t-shirt. Students who already have an orchestra T-shirt that fits and is in good shape do not need to order another one. T-Shirt Cost will be **\$10.00**.

Concert Uniforms will be fitted and issued during the first few weeks of school. A uniform usage fee will be due before your student's uniform will be sent home. This fee will pay for the use of the uniform for the entire school year and the final dry cleaning. Students are expected to properly maintain and dry clean their uniform throughout the performance season. **Uniform fees are due to the boosters by Friday, August 7, 2026.**

New this year - students will be fitted for and will purchase a tuxedo shirt from us if they need one. Cost will be \$25. Please indicate on the Membership Agreement Form if you need a tuxedo shirt.

Students are responsible for returning all uniform parts in good condition, as well as replacement costs for lost or damaged uniforms/parts. You will not be responsible for the end of the year dry cleaning, as we will have all uniforms dry cleaned together at the end of the year.

The following is a listing of uniform needs for each student:

Tuxedo (All Orchestras)

- Tuxedo (Coat, Pants, Tie, Cummerbund) - checked out from the school (**\$35**)
- Wing collared tuxedo shirt (**\$25** if needed) - purchased by the student
- Black dress shoes, Black dress socks - purchased by the student
- Orchestra t-shirt (**\$10** if needed)

Starlight Serenade (strolling)

- Starlight Serenade dress (Dry-clean only) - checked out from the school (**\$20**)
- Black dress shoes & sheer black nylons - purchased by the student

Chamber Orchestra (6th & 7th Hour) and Concert Orchestra (1st hour)

- Black skirt (machine washable), Tie, Cummerbund - checked out from the school (\$20)
- Wing collared tuxedo shirt (\$25 if needed) - purchased by the student
- Black dress shoes, Sheer black nylons - purchased by the student
- Orchestra t-shirt (\$10 if needed)

Symphony Orchestra (2nd Hour) and Sinfonia (3rd Hour)

- Symphony/Sinfonia dress (Purchased by student from the school - \$80) - Fitting, ordering, and delivery will be handled through the HHS Orchestra Boosters.
- Black dress shoes & sheer black nylons - purchased by the student
- Orchestra t-shirt (\$10 if needed)

Travel

Each year the Highland Orchestras plan field trips and outside learning opportunities to supplement what we do in class. Here are the current plans and potential costs for each ensemble.

- **Symphonic Strings-** will be traveling to Camp Shadow Pines in Heber, AZ for Retreat on September 11-12, 2026. The total cost is \$200 and balance is due by Friday, August 21, 2026.
- **Symphony Orchestra & Sinfonia-** Students will be traveling to New York City December 1-December 5, 2026. Trip balance due September 18, 2026.
- **Chamber Orchestra-** An overnight trip is being planned and will cost approximately \$200.00. More info on the date and location will be shared in August.
- **Concert Orchestra-** will be traveling to Tucson, AZ for the ABODA Festival on March 3, 2027. The cost for this will be covered by the student's course fee.

Orchestra Grading Policy

- Rehearsal Checks
- Music Checks/Playing Tests (Performance seating may also be determined from these)
 - Students that receive a score of 79% or lower will have the opportunity to redo their test for a higher grade after completing the required work as agreed upon by the student and the teacher.
 - Late music checks will be accepted but will not be considered for performance seating.
- Written assignments: Concert Reviews/Critiques
- Performances
 - Points for performances are awarded for successfully completing the following: Arriving on time for tuning/warm-up, complete uniform, audience etiquette, performance on stage, observation of the entire concert, and concert reflection.

At the end of each grading period, points will be totaled and put in percentage form.

A = 90 - 100%, B = 80 - 89%, C = 70 - 79%, D = 60 - 69%.

Orchestra Capstone

Senior students in their fourth year of high school orchestra may enroll in PA-200: Orchestra Capstone. This course requires students to engage in additional, director-approved learning experiences, such as Regional Auditions, Solo and Ensemble, recitals, or research projects. To earn a weighted semester grade, students must successfully complete the orchestra course, complete one approved learning opportunity each semester, and submit a written reflection upon completion of the project.

Expectations

- Please be on time and ready to work when rehearsal begins. Please note that tardiness will also be dealt with as per the Highland High School attendance policy.
- Chewing gum, eating, or drinking during rehearsal or performance is not allowed. A water bottle is the only exception.
- Using a cell phone/smart watch during rehearsal, performance, or in the audience is not allowed. To avoid distraction, cell phones and smart watches need to be in the student's **backpack** for the duration of class. If a student violates this rule, the phone will be taken and put in a safe place by the teacher. The cell phone/smart watch may be retrieved by the parent at the end of the day.
- All students must keep their fingernails trimmed short, to enable them to play at the best of their ability.
- For our organization to function properly, all students must have the proper instrument, equipment, music, and a pencil.

Orchestra is a performance-based class. All members are expected to participate in all performances. An unexcused absence from a performance will result in the student's grade being lowered by 100 points. All make-up work must be completed in the appropriate amount of time.

Excluding emergencies, absences from performances can only be excused by an email from the parents/guardians being received by Mr. Ghormley and Mrs. Bennett at least two weeks prior to the anticipated absence. This includes conflicts due to other school related activities and events. In the case of an emergency, a phone call or email from the parents should be received as soon as possible; preferably before the performance. An email or phone call does not automatically excuse a student's absence, depending on what is contained in the note.

*99% of all conflicts can be resolved if both parties involved have communicated at the appropriate time.

The Importance of Attendance

Student attendance closely matches and nearly always mirrors academic achievement. Students who are absent from school miss the introduction of new material as well as the benefits of interacting with their peers in discussion, activities and presentations. Students who are chronically or habitually absent may be asked by their grade level administrator to provide documentation for excessive absences from medical personnel. Ideally, all attempts should be made by parents to schedule orthodontist, dentist and doctor appointments before or after school. Family vacations should be scheduled during school breaks.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Students who are excessively absent, failing courses or have grades below a D, may be denied the ability to participate in field trips or other extra-curricular activities. This includes all athletic events as well as performing arts and other club events.

Tardies

Students who arrive to class late are a distraction to the students in class as well as to their teacher. Please encourage your child to leave the house early enough to account for traffic and get to school on time.

Additional District Policies

District policy requires all students who perform in AMEA adjudicated events to maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.00 and have no failing grades for the previous 9-week grading period. Students can be reinstated after the next 4 1/2 week grading period.

Bullying and/or hazing is not an acceptable behavior. Gilbert Public Schools' policies may be found in the student handbook and also on the GPS website. JIC-EG092711

HIGHLAND ORCHESTRAS PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

FIRST SEMESTER 2026 - 2027

Monday - Friday, August 3 - August 7, 2026

All Orchestras - Uniform Fitting during class

Friday, August 7, 2026

Uniform Fees and Handbook forms Due for all orchestras.

Monday, August 24, 2026

Debut Concert tickets available online to **Parents**

Monday, August 31, 2026

Debut Concert tickets available online to General Public

Friday & Saturday, September 11 & 12, 2026

Symphonic Strings Retreat at Camp Shadow Pines- Heber, AZ

Thursday, September 24, 2026

HHS Orchestras **Debut Concert** HHS Auditorium

6:00 p.m. – **Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia, Starlight Serenade**

7:30 p.m. – **Starlight Serenade, Chamber Orchestra, Symphonic**

Friday, September 25, 2026

Fall Orchestra Festival at Highland HS

Perf. Times **TBA Sym. Strings, Sinfonia, Chamber, Concert**

Volunteers will be needed as we are hosting.

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

“Home for the Holidays” tickets available online to **Parents**

Wednesday, November 18, 2026

“Home for the Holidays” tickets available online to Public

Tuesday, November 17, 2026

Orchestra Yearbook Pictures during class - *uniforms required*

Tuesday - Saturday, December 1 - December 5, 2026

Sinfonia & Symphonic Strings NYC Trip

Wednesday, December 9, 2026

Symphonic Strings/Starlight Serenade

Performance at Valle del Oro RV Resort

Call time: 3:00 p.m. Performance: 6:30 p.m.

Friday & Saturday, December 11 & 12, 2026

HHS Orchestras **“Home for the Holidays” (2 days – 3 shows)**

ALL ORCHESTRAS PERFORM IN EVERY SHOW

Three Performances

Dec. 11

Call time: 6:00 p.m. Performance: 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 12

Call time: 1:00 p.m. Performance: 1:30 p.m.

United Sound will perform in this show.

DINNER BREAK – (Off Campus)

Call time: 7:00 p.m. Performance: 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 12, 2026

Valentines Dinner tickets go on sale at Holiday Concert @ 8 am

HIGHLAND ORCHESTRAS PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

SECOND SEMESTER 2026 - 2027

Saturday, January 16, 2027 AMEA Solo and Ensemble Festival Tier 1 @ TBD

Friday & Saturday, January 22 & 23, 2027 Regional Auditions @ Desert Ridge HS

Monday, January 25, 2027	Festival Showcase Concert tickets available online to Parents
Monday, February 1, 2027	Festival Showcase Concert tickets available to Public

Tuesday, February 9, 2027 Valentine Dinner Performance/Fund-Raiser at Highland HS “Crystal Ballroom” **6:00 - 9:30 pm**
All Orchestras (all students)

Thursday, February 25, 2027 HHS Orchestras **Festival Showcase Concert** - HHS Auditorium
6:00 p.m. – **Chamber Orchestra, Sinfonia, Starlight Serenade**
7:30 p.m. – **Starlight Serenade, Concert Orchestra, Symphony**

Friday, February 26, 2027 ABODA Area Concert Festival
@Highland HS **Symphony, Sinfonia, Chamber**
Volunteers will be needed as we are hosting.

Monday, March 1, 2027 HJHS Orchestra Concert
7:00 p.m. HHS Auditorium - **Symphony Orchestra**

Wednesday, March 3, 2027 **Concert Orchestra** to ABODA Area Concert Festival
@Catalina Foothills HS, Tucson, AZ

Friday & Saturday, March 5 & 6, 2027 All-State Orchestra Auditions @ Gilbert HS

Wednesday, April 14, 2027	An Evening at the Symphony tickets available to Parents
Wednesday, April 21, 2027	An Evening at the Symphony tickets available to Public

Monday, May 3, 2027 **Annual End of the Year Celebration**
All Orchestra Students and their Parents
6:30 p.m. HHS Crystal Ballroom

Friday, May 14, 2027 “An Evening at the Symphony” & Senior Night – HHS Auditorium
6:00 p.m. – **Concert Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, Starlight Serenade**
7:30 p.m. – **Starlight Serenade, Sinfonia, Symphony, United Sound**

Thursday, May 20, 2027 **Symphony Orchestra** Baccalaureate Rehearsal- Auditorium
6:00-7:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 23, 2027 Baccalaureate- HHS Auditorium **Symphony Orchestra**
Call Time - 12:00 p.m. TWO SHOWS - 1:00 p.m. & 3:00 p.m.

***STARLIGHT SERENADE PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE
FIRST & SECOND SEMESTER 2026 - 2027***

Saturday, September 26, 2026	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> - National Anthem @ HHS MB Comp. Call time: 5:00 p.m.
Friday, October 2, 2026	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> - National Anthem @ HHS Football Game Call time: 6:15 p.m.
Wednesday, November 18, 2026	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> - Gilbert Community Excellence Awards Call time: 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, December 9, 2026	<i>Sym. Strings/Starlight Serenade</i> @ Valle del Oro RV Resort Call time: 3:00 p.m. Performance: 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, December 17, 2026	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> - Elementary School Tour (Time TBD- pm after finals)
Monday, January 4, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> Rehearsal 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, January 12, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> @ Sunland Village East Call time 5:15 p.m.
Tuesday, January 19, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> @ TBD Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Monday & Tuesday, January 25 & 26, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> @ 6 th Grade String Festival #1 & #2 Call time: 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, February 2, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> @ Sunland Village Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Tuesday, February 9, 2027	Valentine Dinner Performance/Fund-Raiser at Highland HS “Crystal Ballroom” 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Tuesday, February 16, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> @ Mesa Regal Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Thursday, February 18, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> @ Golden Vista Call time: 5:15 p.m.
Friday, May 14, 2027	<i>Starlight Serenade</i> final rehearsal 6:30 – 7:25 a.m.

****Additional performances may be scheduled throughout the year***