**Skaneateles High School and Middle School Orchestras**

Ms. Karen Veverka

Orchestra Director

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Dear 2017-18 Skaneateles Orchestra students and parents:

Welcome to what will be an outstanding year for the Skaneateles Orchestras! Playing a stringed instrument in orchestra is a fun and unique experience for both students and parents. Your involvement is essential and welcome.

I strive to help each student be successful and have a positive experience in orchestra. This handbook outlines the details needed to aid in each student’s success and achievement. As needed, I will communicate using the orchestra website, e-mails and letters. Please feel free to contact me by phone or email with questions and concerns.

I am very happy to be starting my twenty-eighth year in our district. I am excited to be a part of the Skaneateles String Program’s continued growth and development.

To learn more about me as a music educator and professional musician, I welcome you to visit [www.skanschools.org](http://www.skanschools.org), click on the orchestra page and locate my bio.

I know we will have a great year!

Sincerely,

*Ms. Veverka*

*Director, Skaneateles HS and MS Orchestras*

*Conducting Staff, Symphoria*

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

A good **attitude** and a strong concept of **responsibility** to one’s self and the group are vital to our program. Orchestra is a team – no one sits on the bench – everyone is a contributing member! For that reason, the quality of the group is limited when one individual does not aim for excellence. To achieve excellence, consider the following guidelines:

***Classroom Expectations:***

1. Punctual and regular attendance at all rehearsals is important.
2. Students will strive to sustain a high level of concentration and musical involvement during each rehearsal.
3. Each student will be an example to those around him/her in terms of attitude, responsibility, and enthusiasm.
4. Each student should have his/her copy of all music handed out by the director. It is the individual’s responsibility to have the right music at all rehearsals.
5. A pencil is always necessary at every lesson and rehearsal. Mark your music neatly and thoroughly according to the director’s wishes. Please do not use ink on any music.
6. Students will work individually to learn all assigned parts by intelligent and regular practice.
7. Students need to participate in all required orchestra events/concerts.
8. Students should seek extra help from the director at any time that they do not feel confident with their progress. Ms. Veverka is here to help you succeed and learn.

***General Expectations:***

1. No one will play another’s instrument or open their cases without that student’s permission.
2. All percussion and pianos are to be treated as musical instruments and used only by authorized students.
3. Keep your instruments stored in your instrument rack and in your assigned number during the day.

***Required Materials:***

**Instrument** (if you need to rent an instrument, please contact **Midstate Music at 314-7027, OR SHAR Music at 1-800-248-7427, or** **rental@sharmusic.com** **.** *If you are a violinist or violist, please avoid VSOs—“violin shaped objects.”\* (Students who need to use a school instrument should see Ms. Veverka).*

1. Pencil
2. Recommended: a music stand (to keep at home).
3. Music; students should keep all practice parts and handout materials in one folder.
4. If you require a school instrument and cannot rent or purchase, please contact Ms. Veverka. We have a limited number of school instruments set aside for use. Students may sign out an instrument for the school year. (*These are offered after all possibilities have been looked at for rental first.)*

***Method Books***

 **Essential Elements for Strings – Books 1 (6th grade), Book 2( 7th grade) and Book 3 (8th grade – High School)** To purchase your own book, contact Music and Arts at 409-0901. A representative from Music and Arts visits each week, and can deliver the books directly to the orchestra room.

The purchase of a book is not required, however may be very helpful to the student.

*\*VSO’s are “violin –shaped objects” and I encourage parents to avoid the temptation to but a cheap internet-auction violin outfit, commonly known as a V.S.O. VSO’s look like violins, but a very high percentage are virtually unplayable due to innumerable structural and set-up problems. Many well-meaning parents bring in their VSO’s to violin shops around the country and are disappointed to find out that the repairs needed to make their instrument playable far exceed both the price they paid for the instrument and the price of a properly made and set-up instrument.*

**PRACTICE CARDS**

Music education research has shown that students who keep a written record of practicing are more likely to have a successful experience with their instruments and playing in school orchestra. Practicing is one of the single most important factors in progress and enjoyment. I strongly encourage you to take your instrument home and practice every night. Find a quiet place at home where you will be comfortable and relaxed for your practicing.

Students will keep a practice log, or fill out weekly practice cards with a parent’s signature, which will be returned at the end of one week.

Five-fifteen minutes of practicing is better than zero minutes, thirty minutes (or more for high school students) is best.

**Home PRACTICE TIPS**

1. **Schedule a regular time and place where you can work undisturbed.**
2. **Practice at least five times per week, every day if possible.**
3. **Younger students (6th – 7th grade) should begin with five good minutes, increasing to fifteen minutes with concentration.**
4. **Warm up with warm-ups used in class, or a scale.**
5. **Know your lesson assignment.**
6. **If you are using Essential Elements, play each exercise three or four times.**
7. **Find a difficult spot, and practice in ten times.**
8. **Be sure to check your finger pattern.**
9. **Check your posture and bow hold often; write down any questions for Ms. Veverka.**

**Care of Bow and Instrument**

**BOWS:**

* + - 1. **Never touch the hair of the bow with your hands. Natural oils from your skin and perspiration from your hands will spoil the bow hair.**
			2. **Tighten your bow three or four times before playing and loosen your bow three or four times when you are finished. The distance between the hair and the stick should be not much more than the width of a pencil or “pinky” finger. Bows that are not loosened after each playing session will gradually fail to tighten at all.**
			3. **Rosin your bow only as needed. Press the hair firmly into the cake of rosin. Basses should use bass rosin only.**
			4. **Be careful handling your bow; the stick is fragile and can break if dropped.**

**INSTRUMENT:**

**1. Carry a clean, soft cloth in your case to wipe off rosin and finger marks from the strings and body of the instrument when you’re done playing. NEVER use furniture polish, or any other type of cleaner.**

**2 .Instruments can be damaged by extreme heat or cold. Never leave it in a car on a hot, sunny day as the varnish will bubble, or on a cold winter day, when it might crack.**

1. **Do not allow other people to play your instrument. Your case should never be opened at the bus stop, or while riding the bus to and from school.**
2. **Be sure your case is completely closed, latched, or zippered shut.**
3. **Don’t lay your instrument on the floor or on an unattended chair; if it gets stepped on or falls off the chair, it will break.**

**ACCESSORIES:**

1. **A SHOULDER REST OR SPONGE PAD IS A MUST!**
2. **A SOFT CLOTH MAY BE PLACED OVER THE BODY OF THE INSTRUMENT TO PROTECT IT FROM THE BOW.**
3. **Each student instrument MUST be labeled with a students’ name. Luggage tags or homemade name tags are an excellent choice.**

*Please note: Strings break occasionally and usually without warning. A certain amount of wear and string breakage is normal. Your string teacher carries replacement strings, but it is recommended that each student have an extra set of strings. Do NOT attempt to tune the instrument yourself unless you are familiar with how to tune. This can cause a string to break. If you have problems with your instrument, or if a part breaks, contact your teacher first. DO NOT ATEMPT HOME REPAIRS! ☺*

**INSTRUMENT REPAIRS**

If you break a string, drop your instrument, or develop a crack, please notify Ms. Veverka a soon as possible. All of our repairs are done by Mr. Robert MacBlane, 6784 Corl Drive, Preble, NY. 13141-0182. (1-607-749-2594)

You may take your instrument to Mac Blane’s or it may be sent to the music store by Ms. Veverka, where it was rented ( in the case of a rented instrument.)

**CONCERT DRESS**

**High School Orchestra: Boys: Black pants, white collared shirt, black shoes and black socks. Girls: Black dress pants or below-the-knee skirts, white tops, and black shoes.** *No jeans, kin-tight yoga type pants, sneakers, Uggs, or flip-flops please!*

**Middle School Orchestras: Dress clothes or black and white as listed above.**

**PRIVATE LESSONS**

Private lessons are highly encouraged, and provide enrichment to the basics covered in a school lesson. Students or parents interested in private lessons should consult the enclosed list of teachers, or contact Ms. Veverka. Private lessons give students an opportunity to improve their technical and musical ability at an accelerated rate, limiting some of the frustrations they may encounter in rehearsals. In addition, to guide a student’s musical endeavors,, private lessons give students a chance to build a one-on-one relationship with a professional musician. Furthermore, private lessons provide students with an opportunity for solo playing, enhancing their ability, enjoyment, and comfort within an ensemble.

**STUDENT-LED ENSEMBLES**

While self-direction and actualization are the definite goals of education, student-led ensembles are encouraged for string players ***only under the supervision of a teacher or skilled professional coach.*** While the formation of chamber ensembles and special groups in school are welcomed and encouraged, students and parents should be aware that any student string ensembles performing in the community, and/or outside of school without the supervision of a school music teacher are not representative of the Skaneateles Central Schools Music Program, or legally covered by school insurance. Students and parents who desire to pursue off campus string ensembles outside of the school program or youth orchestras should hire/consult a private professional coach on a contractual basis.

**PRIVATE TEACHERS ON OUR AREA**

Judith Hershberger violin and viola Skaneateles 685-0137

Steve Frackenpohl violin and viola Skaneateles 685-8004

Greg Wood cello Camillus 487-1495

Ellen Smith cello Skaneateles 685-9304

Lindsay Groves cello Skaneateles 685-3837

George Teufel cello Skaneateles 685-6109

Adam Carkey bass Auburn 427-9606

Terry Squires bass Skaneateles 685-6336

Further names are available upon request. All of the above professionals are also qualified to coach chamber music, or, student-led ensembles.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENRICHMENT**

**In addition to private lessons, the following are enrichment opportunities:**

**Elementary All County (grade 6) by teacher recommendation**

**Jr. High All County Orchestra (by audition)**

**Sr. High All County Orchestra (by audition)**

**NYSSMA All-State Orchestra (student must score 100 on Level 6 solo)**

**NYSSMA Solo and Ensemble Festivals**

**NYSSMA Major Organization Festivals**

All of the above opportunities are dependent upon students preparing a NYSSMA solo and scales. Your instructor or private lesson teacher can help to prepare students.

**Symphoria Youth Orchestra (*formerly Syracuse Youth Orchestra)***

*by audition*

**Sinfonia Youth Orchestra**

*by audition* (NYSSMA Level 4-5-6)

**Symphoria String Orchestra**

by audition (NYSSMA Level 3 and up)

**Auburn Chamber Orchestra**

*Steve Frankenpohl, Conductor*

**Pit Orchestra for High School Drama Productions**

**Any of the above opportunities are a great way to further your education and experiences on a string instrument. Please see or contact Ms Veverka for more details.**