

SOMERSET STRINGS

Middle School Handbook

2018 - 2019

September 2018

Dear String Student and Family,

I hope you have all had an enjoyable, relaxing summer and are now ready for the challenge of another exciting school year!

This handbook was designed to let both the student and families know what will be expected this year in the string program. While it may seem like a very strict and rigid program, I think you will find the actual classes are relaxed and informal. This is just my attempt to tell you as straightforwardly as I can how it all works.

Of special importance in this handbook is an agreement to be signed by both students and parents. I feel that this will help students to remember their commitment and I can be sure that the families have had a chance to look this over.

Please take a few moments to make sure you bookmark the Somerset Strings website into your Internet browser – www.somersetstrings.weebly.com
There is a large amount of information available there including concert dates, letters that are sent home and links to string and music related sites.

Welcome back and have a great year!

Sincerely,

Ira M. Schaefer,
String Teacher

Concert Dress

Unless otherwise specified, concert dress is as follows:

Ladies: Black skirt or black pants, white blouse, black shoes

Men: Black pants, white dress shirt, black socks, black shoes

Please do not wear Blue Jeans, white sneakers or white socks!

Audiences perceive a well-dressed group as one that will sound good - before we even start playing.

Concert Attendance

Attendance for concerts is **mandatory**. For each concert you will receive either an A or F. As long as you show up for the concert, you get an A. Your concert attendance will be part of your grade in marking terms 2, 3 and 4. Concert dates are listed in the back of this handbook. If there is a conflict with a concert date, please let me know as far ahead as possible.

String Ensemble Rehearsals

As there are no small group lessons at the Middle School, rehearsals will involve several parts. Most of the time, we will be working as an ensemble rehearsing the music. Some of the rehearsals we will use for sectionals or small group work and some will be spent with some individual help. This is a team effort and all members must do their part.

For each rehearsal you will receive a grade for bringing your instrument and music and for your attitude/cooperation. You need a pencil so you can mark any changes in the music- **Please use only pencil to mark your music** (no pen, highlighter, crayon, magic marker or lipstick!)

**** 6th Grade** String students will need to purchase **Essential Elements 2000-Book 2** as we will be using it to continue technique development. Be sure to get the book specific to your instrument!

Playing Tests

Playing tests will be given throughout the year. These tests will be on music and/or scales that we are working on in class. There is no such thing as a surprise playing test. You will always know at least two weeks ahead of time so you can be well prepared and I can answer any questions you may have. These tests can be in the form of large group, small group or individual assessment, either in person or recorded at home and emailed to me.

Home Practice

Home practice is to music as homework is to your academic subjects. It is an important time to review and sharpen skills taught in class. In order for the ensemble to sound it's best, each student must put their best playing to each rehearsal. As part of their quarterly grade, Grade 6 students will be asked to turn in their practice charts weekly for Mr. Schaefer to check.

Some practice tips:

- Studies have shown it is more beneficial to practice for a short amount of time, more often during the week than to practice less often for more time.
- One important item to have when you are practicing is a music stand. The wire ones are only about \$15-\$20. Your playing will not improve if you are trying to read your music when it is on the floor.
- Make sure you have good lighting. Bad lighting will strain your eyes and will cause you to get tired quicker.

- Try to be specific in your practicing. Concentrate on the parts that you have difficulty with. Don't just play the music that is easy and sounds good already. Also, you don't have to practice all the difficult material in one practice session.

If you put the time in you will feel good about your playing and improve the quality of the group at the same time.

Grading Criteria

Students will be graded each class on their effort, cooperation, and having their instrument and music.

Quarterly Grade Breakdown

GRADE 6

<u>Term 1:</u>		<u>Terms 2 and 3:</u>		<u>Term 4</u>	
Effort/Cooperation	10%	Effort/Cooperation	10%	Effort/Cooperation	10%
Materials	25%	Materials	20%	Materials	20%
Signed Handbook	10%	Playing Tests	20%	Vocab/Symbols Test	20%
Playing Tests	30 %	Concert Attendance	25%	Concert Attendance	25%
Practice Charts	25%	Practice Charts	25%	Practice Charts	25%

GRADE 7 and 8

<u>Term 1:</u>		<u>Terms 2 and 3:</u>		<u>Term 4</u>	
Effort/Cooperation	20%	Effort/Cooperation	20%	Effort/Cooperation	20%
Materials	35%	Materials	25%	Materials	25%
Playing Tests	35%	Playing Tests	25%	Vocab/Symbols Test	25%
Signed Handbook	10%	Concert Attendance	30%	Concert Attendance	30%

Each marking term students will start out with 100 points in the Materials and Effort/Cooperation categories. For each class that a student does not have materials or is uncooperative, they will lose 2 points in the respective category. Students should bring in a note from home if an instrument is broken and/or being repaired so no credit is lost.

Select Strings

Select Strings is open to students in grades 7 and 8 who are looking to play more challenging music, particularly those students who may be taking private lessons. Students must audition for this group. This group rehearses Wednesdays from 7:25 am–7:55 am and Period 8 one day out of the 6 day rotation. Extra rehearsals and performances will occur. Students will receive schedules on a regular basis to keep them informed of upcoming events.

Auditions for the 2019-2020 Select Strings ensemble will take place in May 2019. Auditions are open to 6th and 7th grade String students who participate and are in good standing in either the 6th Grade String Ensemble or 7/8 Grade String Ensemble. Students must be a member of the 7/8 Grade String Ensemble next school year if chosen for this group.

Junior Southeast

Junior Southeast District is open to students in grades 7-9. This festival is made up of students from all of Southeastern Massachusetts. Students must audition to be selected to participate.

The auditions are on December 8, 2018 and the Festival takes place March 8 and 9, 2019. Friday's rehearsal will require you to miss school for the day. There are 2 rehearsals and a concert on Saturday. There is an audition fee and if selected, a festival fee.

I hope this packet gives you a good overview of expectations and events that will take place over the year. If there are any questions please feel free to call me at the Middle School at 508-324-3140 or email at ira.schaefer@somersetsschools.org.

I look forward to an excellent year!

2018 – 2019 MIDDLE SCHOOL CONCERT INFORMATION

GRADE 7/8 STRINGS

WINTER CONCERT (all 7/8th grade ensembles)

Wednesday, December 12 - 7:00 pm at Somerset Middle School (counts as Term 2 Concert Grade)
Performance during school time as well.

SOMERSET STRING FESTIVAL

Tuesday, March 12 - 7:00 pm at Somerset Berkley Regional High School – Rehearsal in the afternoon and pizza dinner. (counts as Term 3 Concert Grade)

SPRING CONCERT (all 7/8th grade ensembles)

Wednesday, April 10 - 7:00 pm at Somerset Middle School (counts as Term 4 Concert Grade)

GRADE 6 STRINGS

WINTER CONCERT (all 6th grade ensembles)

Tuesday, December 11 - 7:00 pm at Somerset Middle School (counts as Term 2 Concert Grade)
Performance during school time as well.

SILVER CITY GALLERIA

Tuesday, December 18 (tentative) - at Silver City Galleria Mall in Taunton (does not count for a grade)
We will perform with the 5th Grade String students. I will let you know when the date has been confirmed.

SOMERSET STRING FESTIVAL

Tuesday, March 12 - 7:00 pm at Somerset Berkley regional High School - Rehearsal in the afternoon and pizza dinner.(counts as Term 3 Concert Grade)

SPRING CONCERT (all 6th grade ensembles)

Tuesday, April 9 - 7:00 pm at Somerset Middle School (counts as Term 4 Concert Grade)

5th GRADE STEP UP DAY

TBA – in June (does not count for a grade)

SELECT STRINGS (in addition to the above dates)

Friday, December 14 – Tour to Clifton and Somerset Ridge

Friday, May 17 – Great East Music Festival and 6 Flags

June – Pre-Voc Graduation???

Please read through this handbook and sign and return to Mr. Schaefer by September 28, 2018.

As a string student, I have read, the Middle School Strings Handbook and understood and accept the responsibilities I have, including practicing, bringing my music and instrument and coming to rehearsals and concerts, as well as concert dates.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

As a string parent, I have had the chance to read this handbook and am aware of all expectations of my child including the commitment of concert attendance.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____