

Parent/Student Handbook

2026-2027



Jessica Fuchs, Orchestra Director

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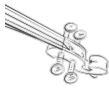
www.kellorchestra.org

WELCOME TO THE KELL ORCHESTRA PROGRAM!

Welcome to the Kell High School Orchestra! We are excited to have you as part of our orchestra family. The Kell Orchestra Program is committed to developing skilled musicians, confident leaders, and responsible young adults through excellence in music-making. Whether you are performing in Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia Orchestra, or Chamber Orchestra, every student is an important member of our ensemble.

Students are placed in one of three ensembles based on teacher recommendation, audition results, and demonstrated musical skills. Placement is determined by the director and reflects each student's current level of performance and rehearsal readiness. Chamber Orchestra is an audition-only ensemble, while Concert Orchestra and Sinfonia Orchestra are placement-based. Orchestra is a year-long course, and schedule changes are not made mid-year.

This handbook outlines the policies, expectations, and opportunities that help make the Kell Orchestra Program successful. Please read it carefully and refer to it throughout the school year. We look forward to a fantastic year of making music together!



HOW WILL INFORMATION BE COMMUNICATED?

1. CutTime System
 - **CutTime** is the official communication and financial management system for the Kell Orchestra program. All weekly communication, announcements, reminders, event information, and communications from Mrs. Fuchs and the Kell Orchestra Booster Association (KOBA) will be sent through CutTime.
2. CTLS Parent
 - **CTLS Parent** is utilized for individual communication between parents/guardians and Mrs. Fuchs. While orchestra-wide announcements will be shared through CutTime, messages regarding your individual student will be sent through CTLS Parent.
 - Parents and guardians may also use CTLS Parent to contact Mrs. Fuchs with questions or concerns throughout the school year.
3. Email
 - Parents/guardians and students are always welcome to email Mrs. Fuchs with questions or concerns throughout the school year! Her email address is listed on the first page of this handbook.

CutTime Communication & Account Information

All important announcements, reminders, event information, and communications from Mrs. Fuchs and KOBA will be sent through CutTime.

CutTime is also the platform used to:

- Pay orchestra dues and fees
- View your account balance and payment history
- Access important program information

To ensure you receive all communications, it is essential that we have a current email address and phone number for every parent/guardian. At the beginning of the school year, you should receive both a text message and an email with instructions for creating your CutTime account. If you do **not** receive a text or email with your account setup information, please contact Mrs. Fuchs as soon as possible so your contact information can be updated.

To help families get started, KOBA has created a step-by-step video tutorial explaining how to access and navigate CutTime. The video is available on the orchestra website, kellorchestra.org, under the "Parents & Community" tab.

Staying connected through CutTime is an important part of participating in the Kell Orchestra program!



ORCHESTRA – GRADING & PARTICIPATION

{2026-2027}

GRADING BREAKDOWN & WEIGHTS:

20% Formative

Daily Musicianship and Rehearsal Skills

- Musicianship and rehearsal skills will be formatively assessed during each rehearsal. This includes during scales, exercises, and repertoire rehearsal. Grades will be entered weekly.

70% Summative

- **Weekly Practice Reflections/Checks**, Performance Evaluations, Orchestral Performances
- Theory/History Work and Written Work/Reflections

10% Final Exam

- May be in the form of a Written exam, reflection, audition or performance assessment

DAILY MUSICIANSHIP RUBRIC

♪ Distinguished - 5 Points

(Above and Beyond!)

♪ Proficient - 4 Points

(Meets Expectations)

♪ Basic - 3 Points

(Bare Minimum)

♪ Unsatisfactory - 0-2 Points

(Does Not Contribute)

Full Rubric posted in classroom & on CTLs.

GRADEBOOK:

Student gradebooks will reflect placeholder grades for unsubmitted assignments. The placeholder grade is intended to communicate with families and will be replaced once the assignment is submitted or the Assessment Accountability process completed. Placeholder Grades will follow the rules noted below:

- Missing work due to an absence: a placeholder of a .1 will be used to indicate the missing assignment.
- Missing work due to Assessment Accountability: a placeholder of a .3 will be used to indicate the student refused to complete the assignment and will be referred to Assessment Accountability.

DEADLINES:

Deadlines are firm and are an important part of developing responsibility and time-management skills. Students are given ample time to complete assignments before the due date.

- Technology or instrument issues must be communicated **before** the deadline whenever possible.
- All assignments must be submitted through CTLs. Assignments sent by email will not be accepted.

WEEKLY PRACTICE REFLECTIONS & PERFORMANCE CHECKS

Developing strong practice habits is an essential part of becoming a successful musician. Throughout the school year, students will complete a **Weekly Practice Reflection** designed to encourage purposeful, individualized practice.

Each week, students will identify specific passages or skills from our current repertoire that need improvement. Mrs. Fuchs will provide guiding practice goals and reflection questions, while students will determine the areas they need to focus on most. **Practice Reflections are due each Friday.**

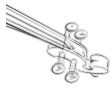
In addition, students will complete a **Performance Check** approximately every two weeks. These brief assessments will focus on short excerpts or technical passages from our concert music that require extra attention. Performance Checks must be submitted as a video recording through **CTLs** by the assigned due date.

These assignments are intended to promote consistent practice, individual growth, and musical confidence while providing regular feedback throughout the rehearsal process.

CONCERT & REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE

Concerts are the culmination of our work in class and are an essential part of the orchestra experience. Because every member plays an important role, attendance at **all required performances and scheduled rehearsals** is mandatory. There are **four required concerts** each year, Fiddle Fest, and a limited number of after-school rehearsals as needed. All performances are **graded, co-curricular events**, and students are expected to participate in the entire concert.

- If a student must miss a required rehearsal or performance, written notification should be provided to Mrs. Fuchs at least **two weeks in advance** whenever possible. Emergency absences should be communicated as soon as possible and require appropriate documentation. Excused absences include illness, family emergencies, religious observances, school-sponsored activities, and other circumstances approved by the director.
- Students with an excused absence will receive a temporary grade until a make-up assignment is completed. It is the student's responsibility to request and complete the make-up assignment within **two weeks** of the missed event. Unexcused absences or tardiness will result in a significant grade reduction.



“The Kell Orchestra Way”

Our classroom culture is built on four simple principles:

- **Respect** yourself, others, and the Kell Orchestra.
- **Be Kind.**
- **Be a Leader** both inside and outside the orchestra classroom.
- Maintain a **Positive Attitude** and an **Open Mind**.

CLASSROOM & BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to:

1. Arrive on time and be in their seat tuning/warming-up within three minutes of the bell.
2. Bring their instrument, music, and a pencil every day.
3. Stay engaged and seated during rehearsal unless given permission otherwise.
4. Follow directions the first time they are given.
5. Help create a respectful, focused rehearsal environment.

Membership in the Kell Orchestra program requires students to consistently demonstrate respectful, responsible, and appropriate behavior. Orchestra is a collaborative environment where all students deserve to feel safe, supported, and valued. Every student plays a role in maintaining a positive rehearsal space.

Behavior that is disruptive, disrespectful, unsafe, or that interferes with the learning and well-being of others will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate language, repeated disruptions, failure to follow directions, or actions that damage the ensemble's culture and focus.

Disruptive or disrespectful behavior that interferes with learning will result in disciplinary action and, if necessary, removal from the ensemble at the discretion and agreement of the director and administration.

PHONE & ELECTRONICS POLICY

Phones must remain in students' backpacks for the duration of class, including during practice room use. Headphones should remain put away unless permission is given. Students may use the classroom charging station, but phones must remain there until dismissed by the teacher.

Failure to follow the phone policy will result in the following consequences:

- **1st Offense:** Teacher warning
- **2nd Offense:** Parent/guardian contact
- **3rd Offense:** Teacher detention
- **4th Offense:** Administrative referral

RESTROOMS

Students should use the restroom during class changes whenever possible. Each student receives **5 hall passes per semester** to use during orchestra class. Passes may not be used during the first or last 10 minutes of class (per school policy) and students may be asked to wait briefly during important rehearsal moments.

Unused passes may be turned in for a small amount of extra credit at the end of the semester. Students who need additional passes may earn them by completing a classroom or school service task.

FOOD & GUM

Food, drinks (except water), and gum are not permitted in the orchestra circle or practice rooms.

ATTENDANCE & TARDIES

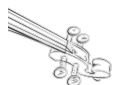
Attendance is taken **three minutes** after the bell. Students are expected to be in their assigned seat, prepared for rehearsal. Tardies are handled according to the Kell High School Student Handbook and may affect future audition opportunities.

INJURIES

Students unable to play due to injury must provide a doctor's note. They are still expected to participate through active listening and may receive an alternate assignment for extended injuries.

NAILS

Short fingernail length is an important aspect of playing a string instrument. Nails that are too long prohibit proper intonation. Posture/position grades on assessments will be impacted by nails that are too long in addition to the intonation grade.



INSTRUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Students are encouraged to provide their own instrument as the program has a limited amount. Students that do not own their own instrument will be issued a school instrument to use for the school year. Cello and Bass players will be assigned a school instrument. The instrument will include a case, bow, shoulder rest or rock stop, and four strings.

Students must provide their own rosin.

- Students who require a school owned instrument will be given a CCSD Instrument Use Form that must be filled out and signed by the parent/guardian.
- Loss or damage of any parts of the issued instrument incurred due to student carelessness will be the financial responsibility of the individual student and their parents. Failure to return the instrument or reimburse Kell Orchestra will lead to failure to walk at Kell Graduation.

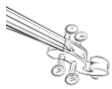
INSTRUMENT SET-UP AND REPAIR COSTS

Most students take excellent care of their instruments. It is rare for an instrument to need repairs. Here are some things you can do to avoid repair costs:

- ✓ Follow your orchestra teacher's guidelines for good instrument care (covered in class) and ASK if you have questions.
- ✓ Rent/purchase instruments from stores that staff a luthier (repair-person).
- ✓ Only let your teacher or a certified luthier (repair-person) fix your instrument.

The prices below are for reference only. The repair shop will determine the actual cost.

Instrument Set-Up (Low Quality) and Repair (Broken) Costs	
Low-Quality Instrument Set Up	\$100+ to non-repairable/playable
Refit Low-Quality Tuning Pegs	\$100-170
Replace Low-Quality Fine Tuners	\$60-90
Bow Rehair	\$80
Replace Strings	\$10-160
Re-Glue Fingerboard (example: if dropped)	\$80
Re-Glue Seam (example: left in heat/cold)	\$60-120
Repair Broken Neck (example: dropped)	\$300-500
Repair Crack (example: dropped/temp.)	\$80-250 or non-repairable
Repair Nicks/Dents/Scratches	\$60-400
Replace Broken Bridge	\$180-220 (Bass - \$500)
Replace Broken Bow	\$100-220
Replace Broken School Violin/Viola	\$525
Replace Broken School Cello	\$1500
Replace Broken School Bass	\$2600



ORCHESTRA PRACTICE ROOMS AND EQUIPMENT

Rehearsal areas should be kept clean. If you see trash, pick it up. If something needs attention, please alert the instructor. *Chairs and stands should be used properly and should be put back in order at the conclusion of class.* Students are not to play or move any instruments or equipment without the orchestra director's approval.

Practice rooms are for MUISC PRACTICE ONLY and available for use before and after school at Mrs. Fuchs' discretion. When a practice room is in use, the light must be on, and the window is free of obstruction. All equipment and lights must be turned off when you leave the room. Chairs, music stands, etc. moved to practice rooms must be returned to their original location in the orchestra room. Inappropriate use of the practice rooms will result in disciplinary action at the director's discretion and banning further use of practice rooms for the year.

- NO FOOD, DRINKS, OR GUM ALLOWED IN THE PRACTICE ROOMS.

LOCKERS

Violin and viola students will be assigned a locker and lock for the school year. Lockers should remain locked whenever instruments are stored. Replacement locks cost **\$10**. Kell High School is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

SHEET MUSIC

Students must bring their assigned music folder and music to every rehearsal.

- ✓ Label all music with your name.
- ✓ Write only in pencil.
- ✓ Record bowings and markings immediately.
- ✓ It is the student's responsibility to obtain missed music from the music librarian.

CLASS TUNERS

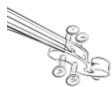
Tuners are assigned to each stand or instrument. Students are responsible for proper care and returning them after every class. Lost or damaged tuners incur a \$15 replacement fee.

ORCHESTRA UNIFORMS

Every orchestra member must have an orchestra uniform. Uniforms are provided through KOBA. Two uniform options available to students:

1. Floor length black dress with flutter sleeve, black dress shoes
2. Black tux pants, black button-down shirt, black tie, black dress shoes, black socks

All students are required to provide their own black shoes to wear for performances. The fee to borrow the uniform is included in the dues for KOBA (\$200). All uniforms will be fitted at the beginning of the year and are due back to school after the final concert in May. The uniforms should be returned dry cleaned and ready for the next person to use. Failure to return the uniform or any part of the uniform will lead to a replacement fine. Failure to pay the fine will lead to failure to walk at Kell Graduation.



KELL ORCHESTRA BOOSTER ASSOCIATION (KOBA)

The Kell Orchestra Booster Association (KOBA) is an integral part of the Kell Orchestra program. It is run by parents of students and handles many of the extra-curricular events associated with orchestra. This includes field trips and fundraisers. KOBA also provides uniforms, clinicians, equipment, repairs, and any additional funding necessary to keep the orchestra program going. Cobb County provides a budget for the Kell orchestra program but that does not cover all of our costs. KOBA uses orchestra-wide fundraisers to raise money for the program but also relies heavily on dues paid by orchestra families.

Visit the KOBA page on the website, kellorchestra.org, for more information.

ORCHESTRA DUES

Orchestra dues are an annual fee of **\$200.00** per student and are collected at the beginning of the school year. For families with multiple students in the program, we ask for **\$100.00** for each additional child. A payment plan option is available. Orchestra dues include:

✓ Supplemental instruction through workshops, clinics, and fall/winter camps ✓ Equipment such as tuners, shoulder rests, batteries, rock stops, rosin, etc. ✓ Yearly purchase of new music ✓ Guest instructors, performers, or clinicians ✓ Bus transportation on some orchestra field trips ✓ Entry fees for performance evaluation or other performances ✓ Fees for performance sites and maintenance ✓ Student recognition awards – certificates, medals, and orchestra letters ✓ Food on competition days, for workshops, and hospitality events ✓ Assist with purchases of new instruments and equipment ✓ The Kell Orchestra T-Shirt!

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is an essential part of a non-profit organization. All fundraisers are done to lower the cost of activities for the students, as well as go directly to student dues. Throughout the year, students and parents will be asked to participate in these activities. Specific fundraisers will help to offset the costs of various trips and activities. Any additional fundraising funds will go to benefit the entire orchestra program. Student participation is expected in order to earn an orchestra letter.

STUDENT MONEY COLLECTION

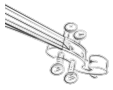
All payments TO THE BOOSTER CLUB will be made online through the CutTime platform OR in person at one of our Orchestra events throughout the year.

Payments should be made payable by check (no cash, if possible) to KOBA (Kell Orchestra Booster Association) or Debit/Credit Card.

TRAVELING & SOCIAL EVENTS:

Throughout the year, the Kell High School Orchestra will have the opportunity to travel to various events. When leaving the school grounds, all school rules remain in effect. This includes travel to and from the event on the bus/plane and at the actual event. It is important that each orchestra member is aware of the Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco guidelines for all extra and co-curricular activities. Specific travel rules will be published at a later date, as the need arises. Rules are created to ensure the safety and well-being of each person who is involved with the trip. *There will be no tolerance for any violation of rules while on an orchestra trip. Failure to comply with school rules will lead to the student being immediately removed from the trip.*

Social events will be scheduled throughout the year to encourage orchestra camaraderie. The same school/county rules and regulations are enforced at these events. The student and booster club officers, with the approval of the orchestra director, will determine these functions.



CLASS PLACEMENTS & AUDITIONS

Joining the Kell Orchestra Program is by recommendation of the middle school/high school orchestra teacher and by audition. To be enrolled in on-level orchestra (Concert Orchestra & Sinfonia Orchestra), students will be placed at the discretion of the director based on rehearsal skill and competencies. The advanced orchestra (Chamber Orchestra) is by audition only. Rehearsal standards corresponding to your placement are expected; failure to maintain a high standard may result in a lowered orchestra level. Auditions for Chamber Orchestra are typically held in December and April. Audition requirements are posted on the orchestra website. The judge will use a standardized form to score each performance. These scores will be tallied and to determine orchestra placement for the following year. *Orchestra is a year-long class, and mid-year changes will not be accommodated.*

FALL SEMESTER

1st Period: Concert Orchestra (Intermediate)
2nd Period: Sinfonia Orchestra (Advanced)
3rd Period: Chamber Orchestra (Mastery)

SPRING SEMESTER

1st Period: Concert Orchestra (Intermediate)
2nd Period: Sinfonia Orchestra (Advanced)
3rd Period: Chamber Orchestra (Mastery)

ADDITIONAL PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES

Students are encouraged to participate in opportunities beyond the classroom, including:

- **Solo & Ensemble Festival**
- **District Honors Orchestra**
- **GMEA All-State Orchestra**
- **Local Youth Orchestras**

Information, audition materials, and registration deadlines can be found on the orchestra website and will be shared throughout the school year.

VARSITY LETTER AWARD

Students may earn a **Varsity Letter** through a merit-point system that recognizes commitment, leadership, participation, and service to the program. To be eligible, students must meet the required point total for their ensemble and have no unexcused concert absences. Letters and award bars are presented at the annual Orchestra Awards Banquet.

Minimum point totals:

- **Concert Orchestra:** 300 points
- **Sinfonia Orchestra:** 350 points
- **Chamber Orchestra:** 400 points

PRIVATE LESSONS

Private lessons are one of the best ways for students to grow as musicians. While not required, individualized instruction helps students develop strong technique, confidence, and musical independence. A list of recommended private teachers is available on the website.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Leadership is an important part of the Kell Orchestra program. Students are encouraged to serve in leadership roles that support the orchestra, assist with rehearsals and events, organize social activities, and help build a positive program culture.

Section Leaders are selected through an audition and interview process based on musicianship, leadership, and responsibility. Students may also serve on the **Student Leadership Team**, which works with Mrs. Fuchs and KOBA to support the orchestra program.