

FORT COLLINS HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRAS HANDBOOK 2025-2026



F C H S O R C H E S T R A S
"Where Excellence Is Expected"

Music Department Expectations

x Attendance is a vital part of every musical ensemble. All excused absences/tardies can be made up through extra work given by the director. Unexcused absences/tardies will affect your grade greatly because participation points, as well as any other graded work, for that day can be made up but for only 50% of the original value. Make sure that you do not skip class and that all legitimate absences/tardies are excused through the school attendance office. Symphony students are expected to be in their seats with their instrument ready to play by the time the bell rings. All other orchestras have 2 minutes after the bell.

x Please check your attendance on the internet regularly. Mistakes are easier to fix if they are found quickly.

x All musicians are to perform in all of their ensemble's concerts. Excused absences from concerts may be granted for personal illness, family emergency, or prearranged important occasions. **A job, a rock concert, and picking up an exchange student at the airport are not acceptable reasons for missing a concert.**

Performing is a vital part of the curriculum and it should be considered as such. If any student feels that he/she needs to be excused from a performance, then there should be advance notice, (at least two weeks) given to the director.

x Come to class prepared. Make sure you have your music, a pencil, and your instrument. Display a helpful and eager attitude and always do your best.

x No food or drink other than water, is allowed in the music rooms, practice rooms, or the stage.

Concert Etiquette

x Call time is normally 30 minutes prior to each concert. There are exceptions where Mr. Hermanson will ask students to report 60 minutes prior to the concert.

Concert Dress for Orchestras

Part of the fun of performing in an orchestra, whether you admit it or not, is to dress up. These are the requirements for concert dress.

Symphony Orchestra Concert Dress

Dress Option

X Wear a standard, music department dress. Also make sure that you wear **black** shoes. Flip Flops and tennis shoes are not acceptable.

Suit Option

X Wear music department issued **black** tuxedos with black dress pants that have the satin stripe. Bow ties, socks and shoes are to be black as well. Black tennis shoes, white socks, and black jeans are **not acceptable**. It is also expected that gentlemen wear the music department issued white dress shirt. Flip Flops and tennis shoes are not acceptable.

Concert Orchestra Concert Dress

Dress Option

X Wear a standard, music department dress. Also make sure that you wear **black** shoes. Flip Flops and tennis shoes are not acceptable.

Suit Option

X Wear the standard music department black dress pants with the satin stripe, the standard music department white button-down shirt, the standard music department purple tie, and the standard music department vest. Appropriate black dress shoes are to be worn. Flip Flops and tennis shoes are not acceptable.

Sinfonietta Concert Dress

Dress Option

X Wear a standard, music department dress. Also make sure that you wear **black** shoes. Flip Flops and tennis shoes are not acceptable.

Suit Option

X Wear the standard music department black dress pants with the satin stripe, the standard music department white button-down shirt, the standard music department gold tie, and the standard music department vest. Appropriate black dress shoes are to be worn. Flip Flops and tennis shoes are not acceptable.

NOTE: Not to comply with the concert dress code will lead to loss of points for the performance and may lead to dismissal from the performance.

Grading Policy for Orchestras

The final grade for each semester will be determined through four categories, 1) Performance, 2) Participation, 3) Assessments and 4) Assignments. The following categories are weighted as follows, 1) Performances are 21% of the final grade, 2) Participation is 30% of the final grade, 3) Assessments are 34% of the final grade and 4) Assignments are 15% of the final grade.

x **PERFORMING, 21 % of the Final Grade**

The number of scheduled performances varies. Check the included calendar.

All musicians are to perform in all of their ensemble's concerts. Excused absences from concerts may be granted for personal illness, family emergency, or prearranged important occasions. Jobs are not an acceptable reasons for missing a concert.

Performing is a vital part of the curriculum and it should be considered as such. If any student feels that he/she needs to be excused from a performance, then there should be advance notice, (at least two weeks) given to the director.

Attendance is a very important part of every musical ensemble. Make sure that you do not skip class and that all legitimate absences and tardies are excused through the school attendance office.

If an absence from a performance is excused then a student can make up all points that were missed through extra work. If the absence is unexcused a student may still do extra work but may only receive 50% of their earned grade.

x **PARTICIPATION, 30% of the Final Grade**

Points, (5 for non block days and 10 for block days) will be earned daily for being on time and fully prepared. Points will be deducted if the student is tardy, unprepared for class, or does not participate. Every absence results in 0 points for the day. If the absence is excused then a student can make up all points that were missed through extra work. If the absence is unexcused a student may still do extra work but may only receive 50% of their earned grade. Please check your attendance on the internet regularly. Mistakes are easier to fix if they are found quickly.

x **ASSESSMENTS, 34% of the Final Grade**

Assessments are in the form of pass-offs. These are playing exams that can be retaken if the student is not satisfied with their original grade. Pass-off grades are based on a rubric provided for you on the following page. If a pass-off receives a failing grade then the student will begin a practice card that will remain in effect until the student retakes the pass-off and brings the grade up to a passing grade.

x **Assignments, 15% of the Final Grade**

Assignments are in the form of music theory worksheets, history presentations, reflective writing, listening projects etc.

NOTE: Every quarter/semester is different from another in terms of the number of performances, pass-offs, assignments, etc. It is the student's responsibility throughout the semester to keep up with their grades. A great way to do this is to check their progress and attendance through Synergy.

PASS-OFF RUBRIC

Students are expected to individually “pass-off” their music for the director. Pass-offs are musical excerpts taken from the literature or the musical exercises being learned. Students will work on these in class but they are also expected to spend time on them at home in their personal practice. Each pass-off will be for a grade and that grade will be determined from the following rubric.

FCHS Orchestra Pass Off Rubric				
Category	Outstanding in nearly every detail	Some Minor Flaws	Frequent Minor Flaws/Some Major Flaws	Frequent Major Flaws
Pitch Accuracy	Pitches are consistently accurate. There is no sliding.	Most pitches are accurate. Pitch errors are small and there is no sliding.	Inaccurate pitches are played. Sliding is present.	Wrong pitches are played. Sliding is present. A finger is in the wrong place for the key signature.
Rhythmic Accuracy	The rhythms are consistently accurate.	Most rhythms are accurate. Errors are not major.	Inaccurate rhythms are played often.	Wrong rhythms are played consistently.
Tone Quality	Tone is constant, steady, and smooth. The tone is the same in all parts of the bow.	Tone is constant, steady, and smooth. The tone varies slightly in different parts of the bow.	Tone is not constant, steady, or smooth. The tone varies widely in different parts of the bow.	The tone is uncontrolled. The tone varies widely in different parts of the bow at different times, or the whole bow is not utilized.
Technical Fluency	Performance indicates regular and sustained practice outside of class with great attention to the area of focus.	Performance indicates regular practice outside of class with some attention to the area of focus.	Performance indicates some practice outside of class, but with little attention to the area of focus.	Performance indicates very little practice outside of class.
Tempo Control	There is an audible metronome. The tempo is consistent and unwavering.	There is an audible metronome. The tempo is consistent with some minor fluctuations.	There is not an audible metronome and the tempo is not constant. OR there is an audible metronome and the tempo fluctuates greatly.	There is not an audible metronome. The tempo fluctuates greatly.
Style Markings	All style markings (staccato, marcato, tenuto, slurs) are obviously played	Most style markings were obviously played.	Style markings are present but not obviously played, or many style markings were missed.	Little or no attention is given to style markings.
Dynamics	Dynamic levels are obvious consistent, and accurate.	Most dynamic markings are obvious and accurate.	Dynamic levels are inconsistent.	Little or no attention is given to dynamics.
The Bow	All bowings are observed and the bow is used correctly (part of the bow, dynamic contrast from the bow, etc.)	Most bowings are observed and the bow is used correctly.	Some bowings are observed and/or the bow use is inconsistent.	Little or no attention is given to bowings and/or the student uses only part of the bow.
Shifting	Shifts are consistently performed at the correct time and are accurate. There is no sliding.	Shifts are often performed at the correct time and are often accurate. There is no sliding.	Shifts are sometimes performed at the correct time and are sometimes accurate. There is some sliding.	Shifts are rarely performed at the correct time and are rarely accurate. There is sliding.

2025-2026 FCHS ORCHESTRAS DEPARTMENT CALENDAR



AUGUST	19 th	Back to School Night, 6:00 PM (A)
	22 nd	Music Department Contracts Due (A)
SEPTEMBER	5 th	Concert Attire \$ is Due (A)
	8 th	Tri-M Applications Due (All who are interested in being a part of Tri-M)
	16 th	Tri-M Induction Ceremony, McNeal, 7:00 PM (Tri-M Members)
	30 th	Front Range Chamber Players Collaboration Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (FR)
	22 nd -25 th	Western States Honor Orchestra Audition Recording (Players wishing to Audition)
OCTOBER	29 th	All Orchestras Concert with Boltz Middle School, McNeal, 7:00 PM (A)
	30 th	First Annual Halloween Orchestra SPOOK FEST, McNeal, 7:00 PM (A)
NOVEMBER	7 th	Purple & Gold Dinner opens (Tri-M members are expected to participate)
	6 th -8 th	Western States Honor Orchestra (Those who auditioned and were accepted)
	9 th	Mattress Fundraiser (A)
	10 th -13 th	Recording for All-State Orchestra Auditions (Players wishing to Audition)
	14 th	FCHS Young Ensembles Festival, 9 AM - 12:30 PM, McNeal (CO SI)
	17 th	Band & Orchestra Concert, Symphonic Band & Symphony Orchestra, McNeal, 7:00 PM (S)
	18 th	Leshner Run Out Performance, Noon-1:30 PM, Leshner MS (S)
	18 th	Front Range Chamber Players Collaboration Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (FR)
	19 th	Band/Orchestra Concert, Concert/Int. Bands, Concert/Sinfonietta Orch, 7:00 PM (CO SI)
	8 th	Chamber Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (Tower)
DECEMBER	9 th	Front Range Chamber Players Collaboration Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (FR)
	10 th	"Hallelujah Chorus" Rehearsal, 8:00-9:00 AM (S CO)
	15 th	Holiday Gift Concert, 5:00 PM AND 7:30 PM (S CO)
JANUARY	27 th	Pre CMEA Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (S)
	28 th -31 th	CMEA Convention (S)
FEBRUARY	4 th	Middle School Audition Workshop!
	5 th -7 th	Colorado All-State Orchestra, CSU (Those who auditioned and were accepted)
	10 th	Front Range Chamber Players Collaboration Concert 7:00 PM (FR)
MARCH	26 th	Spring Orchestra Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (A)
	5 th	ASTA Orchestra Festival, all day (S CO)
	9 th -12 th	2026-2027 Orchestra Auditions, during class (CO SI)
	10 th	Front Range Chamber Players Collaboration Concert 7:00 PM (FR)
APRIL	23 rd -25 th	2026-2027 8 th Grade Orchestra Auditions
	16 th -18 th	FCHS Performing Arts Presents <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> , McNeal, 7:00 PM (Pit Orchestra)
	23 rd -24 th	ASTA State Festival, FCHS, All Day (S)
MAY	28 th	Senior Recital, 7:00 PM (Seniors wishing to participate)
	5 th	Front Range Chamber Players Collaboration Concert 7:00 PM (FR)
	14 th	Chamber Concert, McNeal, 7:00 PM (Tower)
	18 th	End of the Year Concert, 7:00 PM (CO SI)
	19 th	Honors Concert, 7:00 PM (S)
	20 th	FCHS Performing Arts Awards Night, 7:00 PM (A)
	20 st	Graduation Music Rehearsal, 8:00-9:00 AM (CO S)
	23 rd	Graduation Practice, Moby Gym, 9:45-11:45 AM (A)
	24 th	Graduation, Moby Gym, 1:00 PM (A)

Key: S = Symphony CO = Concert Orchestra SI = Sinfonietta A = All Orchestra Students
 FR = Front Range Chamber Players. All Students are required to attend at least one concert during the school year.
 school year.



Scan the QR Code to be taken to the music department's Google Calendar, or visit <https://tinyurl.com/fchspacalendar>

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Letter Points and Awards

Orchestra letters are given only to those students who prove themselves to be hardworking and dedicated to their playing/performing. When a student wears an orchestra letter, he/she has achieved an incredible task.

Orchestra Letters are awarded by earning points in two categories. A total of 150 points is needed to earn a letter. After the initial letter is earned, a bar will be awarded for each additional 75 points. Total points over 800 = Lambkin for Life.

Gold Points:

Students need to earn at least 60 gold points to earn an initial letter, and 40 gold points for each additional bar. Gold points can be earned in the following ways:

- Play all major scales (2 octave) from memory and demonstrate knowledge of each key signature. (20 Points)
- Taking weekly private lessons. A letter from your private teacher is required. (20 Points)
- Submit a recording for All-State Orchestra and/or UNC Western States Honor Orchestra. (20 Points)
- Participation in the chamber program for the full year. (20 Points)
- Performing at Solo/Ensemble with a superior rating. Either FCHS S & E or PSD S & E. (20 Points)
- Participation in the Borromeo Weekend if you are in FCHS Chamber (20 Points)

Purple Points:

Purple points can be earned in the following ways:

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| • Membership in orchestra | 10 pts each semester |
| • All State Orchestra (Being accepted AND participating) | Automatic Letter |
| • UNC Weekend for Strings (Being accepted AND participating) | 30 pts |
| • Summer Orchestra | 10 pts |
| • Performing at the Colorado Music Educators Convention | 20 pts |
| • Solo and Ensemble excellent rating | 15 pts |
| • Solo and Ensemble good rating | 10 pts |
| • Performing FCHS concerts | 5 pts each concert |
| • Performing in other public venues | 5 pts each concert |
| • Extra-curricular orchestras (Civic orch, etc) | 15 pts |
| • Concerts attended (with a program as proof) | 2 pts each concert |
| • Pep band | 10 pts |
| • Marching band | 10 pts |
| • Membership in the Pit Orchestra for the Spring Musical | 20 pts |
| • Just Chamber Music | 10 pts |
| • Tri-M | 10 pts (+15 on the board) |

Students should keep good records on their tally sheet, which is on the back of this page. Points can be earned in a variety of ways. Students **MUST** earn 60 gold points to earn an initial letter. However, they are welcome to earn more, and it will count towards the 150 point total. Here are two paths to 150:

- All Major Scales (20) + Private Lesson (20) + Chamber (20) = 60 gold points. Student needs 90 purple points to earn the letter.
- All Major Scales (20) + Private Lesson (20) + Chamber (20) + Superior at S & E (20) = 80 gold points. Student needs 70 purple points to earn a letter.

There are instances where students can earn letter points by doing other musical activities (giving private lessons, mentoring a middle school student, helping at middle school concerts, composing music, etc.). Those activities will be awarded letter points on a case by case basis. Please speak with Mr. Hermanson so that we can mutually agree on how many points an activity is worth. To earn points, some form of proof is required.

Awards and letters will be given out at the honors concert each year. It would be my pleasure to hand a letter to every FCHS music student. Now go earn one ☺