



Dear Students and Families:

Please carefully review this document as a family. It contains expectations from both a curricular perspective and an extracurricular perspective. ***Some of our curricular expectations extend beyond the school day***, and it is important that we are all aware of them. I have provided as many event dates as possible for the full year, because it is important to me to respect your time. In turn, I will be expecting students to take an active role in planning ahead and knowing their own commitments. Please note that some changes are possible, and I will hold myself to the same standard of planning and communicating any changes well in advance.

This document is not exhaustive, and I will be editing and refining it as needed. I welcome questions at any time, and I am happy to arrange virtual or in-person meetings to promote positive two-way communication. Let's make this year memorable and rewarding!

Mr. Brennan

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Course Overviews

Campus Orchestra (8th Hour)

Campus Orchestra is a non-auditioned ensemble for freshman string musicians at Bloomfield Hills High School. This course is designed to introduce students to the skills necessary to function in a high school ensemble. Students will prepare grade-appropriate musical literature for concert performance while applying independent skills in planning both technical execution and artistic decision-making. To demonstrate knowledge and proficiency, students will complete a mixture of written and performed assessments throughout the year. Students will perform in several public concerts throughout the school year as a *graded expectation of the course*.

Philharmonic Orchestra (5th Hour)

Philharmonic Orchestra is a non-auditioned ensemble for students in Grades 10 through 12 at Bloomfield Hills High School. This course builds upon the skills established in Campus Orchestra and applies them to a higher difficulty level of musical literature, while also expanding opportunities for peer leadership. Students will continue to be held to the expectations for individual written and performed assessments and public concert performances.

Symphony Orchestra (4th Hour)

Symphony Orchestra is an auditioned ensemble for students at Bloomfield Hills High School who wish to develop and apply their artistic and academic skills at a college preparatory level. Students will study a body of literature including unabridged professional masterworks, and are responsible for their own individual preparation for ensemble rehearsal. Symphony Orchestra meets regularly outside of school hours with a wind section to complete a full symphonic orchestra, expanding the repertoire of available music.

Chamber Music (0th Hour)

Chamber Music is a course for small student groups, structured flexibly to the size of the roster and the needs of the students enrolled. Students will develop and exercise skills in chamber music, which is prepared collaboratively between members and performed without a conductor. At the beginning of each semester, students will propose a project to define their course of study for that semester. Students from this course can serve as ensembles-for-hire at BHHS functions.

Full Symphonic Orchestra (9th Hour)

Full Orchestra ("Flork") is an extension of the Symphony Orchestra class, and comprises members of the Symphony Orchestra and members of the wind sections of BHHS performing ensembles. Flork studies literature from the full symphonic repertoire and performs at select concerts throughout the year.

Required Materials

An orchestra is an *interdependent* setting. Each individual's preparation affects the group's success, so *everybody* must be responsible and prepared.

Class Materials

Please bring the following materials to class every day:

Instrument:	with bow, case, rosin, and accessories
Strings:	if possible, a full spare set in case one breaks
Music:	all issued concert pieces and supplemental exercises, in a folder or binder
Pencils:	two if possible, sharpened and ready
Device:	<i>occasional</i> device use will be announced in advance

Concert Attire

Students will be issued a uniform for concerts in early October. Please stay tuned for an email with details. Unless otherwise noted, this attire will be mandatory for all orchestra concerts.

Classroom Expectations

Daily Conduct

All of us, myself included, will remember the BHHS Cornerstones in what we choose to do and say. As an extension of these Cornerstones, to facilitate excellent rehearsals, students will:

Keep School Safe

- Follow all schoolwide expectations.
- Tell Mr. Brennan if something doesn't look or feel right.
- Use words and actions that protect and maintain all students' welcome in the orchestra.
- Safely and responsibly use only the instruments and equipment that are permitted.

Prepare for Class

- Be seated and ready to tune, with all materials, 3 minutes after the bell.
- Keep food, gum, and beverages other than water outside of the rehearsal space.
- Check school email and Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines.
- Mark measure numbers with a pencil in pieces that do not have them printed.

Use Excellent Rehearsal Etiquette

- Talk and play only when appropriate, listening attentively to directions.
- Mark reminders and focus areas in the music with pencil when appropriate.
- Handle instruments and equipment carefully, and safely store them after rehearsal.
- Keep the rehearsal space clean and tidy.

Build Mutual Support

- Ask peers for help when needed, and offer help to others in a supportive way.
- Listen attentively to others, genuinely considering different ideas.
- Maintain respect in disagreements, and "table" discussions that are not quickly resolved.
- Congratulate others for asking questions, taking risks, and seeking correction in front of others.

Commit to Progress

- Give maximum effort, fully and earnestly, in every class exercise.
- Practice regularly at home to reinforce knowledge and refine skills.
- Try to stay positive when mistakes happen, keep trying, and ask questions.
- Reflect on what works and what doesn't to make the most of practice time.

Cell Phone Policy

BHHS is implementing a new cell phone policy for the 2025-26 academic year, in anticipation of incoming statewide legislation and in acknowledgment of the known harms created by cell phones in classrooms. In brief, cell phone use will be prohibited during all instructional hours. Students are to have devices disabled and stowed away. A safe location will be provided in the classroom for phones.

BHHS policy allows teachers to authorize cell phone use for specific academic purposes. Such occasions will be exceptionally rare in Orchestra, and will primarily be for in-class completion of Google Forms for certain reflection activities. Students should plan on making a habit of stowing their phones away daily.

I will be adhering to and enforcing the building-wide policy beginning the week of September 8.

Concert Expectations

Concert Attendance Policy

Orchestra is a scheduled class that also features concerts outside the school day. It is important to understand that these are **co-curricular**, and not *extracurricular*. Concerts are mandatory for a grade, and usually take priority over extracurricular commitments.

I have provided a full Calendar of Events in this document. Please make note of these dates for future planning. If a student is absent from a concert, they must complete a makeup assignment. Full credit can only be earned if the absence is *excused*, meaning that I was notified **at least three days in advance**.

I know that BHHS students are involved in many valuable activities, and I never want a student to be caught in the middle of competing expectations. However, **it is the student's responsibility** to notify me of upcoming conflicts. Please see the following examples of situations that are *excused* and *unexcused*.

- Emergencies, student illness, religious holidays, and certain family events will **always** be excused, and three days' notice is not always possible. Simply tell me when you can.
- Specially earned opportunities, like postseason games or award ceremonies, can also be excused, **as long as I am notified three days in advance**.
- In certain extreme cases, a student may receive an excused absence to use the time for recovery in core classes. Because orchestra is also a graded class, this will only apply if a student is failing a core class **and** has zero missing assignments.
- Regular season games, practices, social events (like birthday parties), and similar commitments will be **unexcused**. Students are expected to communicate in advance with their other coaches.

If a student misses a concert for an event not considered *excused*, or fails to provide proper notification, the absence will be considered *unexcused*. Makeup assignments for *unexcused* absences can earn a maximum score of **60%**. If there seems to be a conflict with no solution, students may refer me to their other coach, or vice versa. I have a duty as an educator to provide a reasonable solution.

If transportation may present a barrier to concert attendance, please contact Mr. Brennan.

Event Conduct

The BHHS Orchestras directly reflect the Bloomfield Hills community by their conduct at orchestra events.

When Performing

- Be present and ready for direction, in proper attire, at the stated call time.
- Behave professionally backstage to allow for a focused environment.
- Consider the performance to begin as soon as we are visible onstage.
- Follow conductor cues to graciously receive the audience and accept applause.

When Not Performing

- Take good care of facilities and leave them in better condition than we found them.
- Behave in a professional manner that reflects well on the orchestra at all times.
- Show good sportsmanship at events with students from other schools.

On Extended Trips

- Know all meeting and check-in times and follow them exactly.
- Notify a Director or Chaperone before changing locations.
- Always travel with a friend or classmate.

Grading Policies

Assignment Categories

Assignments in Orchestra will come from the following categories:

Concert Performance:	Public performance of ensemble music, graded for conduct. One per quarter.
Playing Assessments:	Individual excerpt recordings, graded for proficiency. One scale assessment and one concert music assessment per quarter.
Reflective Writing:	Practice self-evaluations, goal plans, and in-class rehearsal reviews. Several per quarter.
Final Exams:	Cumulative assessment of musical knowledge.

Late Work Policy

I struggle every year with developing a policy that is both fair and rigorous. I honor three main principles:

- 1) It should always be possible to pass a class if all work is completed to high quality.
- 2) Meeting deadlines is an academic skill and should be reflected to an extent in the grade.
- 3) Late work is better than no work. Timely work is better than late work.

Therefore, when an assignment is turned in late, it will receive the following deductions:

- **10%** on the first school day the assignment is late. Quality late work can still earn a grade of “A-.”
- **2%** on each subsequent school day. This translates to a letter-grade deduction each week. I reserve the right to reduce or waive this deduction based on student circumstances.
- **40%** is the maximum deduction. A quality assignment can always receive a passing grade.
- Because of grade posting deadlines, I **cannot** accept work after the semester ends.

Academic Honesty

It is expected that any work submitted for a grade in a BHHS Orchestra class is the student’s own work, unedited or aided by technology except as explicitly authorized. Students found to have plagiarized or misrepresented material for an assignment risk receiving a score of “o” on the assignment and may receive further disciplinary action from BHHS according to the Code of Conduct. A warning may not be given for violations of the Academic Honesty policy.

As an extension of the academic policy, students are advised that they must not represent any work generated by artificial intelligence (AI) as their own. There will be situations and contexts in which AI can be a useful tool to enhance our learning experience, but never as a replacement for expressing opinions or reflecting on one’s own practice process. Students are warned that with current technology, AI-generated writing is far easier to detect in the arts than in other subject areas.

If a student is suspected to have represented AI-generated work as their own, they will be asked to hold a verbal interview with the instructor to discuss the assignment and demonstrate knowledge and proficiency. Based on the interview, a comparison with other AI-generated work, and a comparison with the student’s other work, the student is found to have represented AI-generated work as their own, the case will be handled as plagiarism.

2025-26 Calendar of Curricular Events

Please record these dates in your calendar as soon as possible, and consult them when making additional plans and commitments throughout the year. These are considered to be mandatory, graded events. With the possible exception of MSBOA Band & Orchestra Festival, all events will be held at the BHHS Auditorium.

Date and Time	Event
Tue Oct 21 7 p.m.	Premier Concert - BHHS Choirs and Orchestras
Mon Dec 8 3 p.m.	BHHS Winter Collage Dress Rehearsal
Tue Dec 9 & Wed Dec 10 7 p.m.	BHHS Winter Collage
Thu Feb 19 6 p.m.	BHHS Orchestras Pre-Festival Concert
TBD Feb 26 - Mar 6 Time TBD	MSBOA District IV Band & Orchestra Festival*
Wed May 13 7 p.m.	BHHS Orchestras Spring Concert
Tue Jun 2 3 p.m.	BHHS Senior Concerto Concert Dress Rehearsal (Symphony Orchestra Only)
Wed Jun 3 7 p.m.	BHHS Senior Concerto Concert (Symphony Orchestra Only)

*MSBOA Band & Orchestra Festival cannot be scheduled until all member schools in our district are registered. Registration for these events will take place in late November. I typically receive our schedule in January, which I will immediately communicate to families. Because BHHS is a host site, it is **most likely** that we will perform on either Thursday, March 5 or Friday, March 6 at BHHS during the school day.

Full Orchestra for Symphony Orchestra Members

Beginning in the second academic quarter (approximately the start of November), members of Symphony Orchestra will have a weekly after-school rehearsal with Full Orchestra (“Flork” for short). These rehearsals take place on **Thursdays from 3:00 - 4:50** and are a **curricular expectation of the course**. Students are expected to plan their extracurricular obligations, work, study habits, and social activities around these rehearsals – not the other way around! – and should proactively monitor their schedule for possible conflicts. To maintain the high standards of the BHHS music program, **I reserve the right to create graded assignments during Flork rehearsals!**

2025-26 Calendar of Extracurricular Opportunities

In addition to the dates above, students in the BHHS orchestra program will have many additional opportunities to perform, both within and beyond the BHS community. Some of these are open to any interested student, while some require an audition, teacher recommendation, or prerequisite accomplishment. This list may grow!

Date	Event	Location
Mon Sep 9 - Sat Nov 15	Pit Orchestra for BHHS Production of <i>The Hello Girls</i> Mondays in Sep and Oct; Intensive Schedule in Nov	BHHS
Fri Sep 19	Central Michigan University Honors Orchestras Contact Mr. Brennan ASAP	CMU Mt. Pleasant
Sat Oct 18 Sun Oct 19	MSBOA All-State Orchestra Auditions Registration Deadline Oct 1 - Form in Canvas	Walled Lake Northern HS
Fri Oct 31 Sat Nov 1	Oakland University Honor Orchestra Nominations Due Sep 15 - Ask Mr. Brennan	OU Rochester
Fri Nov 21	Eastern Michigan University Honors Orchestra Nominations Due Oct 1 - Ask Mr. Brennan	EMU Ypsilanti
Fri Dec 5 - Sat Dec 6	Eastern Michigan University ChamberFest Nominations Due Oct 1 - Ask Mr. Brennan	EMU Ypsilanti
Sat Dec 13	MSBOA Districts 4 & 16 Honors Orchestra Nominations Due Oct 11 - Ask Mr. Brennan	Rochester HS
Wed Dec 17	SHMS 6th Grade Winter Concert Chamber Groups or Volunteer Orchestra - Sign Up in Canvas	SHMS
Thu Jan 22 - Sat Jan 24	MSBOA All-State Orchestra at the Michigan Music Conference Pending Successful Audition Oct 18/19	DeVos Hall Grand Rapids
Mon Feb 2	Wayne State University Honors Orchestra Nominations Due Jan 5 - Ask Mr. Brennan	WSU Detroit
Fri Feb 6 Sat Feb 7	MSBOA District 4 High School Solo & Ensemble Festival Registration Deadline Nov 13 - Will Be in Canvas	Novi HS
Sat Mar 21	MSBOA State High School Solo & Ensemble Festival For Events Earning a Division I "Superior" at District S&E	Rochester Stoney Creek HS
Sat Apr 11	BHHS Spring Stroll Registration in Canvas TBD Feb or Mar	BHHS
Fri May 8	MSBOA Spring Honors Festival For Select Invitees from State S&E	WMU Kalamazoo
Sat May 9	CMU CelloVortex Four Rehearsals Throughout Year - Ask Mr. Brennan	CMU Mt. Pleasant

Leadership Opportunities

Any student can lead by example, and ensembles function best when everybody leads in this way. There are also several titled leadership positions for those who wish to use their skills to more directly guide the development of the program. You may wish to apply for any or all of these positions, but remember: a leadership position is not just a badge of honor; it is a ***role of service to the ensemble!***

There are two primary types of leadership positions that students can apply for: Section Principal and Orchestra Staff. Application details for each are below:

Section Principal

Each section of the orchestra is led by a Principal and Assistant Principal. In the first violin section, they are called the Concertmaster and Assistant Concertmaster. Section Principals are expected to...

- Prepare their music in terms of notes, rhythms, and bowings on a faster timeline than the rest of the ensemble, allowing them to provide positive leadership-by-example during rehearsals.
- Mark bowing changes in the music and communicate them to the section, and make sure that bowings are uniform with other sections in shared parts.
- Sit in the front row of the ensemble, visible to their section and the other Section Principals, giving clear prep breaths, allowing the ensemble to achieve greater unity by matching them.
- Play all marked Solo parts in their music. (Assistant Principals should prepare these as well, in case the Principal is absent.)
- Be aware of the successes and challenges that the section faces, to communicate with the director and allow the planning of better rehearsals.
- Plan and lead one sectional rehearsal per concert, including warm-up exercises, selection of passages, and rehearsal methods. (Some sectionals will be led by professional coaches.)
- Contribute to good section rapport by knowing the names of all players in the section and interacting positively and professionally.

The Concertmaster acts as a Section Principal for the Section Principals. Additionally, the Concertmaster leads the tuning procedure (with the Principal Oboe) at the beginning of rehearsals and concerts.

Audition Procedure

Auditions will be held for Principal chairs within the first two weeks of each concert cycle. These auditions will be ungraded and optional. Candidates will be provided with a short excerpt of difficult music a few days before the audition. It is understood that candidates are unlikely to achieve a fully-polished audition in this short time. The audition is held this way to paint a clearer picture of each candidate's unique strengths.

Audition winners will be announced at the start of the following class rehearsal. Orchestra members are expected to be supportive and positive toward all candidates and winners.

Orchestra Staff

In addition to the performers onstage, professional orchestras employ an administrative staff to manage facilities, publicity, personnel, and finances. The following yearlong staff positions are available for students who wish to use their extra-musical skills to contribute to the orchestra program:

Publicity Manager

The Publicity Manager promotes orchestra events to the general public, encouraging increased attendance and program support. Duties may include designing concert flyers, drafting concert advertisements for school announcements, writing concert invitations to school administrators, speaking to younger students to recruit for the BHHS orchestra program, managing social media accounts, and speaking at concerts to introduce the orchestra, thank audience members for attending, or promote BBOB.

The position may require strong writing skills, interest or ability in graphic design, public speaking, and confidence when speaking with adults and members of the general public.

Operations Manager

The Operations Manager ensures the working condition of the spaces and equipment used by the orchestra. The primary duty of this position is to use the orchestra seating chart to set up the correct number of chairs and stands used by the ensemble in their correct positions, as well as assist with the setup of any large equipment such as risers or percussion instruments. At non-performing events, such as dessert receptions, orchestra parties, or end-of-season banquets, duties may include set-up and tear-down of tables and chairs. The Operations Manager will also assist students with orchestra supplies such as strings, rosin, and rock stops, and notify the director of any supply needs. Finally, the Operations Manager may lead a recording station for playing assessments and auditions.

The position will require the willingness and ability to consistently report to class early, and may require attention to detail and strong communication skills.

Orchestra Librarian

The Orchestra Librarian maintains all music in active use by the orchestra, including warm-up materials, concert music, and special music such as audition packets. The primary duty of this position is to keep a set of spare copies for each section, so that if a student forgets or is missing a copy, the spare can be issued before tuning without disrupting rehearsal. If one student displays a pattern of missing music, the Orchestra Librarian will report this to the director, who will address the issue with that student. As a special tradition kept by professional orchestras, the Orchestra Librarian places the scores on the director's stand before concerts, so that the director can remain backstage to preserve the aura of anticipation! The Librarian may be invited to assist with major library reorganization projects.

The position will require strong organizational skills, and may require the willingness to correct peers who are not meeting orchestra expectations.

Application Procedure

An application via Google Form will be made available at the beginning of the school year, with a deadline in mid-September. Candidates may also be asked to attend a brief interview with the director. After all interviews are completed, winning candidates will be announced at the start of the following class rehearsal.