



Saratoga High School  
Instrumental Music

*Orchestra*  
*Program*



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# Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome to the Saratoga High School Orchestra Program! We are excited to welcome the Class of 2025, as well as incoming students of all grade levels for the coming year. Our program involves a large and diverse population of anywhere between 130-150 string players with varying musical backgrounds: from our All-State musicians with many years of experience to brand new students excited to join, we invite anyone and everyone that plays or is interested in a string instrument to be a part of our program. The orchestra program at Saratoga High School is also a melting pot of students involved in virtually every sport, activity, and co-curricular on the SHS campus. Welcome to the SHS Orchestra Family!

We are already making plans for the upcoming school year for the Saratoga High School Orchestras. The largest part of this preparation focuses on our new members who are completing their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. Therefore, we want to begin an early communication with you to ensure all those involved in the SHS orchestra will have a superb transition to our high school program.

There are many new challenges facing the first-year high school student. Being in the orchestra program serves as a springboard for successful high school life and beyond. Now is the time when musical investment begins to pay measurable dividends. The seeds of success are about to produce a harvest of exciting opportunities for you as you take that all-important first step forward as a member of the SHS Orchestras. In addition, it affords every student the opportunity to enter an advanced level of instruction with a host of talented friends who share a similar interest and a familiar language – music! Our upperclassmen serve as a safe, fun, and supportive social family in the introduction to this new learning climate.

Students are often ambivalent and a bit fearful about entering high school. The first year can be a bit intimidating. Much of this first-year stress can be avoided when you are an integral and valued member of a meaningful and important group – the SHS orchestra. We pride ourselves on our musical accomplishments, but even more on the supportive network our program provides.

This handout is meant to provide answers to frequently asked questions about the SHS orchestra's and just a bit of information that will be of use to you in the next several weeks. Each family will receive an official orchestra mailer in June, which presents all information in much greater detail and a schedule for the upcoming school year. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss our program in detail and share our professional thoughts about the positive implications associated with our orchestra program.

We are anxiously looking forward to working with you! In discussing the future of our program, we all feel next year's entering class will bring a new level of excellence to our program! Welcome Class of 2025!



Michael Boitz  
Director of Orchestra's  
[mboitz@lgsuhsd.org](mailto:mboitz@lgsuhsd.org)

Jason Shiuan  
VPA Chair and Associate Director  
[jshiuan@lgsuhsd.org](mailto:jshiuan@lgsuhsd.org)

Takako Hasegawa  
Administrative Assistant  
[thasegawa@lgsuhsd.org](mailto:thasegawa@lgsuhsd.org)



**What classes should I take  
Freshman Year?**

Parents and students often ask about the demand of orchestra on the academic schedule at Saratoga High School. You will find that some of the brightest and best SHS students are dedicated orchestra members. To the right is a sample Freshman schedule under SHS's bell schedule (This is only a sample – subjects/periods may be different).

**Is it possible to be in  
Orchestra and Band?**

Yes, easily during Semester I, then a choice must be made between Band and Orchestra during semester II unless a student is enrolled in Winter Guard/Percussion for PE Credit. Please see the sample Fall schedule to the right to see an example of this!

**SAMPLE ORCH. SCHEDULE:  
FRESHMAN FALL**

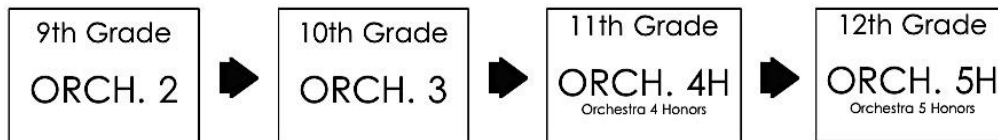
Example "A" Day	Example "B" Day
Period 1 <b>Math</b>	Period 2 <b>Orch. Level II</b>
Period 3 <b>Science</b>	Period 4 <b>Foreign Language</b>
Period 5 <b>Health/ World Geo/ Driver's Ed</b>	Period 6 <b>PE</b> <i>(or Band PE/Guard or Fall Sport PE)</i>
Period 7 <b>English</b>	Period 8 <i>Music Dept. Only</i> <b>Marching Band &amp; Color Guard Rehearsal</b> <i>(if taking for PE Credit)</i>

**SAMPLE ORCH. SCHEDULE:  
FRESHMAN SPRING**

Example "A" Day	Example "B" Day
Period 1 <b>Math</b>	Period 2 <b>Orch. Level II</b>
Period 3 <b>Science</b>	Period 4 <b>Foreign Language</b>
Period 5 <b>Health/ World Geo/ Driver's Ed</b>	Period 6 <b>PE</b> <i>(Free period if participating in WG, WP or Spr. Sport)</i>
Period 7 <b>English</b>	Period 0 <b>Symph. Orch. or Jazz Band</b> Period 8 <b>Winter Guard Winter Perc.</b>

**I've heard the SHS Orchestras earn honors credit?**

Yes, almost all of our 11th and 12th graders earn UC, Private College, Out-of-State, and State College Honors Credit in their 11th and 12th grade year. Students must be enrolled in 9th Grade (Orchestra II) and 10th Grade (Orchestra III) to follow the sequence outlined by the UC system to earn this credit, or pick up the credit in sequence if added after 9th grade year:



As you can see, participating in the SHS Orchestra program for all four years of high school will allow students to earn two years of honors credit recognized by four-year universities.



## **Is it possible to earn Honors Credit if I'm in Orchestra and Band as outlined in my Junior Year for both?**

Yes, if selecting the second Semester II option above, this is possible. There are at least 6-12 students doing this annually. They are happy to share their experience!

### **Orchestra and Other Electives - Clearing Up the Information "Flood" for Students:**

This information is important to Orchestra students, as it does impact the orchestra sequence and Honors Credit earned. While earning Honors Credit is certainly not a reason to join any elective class (in this case Orchestra), in reality the credit does have an impact on many, as well as demonstrates on paper and in practical application a student's ability to commit and progress in a disciplined and engaging art form. Here is some information to help clear things up:

#### **Orchestra and an Engineering Elective:**

Students can enroll in these classes at any grade level, there is no official sequence, regardless of course title (the course titles are a bit confusing/deceiving).

1. Intro to Engineering: **This is NOT a prerequisite to the other Engineering classes, not an official sequence**, and students can take this or the other Engineering classes at any grade level, pending their Math level.
2. Applied Engineering: 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders can take this class, and there is no prerequisite. It is not necessary to take *Intro* before *Applied*.

#### **Orchestra and Journalism**

Most Orchestra students elect to position themselves in Orchestra II during their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year, then add another elective 10<sup>th</sup> grade year and beyond, so sequentially they will be earning Honors Credit by 11<sup>th</sup> grade year. Such is the case for Journalism. Journalism spaces do not fill up for 10<sup>th</sup> graders as they do for 9<sup>th</sup> graders (limited space exists for 9<sup>th</sup> graders), so there is no problem in adding Journalism as a 10<sup>th</sup> grader.

#### **Orchestra and Drama or Speech/Debate**

Most students in Orchestra participate in athletics, clubs, and many other activities, including Rhetoric and Drama. Students need not be enrolled in an actual Speech class or Drama class to participate in the Speech and Debate Team or our Schools Plays and Musicals, as these are outside of the school day.

#### **Does orchestra take up all of my time?**

No. Orchestra is a commitment, just like anything of worth, but does not prevent you from participating in other SHS classes, activities, and co-curriculars. SHS orchestra students participate in virtually all other campus activities and athletics.

#### **Do we meet at all before school begins in the fall?**

Typically, the Orchestra Council (student leadership of the orchestra program) plan a retreat before official classes begin. Information, materials, including some music, will be sent to all students and posted online in June.

### **Is high school orchestra difficult?**

Just like anything worth your time, being in the SHS Orchestra Program takes effort. However, we have a spot for ALL students, regardless of your current level. Our biggest wish is for all students to achieve consistently and enjoy the learning process. Every aspect of our program is designed to foster and encourage musical and personal maturity. From students with many years of experience to younger students or students with fewer years of experience, all are welcome and will find a \*home\* in the SHS orchestra program.

### **Are there outside class/evening class rehearsals?**

With the SHS rotating block schedule, occasional rehearsals (2-3 per semester) are now built into the 8<sup>th</sup> period slot and indicated on the Department Calendar. This time is built into the curriculum and is considered part of the \*homework\* for the class, just as you would have outside homework for any class. The calendar indicates these rehearsals and students must arrange calendars accordingly, or see faculty with immovable conflicts. There is never an insurmountable circumstance when it comes to rehearsals.

### **Are there Full Symphony Orchestras?**

Yes. Students perform as part of a symphony orchestra during Semester II. The first portion of the year is dedicated to string orchestra literature and string pedagogy. In December, auditioned wind and percussion players from the band program will join us in the Saratoga Symphony Orchestra or the Saratoga Philharmonic Orchestra.

### **Is everyone in the full Symphony Orchestra?**

This varies from year to year, pending the instrumentation and facility calendar. There are two symphony orchestras at Saratoga High: The Saratoga Symphony Orchestra (SSO), and the Saratoga Philharmonic Orchestra (SPO). SSO happens every year, and SPO varies.

### **Does the orchestra tour?**

Yes. Extensive tours, however, are not mandatory. We typically take a major tour every 3-4 years, with small tours in between. Tour 2020 (cancelled due to COVID) was to bring our program to Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Prague, and Vienna to perform at the most notable venues in each city. Tour 2017 brought our program to Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands for two major festival performances, three performances along the way, including a final concert at the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Our other major tours have included Spain in 2014, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany in 2009, Australia in 2006, and Europe again before that. Our most advanced string orchestra, *Saratoga Strings*, will sometimes tour on an independent schedule in addition to the regular tour schedule, such as Chicago at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in 2018, 2014.

### **Are there fundraisers to help pay for orchestra events and tours?**

Yes. We have several every year. Students will have their own "account" set up by our music boosters for these purposes.

### **Is it hard to get an "A" in orchestra?**

97% of our students earn an "A" in orchestra. Earning anything less than an "A" means a student is simply not meeting the proficiency and commitment requirements. You will receive a detailed grading policy in your orchestra syllabus.

### **Do I have to attend all performances?**

Yes! Orchestra is a group performance class. Performance situations can't be recreated around each individual student. These growth experiences occur infrequently and are very important to the development of the student. Since we depend on each other so much, it is a great loss to miss anyone. Each student's contribution is critical and irreplaceable. You will receive a performance schedule well in advance (May of 2021 for the 2021-2022 school year). If changes occur in the schedule, you will be notified immediately.

### **Should I be taking Private Lessons on my instrument?**

We highly recommend students to take private or group lessons of some sort. However, they are not actually a requirement. Students who truly excel academically are usually involved with private lessons. Successful music programs typically have a large percentage of their students studying privately on a weekly or every-other-week basis. The percentage of students in our current ensembles who study privately is 90%. The frequency of lessons varies greatly. Some students take an hour private lesson weekly, some 30 minutes, some every other week, etc. Please see Mr. Boitz or another faculty member if you need a recommendation or list of potential private teachers in the area. Students who do not study privately are highly encouraged to seek extra help as often as needed.

### **Does the school provide instruments?**

The school helps with larger, more expensive instruments. Basses and cellos are available for use while at school so students don't need to bring large instruments to and from school every day. The school also has a few violas and a few violins. We do encourage students to purchase a good quality instrument for concert performances. Often, students will play these instruments for the rest of their lives in one capacity or another: community groups, college ensembles, churches, synagogues, etc.! It is worth owning a good instrument. A good quality instrument (unlike modern technology) will sustain its value, and in many cases actually *increase* in value with time!

### **If I want to switch to another instrument, which do you recommend?**

BASS, BASS, BASS! Often we are also in need of a few more viola players for each class, but currently we are short on bass players! Chances are also much greater for admission into our advanced ensemble classes, honor groups, and scholarships if you play one of these. \*We highly recommend students switching instruments to take private lessons.

### **When does the Orchestra perform?**

October: TBA String Orchestra Exchange Concert

November: TBA String Orchestra Festival

Early-December: TBA Winter Pops Performance

Electives Night: TBA (in January, SSO only)

February: TBA Festival Performances

March Concert Series: TBA (early March)

CMEA Performances: TBA (mid March)

SMB Pancake Breakfast: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in May

Year-End Concert: TBA (mid May)

Summer Tour: TBA (every 3-4 years)

Other Various in-school performances



## Does Orchestra look good on college applications?

ABSOLUTELY!! In fact, most college admissions departments seek out music students, as they recognize the higher brainpower and commitment involved in our discipline. Our graduates attend some of the top universities and colleges in the country. Arguably no other organization on the SHS campus has a more incredible record of college placement than instrumental music (orchestra and band). Every year, the music office phone rings with questions from college admissions departments regarding our students. This year alone, Mr. Boitz has written over 30 recommendation letters for orchestra/band students. In addition, at least 14 students have applied with a Performing Arts (Music) Supplement to demonstrate the work they have done during high school; this does not include the few students applying as music majors. Most of our students stand out when compared to non-music students, and every year we have graduates earning scholarships based on their music participation and academic merit, regardless of applied major.

Saratoga HS Music alums from the Class of 2020 are currently attending great colleges and universities all over the United States and Canada:

<i>Boston College</i>	<i>Princeton University</i>
<i>Boston University</i>	<i>Seattle University</i>
<i>Brigham Young University</i>	<i>Spokane Community College</i>
<i>Cal Poly San Luis Obispo</i>	<i>Stony Brook University</i>
<i>California Northstate University</i>	<i>Tufts University</i>
<i>Carnegie Mellon University</i>	<i>University of California, Berkeley</i>
<i>Chapman University</i>	<i>University of California, Davis</i>
<i>College of William and Mary</i>	<i>University of California, Irvine</i>
<i>Columbia University</i>	<i>University of California, Los Angeles</i>
<i>Cornell University</i>	<i>University of California, Riverside</i>
<i>De Anza College</i>	<i>University of California, San Diego</i>
<i>Drexel University in Philadelphia</i>	<i>University of California, Santa Barbara</i>
<i>Duke University</i>	<i>University of Colorado, Boulder</i>
<i>Eastman School of Music</i>	<i>University of Connecticut</i>
<i>Emory University</i>	<i>University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign</i>
<i>Harvard University</i>	<i>University of Michigan</i>
<i>Harvey Mudd College</i>	<i>University of Minnesota</i>
<i>Hofstra University</i>	<i>University of Puget Sound</i>
<i>Johns Hopkins University</i>	<i>University of Redlands</i>
<i>The Julliard School</i>	<i>University of Southern California</i>
<i>Lehigh University</i>	<i>University of the Pacific</i>
<i>Loyola University, Chicago</i>	<i>University of Toronto</i>
<i>Macalester College</i>	<i>University of Washington</i>
<i>Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)</i>	<i>Vanderbilt University</i>
<i>New York University</i>	<i>Washington University in St. Louis</i>
<i>Northeastern University</i>	<i>Wesleyan University</i>
<i>Northwestern University</i>	<i>West Valley College</i>
<i>Pitzer College</i>	<i>Yale University</i>
<i>Pomona College</i>	

### **Do I need to be enrolled in Orchestra for both semesters?**

Yes. The orchestra curriculum is set up as a year-long course, just like a foreign language class. Exceptions can be made in unusual circumstances, but they must be approved by Mr. Boitz and the SHS Guidance Department.

### **What are ways parents can get involved with the orchestra?**

The most important thing parents can do is to fully support students by providing the ingredients for success for all academic endeavors. In music, some of these are: private lessons, good instruments, praise and encouragement, patient ears, and, most importantly, attending all events and performances. The orchestra relies heavily on parent volunteers for many things. Becoming a member of the Music Boosters and volunteering when available is greatly appreciated. In general, orchestra students are fun and inspirational people to be with. Our parents have a great time volunteering!

### **Who should I contact with more questions?**

Please contact the Department Chair, Michael Boitz. Email is often the most efficient method of communication for quick questions. **Email: [mboitz@lgsuhd.org](mailto:mboitz@lgsuhd.org)**

