

TRUMBULL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Trumbull, Connecticut

Chamber Strings Ensemble
Grades 9-12
Music Department

Draft for Pilot 2016
(New Course)

Curriculum Writing Team

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CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

The Trumbull High School Community, which engages in an environment conducive to learning, believes that all students will read and write effectively, therefore communicating in an articulate and coherent manner. All students will participate in activities that address problem-solving through critical thinking. Students will use technology as a tool in decision making. We believe that by fostering self-confidence, self-directed and student-centered activities, we will encourage independent thinking and learning. We believe ethical conduct to be paramount in sustaining our welcoming school climate.

INTRODUCTION

Chamber Strings welcomes any violin, viola, cello, or bass student with prior middle school instrumental instruction. This course complements String Orchestra offered during the school day. Emphasis will be placed on the advancement of technique, music reading and comprehension, and musicianship. Music selected will be geared towards smaller chamber group orchestrations. Both contemporary and classical pieces will be included.

Students will continue to develop their individual skills, learn to perform more advanced repertoire, and utilize more advanced technique to create musical expression. Students will also develop their ensemble skills and awareness of the role of their musical voice in the context of ensemble playing. Chamber Strings builds on the String Orchestra foundation, with emphasis on Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and contemporary composers' works. The music selected will be appropriate for small orchestral ensembles.

The Chamber Strings Curriculum will align practices, standards, and assessments among the Trumbull Public Schools, the Connecticut State Board of Education, Connecticut's Common Arts Assessment Initiative, the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, and the National Association for Music Education. It will include the 2014 National Core Arts Standards for Music with the eleven anchor standards and the addition of "connecting" as an artistic process, along with "creating," "performing," and "responding." The course is a special opportunity for strings students to advance their musicianship and their musical literacy.

This elective course can serve as an enhancement to String Orchestra or for students who have scheduling conflicts that do not permit String Orchestra into their daytime schedules. For example, this course is ideal for students who are enrolled in Aquaculture, Regional Center for the Arts, or Agriscience who may have limited space in their schedule for electives. The ensemble meets on Monday evenings from 6:30 until 8:00 p.m. and prepares students for performances in the String Fling, Winter, and Spring Concerts.

PHILOSOPHY

Orchestra stringed instruments have been a part of our world and cultural heritage for hundreds of years. Learning to play a stringed instrument develops intellectual capacity in a unique way. Performing on a stringed instrument requires a high level of discipline, coordination, and concentration, and involves both hemispheres of the brain. Participation in a chamber ensemble can provide many benefits beyond the development of these capacities. Students are given the opportunity to develop individual skills as well as interpersonal skills that arise from collaborating within an ensemble. All subject areas of education are involved in the passing of knowledge and culture from one generation to the next. Teaching strings students to perform

music in an ensemble is a vital part of this transmission of musical knowledge which encompasses world history, music history, and multicultural traditions.

In Chamber Strings Ensemble, students will continue to refine their abilities to play a stringed instrument with proper posture and tone quality and to read and sight-read notated music. While learning to incorporate their individual skills into ensemble playing, they will also focus on listening and adjusting their balance, intonation, and dynamics. Gaining an awareness of musical performance practices, as well as effective practice habits, students will also become more knowledgeable of music as a performing art. They will have opportunities to assume leadership positions in the ensemble, to perform more advanced individual or group solos with the ensemble, and/or to be a part of string quartets or octets performing higher-level chamber music, offering additional performances in school or community venues. This course also aims to cultivate individuals in becoming life-long musicians and/or supporters of the arts by connecting them intimately to a foundation of classical and contemporary strings repertoire.

Unit 1: Proficiency in Performance

Essential Questions

- How do I interact with the group to achieve a unified sound?
- What elements are needed in my playing to bring out the musical aspects of the music?

Focus Questions

- What areas in my posture/technique need refinement so I can be a better player?
- How can I play scales and arpeggios with a better tone and more accurate intonation?
- What should I listen for when I am playing with others?
- Why is it important to be aware of both the conductor and the markings in the music?
- What practice strategies should I employ at home when practicing a difficult passage?
- How does an orchestra rehearse, and what is my role in having a productive rehearsal?

Scope and Sequence

- Tuning procedures
- Long-note scales and arpeggios, proper posture, fluid right arm
- Balance and blending sound utilizing appropriate etudes
- Rehearse All-District String Concert repertoire to be performed with the String Orchestra

Time Allotments/Pacing Guide (Expected Performance Time Frame)

- Approximately twelve weeks

Unit 2: Refinement and Extension of Proficiency

Essential Questions

- How do different bow techniques change the sound of the music/ensemble?
- How does sitting in different sections of the orchestra affect my ability to be a good ensemble player?

Focus Questions

- Where should I place my bow to achieve appropriate articulations/sound?
- What are the tools to effective shifting/playing in tune in higher positions?

Scope and Sequence

- Practice/rehearse scales using different articulations: staccato/quick 16ths/spiccato
- Vibrato exercises with/without bow
- Rehearse etudes applying the use of vibrato
- Rehearse Winter Concert repertoire
- Prepare for Scale Assessment (midterm exam)

Time Allotments/Pacing Guide (Expected Performance Time Frame)

- Approximately twelve weeks

Unit 3: Achievement of Greater Technical Competency

Essential Questions

- How has the ability to express composers' emotions and my own been enhanced through the practice of technique that I, and the orchestra as a whole, have developed over the course of the year?
- What are the technical obstacles that still challenge my playing that I can continue to refine over the summer?
- How can I continue to use my musical knowledge and ability after high school?

Focus Questions

- How aware am I of how I'm using my bow and the tone I produce?
- What challenges are presented in higher grade level repertoire for myself and the orchestra as a whole?
- How can I continue to grow as a strings player and musician over the summer and in the years to come?

Scope and Sequence

- Practice scales and etudes with varying dynamics
- Rehearse Spring Concert repertoire
- Prepare High School Strings common assessment (final exam)

Time Allotments/Pacing Guide (Expected Performance Time Frame)

- Approximately twelve weeks

Unit 4: Theory and Musicianship

Essential Questions

- How does the knowledge of theory enhance a musician's understanding of a composer's music?

Focus Questions

- How do scales create both melody and harmony?
- Why do keys have different numbers of sharps and flats?
- Why are there three versions of the minor scale?
- How do triads and chords create the harmony of a piece of music?
- How should I count a difficult rhythmic passage?
- What are the differences between simple and compound time signatures?

Scope and Sequence

- Introduce and differentiate a whole step and a half step
- Learn major scales and their corresponding key signatures according to the pattern of whole/half steps
- Learn natural minor scales, comparing them to their relative majors
- Discuss and demonstrate differences among the three forms of the minor scale
- Introduce and differentiate major third and minor third
- Construct triads combining different patterns of major and minor thirds
- Teach the definitions of and abbreviations of musical terms
- Teach how to count rhythms using "1 e and a 2 e and a etc." and "1 and a 2 and a etc." subdivisions

Time Allotments/Pacing Guide (Expected Performance Time Frame)

- Continuously throughout the school year

Unit 5: Evaluating and Connecting

Essential Questions

- What should a musician listen for when assessing a performance?
- How does an understanding of the time period in which a piece was composed affect the way a performer chooses to perform/interpret that piece?

Focus Questions

- What are the main elements to listen for when assessing a performance?
- How does listening to a performance guide one's practice?
- What are the main characteristics of each musical time period?

Scope and Sequence

- Evaluate and compare excerpts of music being rehearsed
- Use metronome as a means to play rhythms accurately and at specified tempos
- Constructively comment on one's performance, as well as peers' and the ensemble's performance to develop practice strategies
- Discuss the major time periods (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Contemporary) and the major composers of each

Time Allotments/Pacing Guide (Expected Performance Time Frame)

- Continuously throughout the school year