



# The Woodlands High School Orchestra Handbook 2020-2021

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## **Administration:**

**TWHS Principal- Dr. Ted Landry**  
**TWHS Ninth Grade Campus Principal- Deborah Shepard**  
**CISD Fine Arts Coordinator – Dr. Bob Horton**

### **STUDENT NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

The Conroe Independent School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

## The Woodlands High School Orchestra

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the revamped Highlander Orchestra Program! Our names are Aaron Michaelson, and Lea Gordon. It is our great honor to be your Orchestra Directors.

We want to congratulate and thank you for your commitment to orchestra and the study of music. We hope the information in this handbook will help you understand your role in making the orchestra program a successful and positive experience, and the expectations required regarding behavior and performance. It is our goal to help grow, steer, and shape this program into one of the best orchestra programs in the state, if not the country. We believe we can accomplish this with hard work, dedication, and communication from us all. Please read this handbook carefully as there are some significant changes from previous years.

As part of the CISD Fine Arts Curriculum, orchestra offers students several opportunities to showcase their individual musical talents, and further develop the skills needed to perform orchestra literature at the highest level. In order to be successful, orchestra students must be self-disciplined and organized to schedule sufficient time for daily practice. An ensemble is only as good as the sum of its parts; therefore, everyone must depend on each other to attend required rehearsal with their music prepared. A positive attitude and teamwork are also expected in order to promote pride in the organization, and produce a well-respected and recognized program. This can only be achieved with the hard work and dedication of the students, parents, and directors. Students, come ready to work hard, learn a lot, and have fun while doing it! Parents, many hands make light work. We ask that each of you help out with at least one event during the year.

We are looking forward to getting to know you, and we look forward to working with you this year and in the future. With your effort and participation, we can make The Highlander Orchestra Program one of the finest in Texas!

Sincerely,

Aaron Michaelson  
 Director of Orchestral Studies  
 The Woodlands High School

Lea Gordon  
 Assistant Director of Orchestras  
 The Woodlands High School

**COMMUNICATION:****Phone:** 936-709-1332**Email:** Amichaelson@conroeisd.net**Email:** Lkgrodon@conroeisd.net**Website:** www.TWHSOrchestra.org**CHARMS:** www.Charmsoffice.com

Communication is the key to any successful program. Students and parents can always contact the directors via email or phone. The district has also provided an online program to facilitate communication between students, parents, and the director. This program, Charms Office Assistant found at [www.Charmsmusic.com](http://www.Charmsmusic.com), will be where all information about the program will be housed. Once a student or parent logs in they will be able to see what forms they haven't turned in, any money such as trip payments or class fees that are due, an up to date calendar, grades, any announcements, take playing test via the recording feature, and email the director. Charms will also house all student contact information, so please be sure to input your information as soon as possible, and update it if anything changes. Most communication will happen through Charms so it is important that everyone be aware of it, and check it often. Please see the Charms Handout for more information. Information will also be posted on our new website, [www.TWHSOrchestra.org](http://www.TWHSOrchestra.org).

**REQUIRED FEES:**

- \$260 Activity Fee for All Students (Paid Through Charms)
- \$75 District Maintenance Fee for Students using School Instruments in Class (Paid on the school webstore)

**Please contact Aaron Michaelson with any questions or concerns about the activity fee. Financial concerns should not stop a student's participation in orchestra.**

**RULES/PROCEDURES:**

A high Standard of conduct is expected from students at all times as members of the Orchestra. All rules, as set forth by the TWHS Student Handbook and Orchestra Handbook, must be followed at all times on (and off) campus. Productive rehearsals produce successful performances. Proper rehearsal etiquette and a disciplined working attitude are crucial for the success of any orchestra program.

- Disruptive behavior of any kind is unacceptable. Talking is not permitted while the director is giving instruction. Students must raise their hands to ask a question during instruction. Be respectful of everyone in the room.
- When the bell rings, be ready to play with necessary supplies (pg. 9) at your stand; class begins immediately. Students not ready to play at the bell will be counted tardy. This applies to after school rehearsals.
- Demonstration of correct instrument and body posture are expected.
- Use only your own instrument.
- Always have your pencil, black Orchestra binder, and planner at your seat.
- **INSTRUMENTS AND SUPPLIES ARE REQUIRED EVERY DAY, unless specified otherwise.**

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

It takes everyone's best effort to make the orchestra team powerful and exciting. Your loyalty and cooperation will reflect as you:

1. Follow rules as stated in the Student and Orchestra Handbooks.
  2. Honor your commitment to The Woodlands High School Orchestra.
  3. Attend all rehearsals and performances and be on time.
  4. Practice daily so you can do your best in class and on playing tests.
  5. Be prepared to give your best in class. Be attentive and ready to play. Have your music, instrument, and a pencil in class daily. Good playing positions are a "must".
  6. Refrain from socializing during rehearsal. Sections may not visit when the director is working with another section. Shadow bowing and fingering of parts is recommended for this "down time".
  7. Keep your nails short and neatly trimmed.
  8. Respect your fellow orchestra members.
  9. Do your part to keep our rehearsal hall in good condition. NEVER BRING FOOD OR DRINK INTO THE ORCHESTRA ROOM! Water is permitted.
- Minor infractions will be handled as follows: First violations will result in a warning and student conference. Second course of action is a parent notification. Office referrals will be necessary for further violations. Students may be removed from a performing ensemble, and/or be removed fully from the program, at the discretion of the director and school administration for repeated disciplinary issues, and/or lack of participation/work ethic.

## THE ORCHESTRAS:

The Woodlands High School has five orchestras over two campuses. They are the Chamber Orchestra, the Concert Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Orchestra, and the Philharmonic Orchestra. Chamber, Concert and Symphony are competitive, while Camerata and Philharmonic are not. All Orchestra Classes will meet in the Orchestra Room of the Senior Campus, Freshmen will be shuttled between the campuses. Throughout the year after school activities will be required of all students. Students will have at least one week notice of any after school activity they are required to attend. **Work, Routine appointments, review classes, make up tests, and driver education do not qualify as excused absences for after school rehearsals or concerts. Students with a school conflict are required to provide notice no later than the previous Friday and should avoid scheduling Make-Up work and tutorials for that time.** All dates are given as soon as possible to help facilitate scheduling. Out of town festivals usually occur in the Spring Semester. Students will be given an itinerary before the trip with a "Code of Conduct Contract" attached. This must be read and signed by both the student and parent, and then returned to the director. Bad Conduct on trips will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behavior may result in a student being sent home immediately at **his/her own expense**. Each orchestra is a team. A superior ensemble will produce more enjoyable experiences for the members of that team. Therefore, a "teamwork" philosophy needs to be nurtured for the good of every student. Students with a successful teamwork philosophy exhibit a willingness to improve their musical skills, a work ethic that will improve the orchestra team, and a positive spirit that promotes the orchestra program. Orchestra students will learn to speak the language of music in a comprehensive manner that will include reading the language, understanding critical notational symbols and words, and the historical nature of composers and works being prepared for performance.

### Chamber Orchestra

This is the most advanced orchestra and is considered a Varsity Orchestra. Students will have the opportunity to continue their development at the most advanced level. This is a true Chamber group and will focus on smaller scale performances, but will be very active within the community and other out of school areas. As a member of this orchestra, students are expected to maintain the highest level of responsibility and musical preparation. Attendance at **ALL** rehearsals (both during the school day and after school), sectionals, and performances is required. This orchestra meets every day during the school day, and will have out of school time commitments based on contests, gigs, and other performance opportunities. Absences and tardiness to any rehearsals directly impact a student's grade. Students are required to perform in the TWHS Fine Arts musical, participate in UIL Solo and Ensemble/ The Vibe Solo and Ensemble Contest, and attend feeder system concerts to help tune. Participation in TMEA Region and All State Orchestras is highly encouraged.

### Concert Orchestra

This is an advanced orchestra and is considered the Non-Varsity Orchestra. Students will have the opportunity to continue their development in a challenging environment. This is a large group, and as such will focus on large performances at the school. Regular attendance and individual musical preparation is crucial to the success of the ensemble. **This orchestra will have after school sectionals/rehearsals twice a week.** Students will be graded on attending these rehearsals and failure to attend could result in a student being "sidelined" during the contest/concert. Attendance at **ALL** rehearsals (both during the school day and after school), sectional tutorials, and performances is required. Absences and tardiness to any rehearsals directly impact a student's grade. **Work, routine doctor appointments, and drivers education, are not acceptable excuses for missing an after school rehearsal/sectional.** Students are required to perform in The Vibe Solo and Ensemble Contest. Participation in TMEA Region/All State Orchestras and UIL Solo and Ensemble is highly encouraged.

### Symphony Orchestra

This is the intermediate orchestra and is considered a Sub Non-Varsity Orchestra. Students will have the opportunity to continue their development in a challenging environment, and it also gives students an opportunity to maintain their string music connection while participating in other school activities. Regular attendance and individual musical preparation is crucial to the success of the ensemble. **This orchestra will have after school sectionals/rehearsals twice a week.** Students will be graded on attending these rehearsals and failure to attend could result in a student being "sidelined" during the contest/concert. Attendance at **ALL** rehearsals (both during the school day and after school), sectional tutorials, and performances is required. Students are expected to be in their chairs with instrument out and ready to play by the start of any rehearsal. Absences and tardiness to any rehearsals directly impact a student's grade. **Work, routine doctor appointments, and drivers education, are not acceptable excuses for missing an after school rehearsal/sectional.** Students are required to perform in The Vibe Solo and Ensemble Contest. Participation in TMEA Region/All State orchestra and UIL Solo and Ensemble is highly encouraged.

### Philharmonic and Camerata Orchestras:

These groups are preparatory orchestra, designed to prepare students for success in higher levels of the orchestra program. These orchestras will be very focused on building technique and playing ability. Attendance is required at all concerts and any after school rehearsals that are called by the director. TMEA auditions, The Vibe Solo and Ensemble Competition and UIL Solo/Ensemble Contest are optional.

**Students in the orchestra program may/will participate in:**

Concerts and performances at TWHS  
 Joint concerts and performances with other schools or organizations  
 UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Contest  
 UIL Solo & Ensemble Contest  
 Texas State Solo & Ensemble Contest  
 All-Region Orchestra  
 All-State Orchestra  
 Performances at feeder schools  
 Public performances in the community  
 Social activities

**ORCHESTRA PLACEMENT:**

Placement into one of the competitive orchestras is by audition having one or more of the following components: orchestral excerpts, etudes, scales, sight-reading, and a written questionnaire. In addition to the audition, effort, conduct, and academic success are important factors in the final decision. Students must maintain passing grades in all classes to perform at functions subject to UIL no pass-no play rules. When a student cannot perform due to failing grades, the entire orchestra suffers. Because of the standard of excellence expected from members of our Orchestras, students in a competitive orchestra who fail one or more classes during the year for a nine weeks grading period are not guaranteed returning positions in a competitive orchestra during the following year. **Students who routinely don't meet program expectations can be dropped from the program at the head director's discretion.**

**Important: The director may find it necessary upon occasion to alter the orchestra's instrumentation to achieve a balanced sound**

**GRADES:**

Grades will be given out following these guidelines:

- **Daily Grades: 20% of overall grade**

Daily grades consist of but are not limited to: participation, binder checks, pop quizzes, spot checks (minor playing tests), and written assignments

- **Quiz Grades: 25% of overall grade**

Quiz grades consist of announced playing quizzes, scale assignments, and written quizzes

- **Major Grades: 55% of overall grade**

Major grades consist of but are not limited to: concerts, dress rehearsals, other performance events, and formal playing tests.

**Please note that for all grades based on a student's instrumental performance, no grade below at 90 will be accepted. Students receiving below a 90% will be required to redo the assignment, until they achieve 90% mastery. A grade of "Z" will be placed in the gradebook until the student completes the assignment at the required level**

Please direct all questions about grades to your class's primary director.

**ATTENDANCE:**

All absences must be made up. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the assignment, but only excused absences receive full credit. An unexcused absence from a performance usually results in failing the class. Last minute excuses may not be accepted unless they involve serious student illness (not just a cold) or death in the family. Each absence will be considered on an individual basis. **Schedule conflicts DO NOT constitute an emergency and will ONLY be considered with two weeks prior written notice signed by a parent or guardian stating the reason for the conflict AND director's approval only for conflicts with other TWHS Activities. Schedule conflicts with activities outside of TWHS, such as club sports, group meetings or family vacations will not be considered.** Again, students with emergency circumstances are required to contact the director **via telephone or email prior** to the performance report time. **Submission of written notice for consideration does not automatically cause the absence to be excused.** A daily participation grade is taken each time class meets or an ensemble has a required rehearsal outside of the school day. Students missing one of these rehearsals will have to complete a makeup assignment. Students with an unexcused absence will not be given a makeup assignment.

**MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Make-Up assignments are given out at the sole discretion of the director on an individual basis and only to those that have an excused absence.** Playing tests (spot checks or formal) may be retaken as long as the student schedules a time with the director outside of class or regular rehearsals, must be retaken before the concert for that piece of music, and must be retaken before the last week of a grading period (9 weeks). Again, any student scoring below a 90% on a playing exam **MUST** redo the assignment.

**CONCERTS:**

Concerts are the product of a team effort. Every student is important to the overall sound of the group. Thus, we all depend on each other not only to practice and play the part well, but also to participate in each performance. When you join an orchestra, you are making a commitment to the others in the orchestra. Finding a suitable substitute is not possible. Concerts produce a Major Grade in the grade book and are impossible to redo. The pressure of performance in front of a live audience, the opportunity to apply hours of practice, the experience of applause for a job well done, and the pride of knowing you helped contribute to an evening of beautiful music are lost when a student misses a concert. A make-up assignment cannot provide the same educational experience, but can be given by the director to any student who is absent from a concert, provided the student meets the requirements set forth in "Attendance" section of this hand book. **Make-up assignments will be at the discretion of the director** but will usually be a 5-10 page research paper, and will be due no later than one week after the date of the missed performance.

**PLEASE NOTE: While it is understood that emergencies and illness arise, it is expected that students and their families will plan ahead to be in attendance for all required events. Students with emergency circumstances are required to contact the director via telephone or email prior to the performance report time. Like sports, the music that we make is a "team effort" and we cannot be our best without all members of the team present. All concert and audition dates are given as soon as possible so families have adequate time to plan their schedules.**

### **Concert Dress**

Dress for concerts will be either formal or informal depending on the venue. Dress will be announced in advance, and it is the student's responsibility to know and wear the proper attire. We are a team and this is our uniform. It is also part of the concert grade. All students are expected to arrive and depart from the performance dressed in the appropriate uniform.

**FORMAL MEN:** Black Dress Pants, Black Dress Shirt, Black Vest, Orchestra Green Tie, Black Dress Shoes and Long Black Socks. The student will provide his own dress pants (no black jeans), black dress shoes (no boots, black tennis shoes, flip flops, brown deck shoes, etc.) and black socks. The school will provide the orchestra tie, shirt and vest.

**FORMAL LADIES:** All Ladies will be issued a dress and must wear black dress shoes and hose/socks

**INFORMAL (all students):** Orchestra T-shirt with either blue jeans, or black pants (not tux pants). Each student will need to purchase his/her own Orchestra T-Shirt.

### **REQUIRED SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS:**

Each student is expected to have **ALL** of the following supplies and materials:

- Instrument, bow, and case in good working order, that meets director approval
- Book 4 of Sound Innovations for Strings (please get the correct book for your instrument) (it is purple)
- 1 inch BLACK binder for music
- Folding music stand (There are events to which each student must bring his/her own folding stand)
- Rosin and soft cloth for cleaning
- Metronome/Tuner
- PENCIL for marking music (A musician ALWAYS has a pencil!)
- Extra strings for emergencies
- Cello/Bass strap or rock stop
- Violin/Viola shoulder rest

It is very important that all necessary supplies be brought to class daily. Students who fail to bring instrument and/or materials lose a daily grade for each rehearsal at which this occurs.

### **In addition:**

All Students are requested to bring in 1 bottle of hand sanitizer, 1 box of tissues, and 1 package of Clorox Wipes

Additional items gladly accepted as donations: reams of 8.5X11 white copy paper, 9 volt batteries, paper towels, tape, pencils, or other office supplies.



**MUSIC:**

Music performed by the orchestra is provided by CISD. Originals are the property of TWHS Orchestra and will remain at school. Students will be issued a practice copy of each piece of music being performed. Each student needs to bring a 1 inch black binder to keep their music in these copies in to class every day. **A charge of \$1.00 per piece is assessed if lost music needs to be replaced.** Students without music are unable to rehearse. This results in loss of a daily grade. Do not leave music lying in the rehearsal room. The student provides music for UIL solos (original part, numbered for judge).

**INSTRUMENTS:**

Each student is expected to have an instrument and bow available for practice at home. This instrument can be purchased or rented. See the director immediately if you do not meet this criteria. String instruments are quite sturdy if well-maintained. A cared-for instrument is much more fun to play; it sounds better and plays more easily. Here are some requirements and guidelines:

1. Bows: must be re-haired yearly, must have an appropriate amount of hair, must be real horse hair (NO PLASTIC ARTIFICIAL HAIR). The stick of the bow is required to be made out of carbon fiber or wood for students in the top 3 groups (fiberglass is permitted in the lower 3 groups ONLY, but it is not of the same quality). The stick must be straight and not warped, and the bow cannot have any structural damage.
2. Strings: many times strings need replacing long before they break. Strings that have worn places on them will play notes that are out of tune; strings that are old and dry will not ring. This can be confusing or discouraging for any student. The cheapest strings will often wear out the quickest. An extra set of strings must be available for emergencies. Please Refer to the attached Instrument Standards for exact string requirements
3. Instrument: must be set up properly, consistently hold tuning, be easy to tune, have NO structural damage, and MUST be made of wood (NOT painted, must be varnished); avoid high heat and humidity and serve cold conditions, which can soften glue, cause warping or blistering, allow cracks to develop, and even melt the rosin; NEVER leave your instrument in an un-air conditioned or unheated car!
4. Rosin: Kaplan, Pirastro, or Jade for violin/viola/cello; Kolstein All-Weather for bass; others must be approved by director
5. Take care of the bridge which supports many pounds of pressure. It needs to stand up straight at all times and to rest centered on the top. A warped bridge needs to be replaced.
6. Keep your instrument clean; wipe fingerprints and dust from the bow and instrument after each use. Cover it with a soft, clean cloth. With this daily effort, polish becomes optional.
7. A yearly check-up at a reputable string repair shop is recommended to keep your instrument in good working order and to catch small problems before they become big ones.

**IF YOU HAVE AN INSTRUMENT ISSUE, DO NOT TAKE IT TO THE SHOP FIRST!! BRING IT TO A DIRECTOR IMMEDIATELY! Many issues can be addressed before having to take it to a shop for repairs.**

## TWHS ORCHESTRA INSTRUMENT STANDARDS

### Required Supplies:

An Instrument and Bow that meet Director approval, Shoulder Rest/ Rock Stop, and proper strings. Please see below for more information.

### Instruments **MUST** pass Director Inspection

To pass they **MUST**:

- Be set up properly (i.e. correct string height, sound post setting, bridge setting and fit)
- Consistently Hold Tuning
- Be easy to tune (i.e. have working pegs and fine tuners)
- Strings and Bow Hair must be replaced yearly, and must be of quality (see below)
- **MUST** be made out of wood, and cannot be painted, **MUST** be varnished
- Have **NO** structural damage

Internet instruments are almost always going to fail this inspection. Before you buy one ask a director/ or take this list to your private teacher

### Bows:

Must be rehaired yearly, must have an appropriate amount of hair, must be real horse hair (NO PLASTIC ARTIFICIAL HAIR). The stick of the bow must be made out of Carbon Fiber or Wood, ABSOLUTELY NO Fiberglass bows. The stick must be straight and not warped, and the bow cannot have any structural damage.

**ALL VIOLIN/VIOLA PLAYERS NEED A SHOULDER REST. SPONGES ARE NOT PERMITTED!  
CELLO/BASS MUST HAVE A ROCKSTOP SUGGESTED IS BLACKHOLE, NO XERO-STRAPS.**

### STRING REQUIREMENTS FOR HS UIL GROUPS:

NO INTERMEDIATE OR BEGINNING STRINGS! (NO Dominant or Pro Arte)

**Violins:** Evah Pirazzi Green with Gold Pated E String

**Violas:** Evah Pirazzi Green

**Cellos:** Evah Pirazzi

**Bass:** Helicore is minimum, Belcanto or Evah Pirazzi HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

### INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE:

Success of the group and of each student depends on individual hard work. Daily practice is essential. It helps many students to have a regular time and place to practice. Practice is more than just playing the notes; it needs to have a goal. Good practice is playing in tune, playing correct rhythms as well as playing with a clear tone and playing musically. Most of the time, it is best to work slowly in 4 to 8 measure sections, repeating problem areas many times until each section can be played easily, perfectly, and up to tempo. Students should have a metronome to monitor tempo. **Thirty minutes of practice on school music is required each day, and an hour in total is suggested.** Students with difficulty tuning their instruments may want to purchase a small, hand-held chromatic tuner. These tuners are inexpensive, battery operated, and can be purchased at local music stores and through mail order companies. It is difficult for practice sessions to be productive when the instrument is out of tune. Listening to a professional recording of the music the student is currently studying contributes greatly to his/her musical growth.

### PRIVATE LESSONS:

Orchestra is a wonderful medium to experience music in a public school setting. The "team" of students works together playing intricate rhythmic patterns with contrasting dynamics and blending harmonies. The result can be a rewarding memorable experience when all parts are played well on an individual basis. It is this individual work that forms the infrastructure of an outstanding orchestra; each student strives to reach his/her full potential. High school music can be very difficult. In a typical classroom rehearsal, time does not permit each student to receive large amounts of individual instruction. Techniques such as vibrato, advanced bowing, shifting, and intonation need to be dealt with on an individual basis. Sectional rehearsals help with this, but nothing has proven as effective as a private lesson program. In order to prepare high school music, in addition to instruction on solo and ensemble work and region audition material, it is recommended that orchestra students retain a private teacher. Unfortunately, the orchestra director cannot arrange private study with every student in spite of the profound results that could be attained. That is why it is essential, foremost for the benefit of the student, and eventually for the welfare of the orchestra, that students seek private study.

We live in an area of the state where several good private teachers are available.

### FACILITY CARE:

The primary function of the orchestra room is to serve as a teaching space for on-campus curricular courses as well as for off-campus guest ensembles. Its condition and appearance must remain orderly and safe. The following guidelines will be **strictly enforced** to ensure the safety and care of our facility:

1. All stands, chairs, A/V components, computers, music folios, instruments, and other items in the orchestra room are to be treated properly and with respect.
2. Only students enrolled in orchestra are allowed in the orchestra room. Friends are asked to wait outside while orchestra students retrieve instruments or conduct classroom business.
3. **Food, drink, besides water, or gum of any kind is prohibited in the orchestra room.**
4. Books, backpacks, athletic equipment, and projects may not be left in any part of the orchestra room during the day without the expressed consent of the director.

### LETTER AWARDS:

A letter may be earned by performing with either the TMEA All-State Orchestra or by receiving a rating of "1" at Texas State Solo & Ensemble Contest. Students may also letter by earning 100 points through volunteering, being an officer playing with TMEA Region 9 Orchestra, participating at UIL Region 9 Solo and Ensemble, and other activities as authorized by the director. Point totals will be kept track of in CHARMS.

### BUS ARRANGEMENTS:

Students may ride a bus to and from school sponsored events **provided the proper forms are on file**. When students ride a bus to an event, they are expected to return to the school from the event on the same bus. The only exception to this rule is the Region Orchestra Concert where the bus will take the students to the event, but they are expected to arrange a ride home. **If it becomes necessary for special arrangements to be made, a letter explaining the special circumstance must be submitted to the orchestra office with appropriate signatures and approved by the director at least 48 hours before the trip.**

### Important Forms:

There are several forms located in the handout section of CHARMS that must be filled out and returned to the director ASAP. Some forms may seem redundant, but they still need to be filled out as thoroughly as possible.

1. TWHS Orchestra Handbook Acknowledgement Form
2. CISD Parent Permit to Travel/Emergency Treatment Card