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AVON COMMUNITY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joel Powell Named Director of Avon High School Orchestras

Longtime Associate Director Tapped to Receive Baton from Founding Director Upon His Retirement

Avon, IN — February 3, 2026

Joel Powell has been announced as the new Director of the state champion Orchestra program at Avon High School. He will receive the baton from retiring Director Dean Westman, founder of the decorated Avon Schools program, at the start of the 2026-27 school year.

“Mr. Powell has long been a beloved member of our AHS family,” wrote Principal Matt Shockley in a letter to Orchestra families, “and it gives me great joy to know our Orchestra program is going to continue to thrive under his leadership.”

Powell, this winter named the 2026 Indiana High School Orchestra Teacher of the Year by the Indiana Chapter of the American String Teachers Association, has been the AHS Associate Director of Orchestras and Director of String Activities since 2019. “I truly have the greatest job in the world,” says Powell. “I get to use music as a vehicle to empower young people, and I’m incredibly grateful to work alongside so many dedicated and inspiring educators. I’m eternally thankful for my amazing students, colleagues, and community who make this work possible.”

During his tenure in Avon, which also included a stint as Conductor of the AHS Symphony Orchestra (2011-2015) and the Orchestra Director at AMS North/South (2012-2015) and AIS East/West (2011-2013):

- Avon Orchestras have earned two ISSMA State Championships, bringing the program’s total to four (2018, 2019, 2022, 2025)
- Avon Orchestras have consistently earned Gold “With Distinction” ratings at ISSMA Organizational Festival
- Avon Orchestras have demonstrated sustained excellence across all levels of the program

- Avon Community School Corporation’s student enrollment in Orchestra programs has doubled to more than 1,000 students
- Student retention in Avon Orchestra programming has climbed to over 90% in grades 8-12

Prior to his current stint in Avon Schools, he worked with orchestras in Carmel Schools (2015-2019), served as Concert Orchestra Conductor for Indianapolis Youth Orchestras (2017-2019), and was the Director of Orchestras at Goshen Middle School and the Associate Director of Orchestras at Goshen High School (2009-2011). Powell regularly lends his leadership and expertise to Orchestra programs across the nation, teaching and conducting in places like Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Utah.

"My favorite thing about Mr. Powell," says Veronica, a current Orchestra student at AHS, "is his endless encouragement and love he has for all of his students, and how he is always there to support you and make you feel welcome, important, and capable of anything."

Taylor, another Orchestra student, notes Powell’s “rare ability to make you feel seen and appreciated when you are pushing yourself and giving the music your all."

Powell graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Music Education with Violin Emphasis from Ball State and he earned a Master of Arts in Secondary Education, also from Ball State.

During the remainder of this school year, AHS will provide opportunities to celebrate with Mr. Powell as he assumes this new role. There will also be chances to honor Dean Westman as he concludes his stellar educational career.

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About Avon Schools

Avon offers students high-quality educational instruction with a keen focus on improving student achievement. We serve nearly 11,000 students from preschool to graduation in 13 schools (one early learning center, eight elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school). Our 1,600 employees dedicate themselves to the success of our diverse student population. Learn more at avon-schools.org.

About Avon Orchestras

The Avon Orchestra program was founded by Dean Westman in 2007 with 35 beginning orchestra students. The orchestra program now involves over 1,000 students in grades 6-12 with full-time orchestra directors at the high school and all three middle schools. The

four-time state champion program provides life-changing experiences for its members and aims to use music as a vehicle to positively empower students.