

SOUTHWESTERN MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHOIR HANDBOOK 2019-2020

Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians;

Welcome to choir at Southwestern Middle School! I am very excited to share some of our new goals for the upcoming school year. For those of you who are new to our choir program, I will share a little bit about myself. I have a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in Music Education, and have taught in virtually every type of classroom all over the state of Indiana. In the past my students have traveled to Disney, Nashville, Gatlinburg, Six Flags, Holiday World, Pacers Games, Nascar Races, Indianapolis Indians Games, and national conventions. My students have also received gold awards at solo and ensemble contests, national and regional festivals, ISSMA contest, and more! Now why do I tell you all this? Because I have HIGH expectations for the vocalists at Southwestern Middle School! I hope you will join me on an ambitious journey to be the very best vocalists and choirs we can possibly become in the coming year!

Last year was a banner year (pun intended)--it will be hard to top it! It was the first year of the Southwestern Jazz Choir; additionally, we won gold for all ensembles at Solo & Ensemble Contest and won gold at Organizational and Jazz Contests! We also made strides in performing the National Anthem publicly at sporting events in the community--including at an Indianapolis Indians Game. Lastly--we met our overarching goal, which was to achieve the All-School Music Award for Choir!

So what should our new goal be? I am very excited about the theme for the school year that has been introduced by our new principal, Mrs. Gustin. "We Are Wildcats" is a phrase meant to promote the unity of our school efforts. This year I want our goal to reflect this spirit of camaraderie. It's time to focus on unifying our music department--choir AND band! What does this mean? We are ALL musical Wildcats! And how can we achieve this? By receiving the All-School Music Award for the entire music department! Yes--get this--there is an even higher award we can achieve if we work together! So this year--we will continue to work for excellence in the arenas we have already mastered--BUT--we will put forth effort to perform alongside and encourage our band peers! We will create music TOGETHER. WE ARE WILDCATS!

*The students have an assignment to read all enclosed information with parental guidance, then complete and return the last page to me by **Friday, August 16th**. Also, please add the choir events to your home calendar.*

Musically Yours,

Camden Ritchie
(765) 269-8708
caritchie@tsc.k12.in.us

COURSES & EXPECTATIONS

There are four choir classes currently offered at SMS: Choir C (beginning), Choir B Ladies (intermediate), Choir B Gentlemen (intermediate) & Choir A (advanced). In all choirs students will participate in daily vocal technique and choral technique exercises. Through these exercises, students will learn appropriate posture, breathing, tone production, and diction. In addition, they will learn to listen to one another as an ensemble and sing with excellent balance, blend, and intonation as a group. Sight-singing and music-reading exercises will comprise a portion of our daily rehearsals. Each choir will sing choral works from various periods of history and cultures of the world. Students will learn about composers, styles, cultures, and historical contexts of the music that they perform. Participation in all groups is dependent upon academic achievement and behavioral success. Should it be deemed necessary by the administration or the director, a child may be removed from the course for these reasons. Otherwise, choir is a full year course and participants are expected to participate for the entire year.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT POLICY

Choir students are expected to follow the choir classroom rules:

1. **Don't Die (safe classroom behaviors)**
2. **Be Respectful**
3. **Perform as Expected**
4. **Participate Completely**
5. **Be Prepared (bring folder, pencil, water & chromebook)**
6. **No Gum Ever**

Consequences:

1. **Warning (may be general to class or specific to student)**
2. **Loss of Participation Points**
3. **Loss of Participation Points & Parent Communication**
4. **Loss of Participation Points & Office Referral**

GRADING POLICY

Students' grades will be determined as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Singing and/or Written Tests | 15% |
| Class Participation | 35% |
| Concert Performances | 35% |
| Classwork/Homework | 15% |

Grading Criteria: Singing tests will be graded based on a rubric, and may be conducted individually or in small groups. Class participation grades will be based on participation in class, including having music and a pencil at each rehearsal. Class participation is also based upon engagement in class as demonstrated by posture, singing, working together with others, and demonstrating a positive attitude.

Concert attendance is required and impacts your grade. If another activity conflicts with an event on our calendar, please notify Mrs. Ritchie by email or in writing at least two weeks in advance so that a solution can be found. Other absences (such as medical emergencies) may be excused as follows school policy and Mrs. Ritchie’s judgment. Please communicate effectively so that you do not lose out on concert performance points. These are a very large part of your grade. Please put these dates on your calendar now so that there will be no scheduling conflicts. While Mrs. Ritchie reserves the right to make final decisions regarding excused absences, here is a general guideline that can be applied to understanding how to resolve schedule conflicts:

Fine Arts Schedule Conflict Resolution Chart

| | Sports or Club Practice or other regularly occurring event | Regular Game or Competition | Playoffs or Highest Level Special Event for a Club |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Music Practice | <i>Discuss with coach regarding team size, player responsibility & possibility for compromise</i> | <i>Attend regular sports game or competition</i> | <i>Attend playoffs or highest level special event for a club</i> |
| Music Concert | <i>Attend music concert</i> | <i>Discuss with coach regarding team size, player responsibility & possibility for compromise</i> | <i>Attend playoffs or highest level special event for a club</i> |
| Music Contest or Special Event | <i>Attend music contest or special event</i> | <i>Discuss with coach regarding team size, player responsibility & possibility for compromise</i> | <i>Discuss with coach regarding team size, player responsibility & possibility for compromise</i> |

Late Work: Late work will be accepted until the end of unit/midterm/end of quarter for 50% credit. (whichever comes first)

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE AND EXPECTATIONS

Students are responsible for acquiring the following items for concert attire for special performances:

1. **Dark (preferably black) dress shoes & black socks**
2. **Black full-length slacks (no jeans, leggings, or pants with holes)**
3. **Choir Polo (They will be available for purchase through the choir department beginning Aug 28th - Sep 11th; the cost will be \$21.59 for S-XL & 23.59 for 2XL and up. Students who already possess a choir polo do not need to purchase another)**

If you are having difficulty finding appropriate apparel please contact Mrs. Ritchie ASAP and she will help. There will also be less formal performances where students will wear a t-shirt and jeans (i.e. the Fall Festival).

Performance Expectations:

- Be ready to sing at call time. This means ready to walk on risers in uniform.
- Represent the school and program well through exemplary behavior at all times. When in the classroom, hallways, or audience, be polite and respectful—never rowdy. Set the tone for audience members to follow your example and enjoy the performance.
- Failure to dress appropriately for the concert will lead to loss of points at the director's discretion. If you are uncertain about an item of apparel, ask the director in advance.

ADVANCEMENT STRUCTURE FOR CHOIRS

Beginning to Intermediate Choir Advancement & Retention (Choir C -> Choir B)

Students must meet the following minimum proficiencies during both semesters in order to advance from Beginning to Intermediate Choir:

Classwork/Homework (75%)

Participation (80%)

Tests/Quizzes (65%)

Performances (50%)

Final Singing Test (70%)

Failure to become proficient in any of these categories will prevent students from advancing to Intermediate Choir. If proficiency is not achieved, students will have the option to retake Beginning Choir or switch electives to take General Music. Students who fail to become proficient in two or more categories at the end of any semester will be moved out of choir and into General Music. Similarly, students who fail to attend two or more required performances during the course of the school year will be moved out of choir and into General Music at the discretion of the director.

Intermediate to Advanced Choir Advancement & Retention (Choir B -> Choir A)

Students must meet the following minimum proficiencies during each semester in order to advance to or remain in Advanced Choir:

Classwork/Homework (85%)

Participation (85%)

Tests/Quizzes (75%)

Performances (85%)

Final Singing Test (85%)

Failure to become proficient in any of these categories will prevent students from advancing to Advanced Choir or remaining in it. If proficiency is not achieved, students will have the option to return to Intermediate Choir or switch electives to take General Music. Students who achieve less than 75% proficiency in two or more categories at the end of any semester will be moved out of choir and into General Music. Similarly, students who fail to attend two or more required performances during the course of the school year will be moved out of choir and into General Music at the discretion of the director. Depending upon ensemble needs, 8th grade students in the Intermediate Choir may be considered for advancement in January based upon this same criteria.

Placement Structure for New Choir Students

6th grade students joining choir mid-year will be placed in Beginning Choir, following review of choir or band grades in a previous school placement. Students who are found not to meet the basic requirements set forth for proficiency in Beginning Choir will be moved to General Music.

7th & 8th grade students joining choir for the first time will be placed in either Beginning, Intermediate or Advanced Choir as determined by the director. Students will need to provide a singing sample for placement (this can be a simple live audition or a recorded video), and a review of choir or band grades in a previous school placement will occur. The proficiencies for Beginning Choir & Intermediate Choir will serve as guidelines in this process.

SMS Choirs

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2019-2020

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 8/28/19 | First Jazz Choir Rehearsal | Jazz Choir | SMS |
| 9/11/19 | Choir Polo Order Form Due | New Choir Members | SMS |
| <i>9/30/19</i> | <i>National Anthem @ Home Volleyball Game</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>SMS</i> |
| <u>10/8/19</u> | <u>Fall Festival</u> | <u>8th Graders</u> | <u>MHS</u> |
| 10/9/19 | Circle the State Entry Deadline | Jazz Choir | SMS |
| <i>10/10/19</i> | <i>National Anthem @ Home Football Game</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>SMS</i> |
| 11/1/19 | Solo & Ensemble Forms Passed Out | Voluntary | SMS |
| <u>11/11/19</u> | <u>Veterans Day Program (during school)</u> | <u>All Singers</u> | <u>SMS</u> |
| 11/15/19 | Solo & Ensemble Entry Deadline | Voluntary | SMS |
| <i>12/16/19</i> | <i>National Anthem @ Home Boys Basketball Game</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>SMS</i> |
| <u>12/18/19</u> | <u>Winter Choral Concert</u> | <u>All Singers</u> | <u>SMS</u> |
| 2/1/20 | District Solo & Ensemble | Voluntary | HHS |
| <i>2/10/20</i> | <i>National Anthem @ Home Wrestling Meet</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>SMS</i> |
| 2/15/20 | Weather Date for District Solo & Ensemble | Voluntary | HHS |
| 2/15/20 | Circle the State With Song | Jazz Choir | JHS |
| 2/22/20 | State Solo & Ensemble | Qualifying Singers | Indianapolis |
| <i>3/5/20</i> | <i>National Anthem @ Home Basketball Game</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>SMS</i> |
| 3/7/20 | District Jazz Festival | Jazz Choir | TBA |
| <u>3/12/20</u> | <u>Fine Arts Festival</u> | <u>All Singers</u> | <u>SMS</u> |
| <i>3/14/20</i> | <i>ISSMA Organizational Contest</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>BCHS</i> |
| <i>4/13/20</i> | <i>National Anthem @ Home Track Meet</i> | <i>Advanced Choir</i> | <i>SMS</i> |
| <u>5/18/20</u> | <u>Spring Choral Concert</u> | <u>All Singers</u> | <u>SMS</u> |

“We have read the SMS choir handbook for the 2019-2020 school year; we understand it, and agree that in order to remain in this class we must abide by it. We have placed all pertinent dates on our family calendar and currently see no conflicts except those noted at the bottom of this page.”

Print Student Name: _____

Student

Signature: _____

Parent or Guardian

Name: _____

Parent or Guardian

Signature: _____