

CONESTOGA JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL

CHOIR HANDBOOK 2024-2025



WELCOME to the Cougar Choir!

This handbook outlines procedures and activities that make up the choral experience at Conestoga. It is provided to each choir student so that they and their parents/guardians are aware of the expectations and goals of the choir. This handbook is a guide to reasonable expectations of contribution, conduct, and performance. This should answer any questions you might have about your vocal music experience. All students and parents/guardians should fully read this handbook.

If you have any questions or concerns about vocal music policies, please do not hesitate to contact me at (402) 235-2271 or by email at ajordan@conestogacougars.org

I. INTRODUCTION

The underlying philosophy of the COUGAR CHOIR program is to provide a rich musical experience through comprehensive training in such skills as reading melody and rhythm, audiation through Solfege, sight-singing, vocal technique, diction, foreign language, and performance etiquette through the use of excellent choral repertoire by master composers. In addition, folk songs from many countries are performed and used pedagogically.

Outlined, herein, are the educational structures of the program and the professional policies which go hand-in-hand with the artistic goals.

II. GOALS

Among the important outcomes of a choral music experience for students is a sense of community, producing something together which is greater than any one person could produce alone.

Choral artistry will:

- focus attention on music
- explore musical ideas
- express feelings and ideas felt and heard in the music
- apply vocal and musical skills to the musical ideas

- allow the students to judge their skills and their outcomes
- develop awareness of feeling and style in music
- understand the elements and styles of music
- appreciate the aesthetic qualities of music
- imagine and create new ideas.
- enjoy music

In addition to the above objectives, the COUGAR CHOIR encourages the personal and social growth of the members and promotes their sense of self-worth, self-esteem, accomplishment and pride.

III. THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

The COUGAR CHOIR offers a unique learning environment designed to provide a rich and rewarding musical experience for each student. The students sing and perform a variety of music from simple, unison folk songs to more challenging choral literature. Masterpieces of music from all styles and periods form the foundation for musical learning and are the basis for the curriculum. Zoltán Kodály states that “[Students] should be led to music masterpieces by means of musical masterpieces.”

The instructional goals are attained in the following ways:

The Music:

Each new piece of music is an opportunity for students to experience and express the great ideas of choral art. The musical elements of melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, dynamics, and text may be understood through producing, practicing, and performing a particular piece of music.

The repertory should consist of a balanced offering of styles and levels of complexity which will challenge and motivate musical learning at the student’s constantly changing developmental needs.

If the quality of music is good, the teaching potential is unlimited. The best musical experiences for students are inherent in great literature. The musical ideas found in great choral music have unusual pedagogical value. Great choral music will yield good returns for the time invested in its study.

Skill and Understanding:

Both skill and understanding are necessary components of a choral music experience. They create a sense of satisfaction and increased music enjoyment. Skill can be taught successfully toward an understanding and life-long appreciation of choral music.

Skill is a kind of practical knowledge - it is a “knowing how” to produce music. The musicianship skills necessary for choral singing include music reading, analysis, and vocal technique. Skills can be developed through choral music experience as a means of solving musical problems of rhythm, harmony, balance, and blend.

Singing:

The singing voice is the unique choral instrument to be used. The purpose of any musical activity is to intensify the student’s focus and concentration on the musical qualities themselves. This understanding can be enhanced through eurhythmics, listening, improvising, and composing.

IV. GRADING

Choir is both an academic subject as well as an activity. As such, students receive a grade as they would for any other course. Students will be graded in three areas:

1. Performance Skills—50% of total grade. School concerts and/or individual assessments. This includes attendance at performances, etiquette, active participation, and attire when applicable.
2. Rehearsal Skills—25% of total grade. Daily work habits, including effort, time on task, managing materials, and following routines, procedures, and directions.
3. Musicianship Skills—25% of total grade. Demonstrating a working knowledge of relevant content and skills, including rhythm, melody, part-work, form, vocal technique, and terminology.

V. PERFORMANCES

As part of their grade, students must attend all concerts and remain until the end. An up-to-date schedule can be found on the activity calendar on the school website.

Definition of an “EXCUSED ABSENCE” - Illness, family-related emergencies, and planned family trips. A note or phone call from the parent/guardian must be submitted to the director well in advance for review and consultation with the student. In the case of sudden illness, a note, phone call, or email from the parent/guardian should accompany the student’s return.

Definition of an “UNEXCUSED ABSENCE” – Work, social activities, and non-school related activities.

Concert Performance Alternative Assessment

If students are unable to attend a concert for whatever reason, students will complete an individual performance assessment. Students must work with the director to arrange a time to individually perform the music repertoire they would have performed at the concert. This policy gives students the opportunity to express their knowledge of the content matter and receive direct instruction and immediate feedback from the director. Failure to complete an individual performance assessment will result in a zero for that portion of their grade.

VI. CONCERT DRESS

Concert attire will be dependent upon the type of performance occurring. There will be performances that fall under the “formal” and “informal” category.

Formal Performance: Fall Concert, Spring Concert, District Music Contest, and any other Honor Ensembles.

1. **Jr. High Choir:** The Conestoga Music Department will provide each student a polo with official insignia. Students are asked to provide their own dark colored t-shirt to wear underneath their polo, dark bottoms with no holes/tears, and dark shoes. Please avoid sneakers or sandals. Heels are not recommended on risers.
2. **Sr. High Choir:** Choir members will be provided concert robes. Students are asked to provide their own dark colored t-shirt to wear underneath their robe, dark bottoms with no holes/tears, and dark shoes. Please avoid sneakers or sandals. Heels are not recommended on risers.

Informal Performance: Winter Concert, May Concert, and any in-class performances.

1. For the Winter Concert, students may wear clothing that is Red, Green, Black, White, or school-appropriate festive attire.
2. For the May Concert, students are to wear nice and appropriate dress clothes.

Please avoid using perfume, cologne, and heavy hair products before concerts, as these can cause allergic reactions in a concert setting. Students are encouraged to ask Mr. Jordan if their concert attire is appropriate before the night of the concert.

VII. HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC LETTERS

A student must go above and beyond what is expected in class to earn a letter. At the beginning of the year, students will receive a list of all opportunities and point values toward achieving a letter for choir. Absence from a concert or performance will affect your ability to letter.