

MONTICELLO TRAILS MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHOIR

Handbook



2024-2025

WELCOME TO CHOIR!

INTRODUCTION & MISSION

DEAR STUDENT, it's so nice to meet you! I am overjoyed to have you in the choir program at MTMS. Every time you walk into the choir room, your brain is going to get a supercharged workout, activating almost all parts of the brain. Along with academic skills, you will learn many life skills in choir. A good choral sound requires teamwork, listening, communication, and empathy (to name a few). Finally, you will get to sing some fantastic music...and have a lot of fun doing it! This handbook provides important information about the expectations and guidelines for our choir.

MISSION STATEMENT: The Monticello Trails Middle School choir program exists to build meaningful community through music-making and develop all students in the areas of academic, intellectual, interpersonal, and artistic growth.

ABOUT MISS NEWSTROM



Hi! I'm Miss Newstrom, nice to meet ya! This is my second year at MTMS. In May of 2023, I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from the University of Kansas (Rock Chalk!). I am originally from Omaha, Nebraska and have grown up with music my entire life. I have been singing since I could talk and have been in choir since 5th grade. In high school, I decided to ditch sports (I have the height for basketball, but NOT the hand-eye coordination) and pursue every kind of musical activity I could find. I participated in concert choir, show choir, A Cappella, musicals, private lessons, and even attended Nebraska All-State Choir for two years.

In my years at KU, I sang in KU Choir, performed in operas, and co-directed Rock Chalk Revue. I also traveled to Greece with KU Chamber Choir where we won First Prize at an international choral festival! Outside of music, I enjoy spending time in nature, traveling, watching movies, reading, doing embroidery, and cooking yummy meals (especially pasta)! The most important thing you should know about me is that I strive to have a safe, enjoyable, and loving classroom environment. I love to laugh and have fun while being productive, and I hope we can do lots of that this year in choir.

FAST FACTS ABOUT MISS NEWSTROM



- **Hometown:** Omaha, NE
- **College I Attended:** University of Kansas
- **Favorite foods:** Pasta and ice cream!!
- **Starbucks Order:** Iced black tea lemonade
- **Favorite hobbies:** Reading, being in nature, embroidery
- **Favorite music genres:** Classical, Jazz, & RNB/Soul (oldies)
- **Favorite Musicals:** *West Side Story* and *The Sound of Music*
- **Favorite country I've visited:** Greece
- **Life goal:** To be a really great mom someday!
- **Fun Facts:**
 - I have 5 siblings.
 - I have never broken a bone.
 - I am left-handed!



The Sound of Music



My family

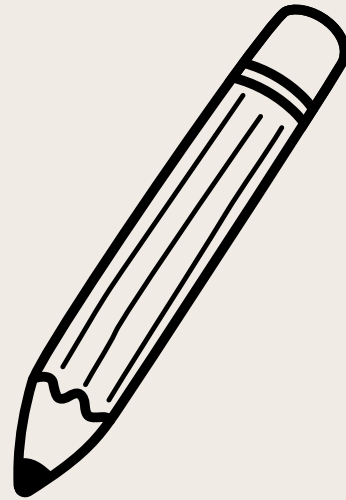


My friends

Pictures from performing in college!



REQUIRED MATERIALS



1. 1-inch 3-ring binder
(do NOT buy larger than 1 inch; it won't fit in the shelves!)
2. Pencils (mechanical is fine)
3. Concert "Uniform" (see next page)

Please bring pencil and 1-inch binder to class by Friday, August 23.

CONCERT ATTIRE



MTMS Choir "Uniform"

1. **Maroon MTMS Choir T-shirt** (If you don't have one, you will order one in the fall)
2. **Neutral-colored pants**
 - Black, grey, denim, tan/brown, white
 - Jeans, slacks, nice joggers, or leggings are okay
 - NO holes in jeans or baggy sweatpants, please!
3. **Neutral closed-toe shoes**
 - Black, grey, denim, tan/brown, white
 - Tennis shoes/sneakers are okay.
 - No Crocs, Sandals, Flip-flops, or high heels

- **All clothing needs to be in compliance with school dress code.**
- **If a student needs help with a clothing item, please let me know ASAP!**



CONCERT APPEARANCE/HYGIENE

- Students should have a clean, polished look at concerts.
 - Hair brushed/combed
 - Showered/bathed and/or deodorant applied if appropriate
 - No perfume/cologne, please! (allergic reaction risk)
 - Clothes are clean and tidy

24-25 CONCERT DATES



Please mark your calendars!

FALL CONCERT

- Monday, October 7, 2024
 - Location: Mill Valley HS Auditorium

WINTER CONCERT

- Tuesday, December 17, 2024
 - Location: Mill Valley HS Auditorium

SPRING CONCERT

- Thursday, May 1, 2025
 - Location: Mill Valley HS Auditorium

Concert times / call times will be communicated via email

KVL Festival in March (during school day): date/time TBA



EMERGENCY! WHAT IF I MISS A CONCERT?



Attendance at concerts is MANDATORY. Concerts are essentially our “final exam” and worth 100 points. Sports or job conflicts are not considered excused absences. Unexcused absence from a performance cannot be made up. Excused absences (illness or family emergency) can be made up with the teacher. **Please notify Miss Newstrom ASAP if you will miss a concert.**

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

1. **Respect all people and things.**

- a. Follow the CHAMPs expectations for each activity.
- b. Show the teacher respect by not talking when I am giving instruction.
There will be times for talking, I will let you know when that time comes.
- c. Show your classmates respect by using kind words keeping your hands to yourself.
- d. Show respect to things by NEVER touching the projector screen, taking good care of your music, your binder, and the choir classroom.

2. **Be on-time and prepared.**

- a. Be on time and ready to begin with the bell rings.
- b. Always have your music and binder.
- c. Always have a pencil in your folder. .
- d. ABSOLUTELY NO gum, candy, food, or drinks besides water in the classroom.
- e. Fill your water bottles and go to the bathroom during passing time/lunch as much as you can.

3. **Give 100%.**

- a. Always give a good effort, even when you are having a bad day.
- b. Stay on-task and listen to directions.
- c. **Ask appropriate questions when you are confused.** DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS! I love questions :) It shows that you are putting in effort!!

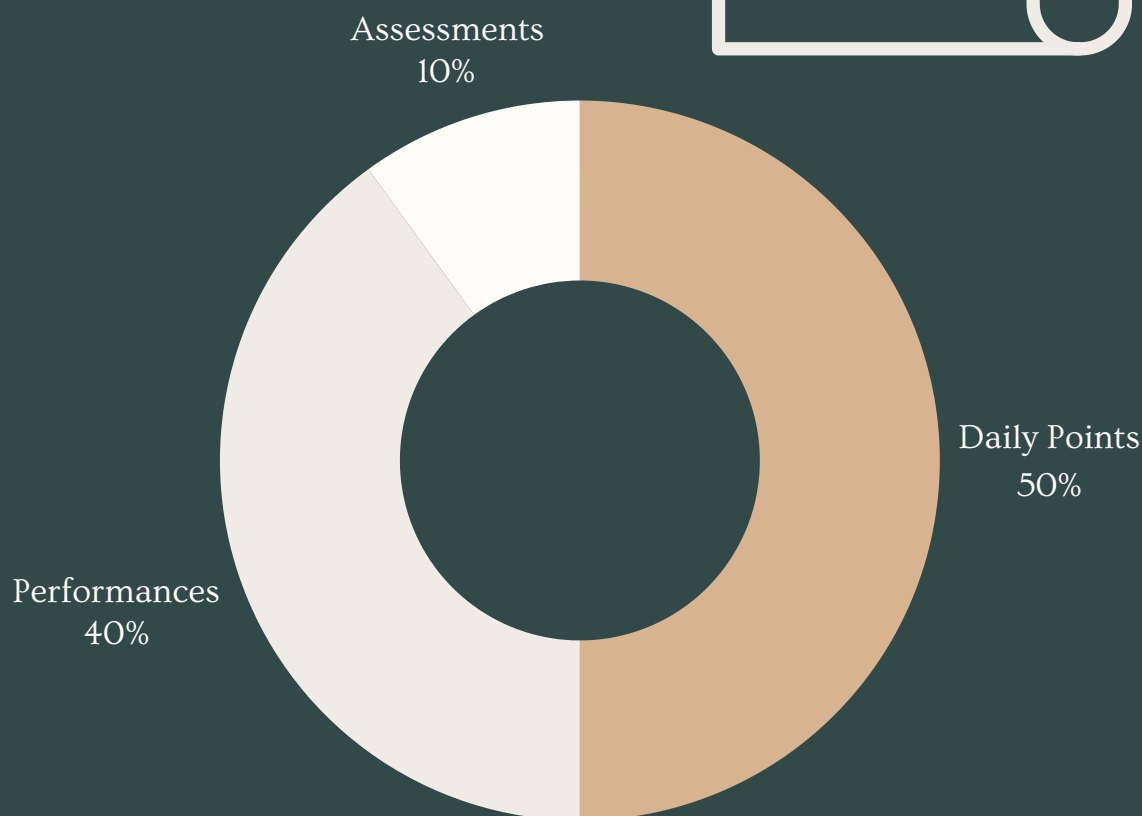
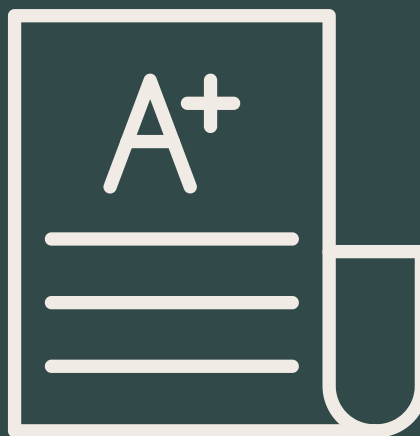
GRADES

WHAT GOES INTO THEM?

~50% Daily Points (rehearsal skills, bellwork, small assignments)

~40% Performances (concert participation & etiquette)

~10% Assessments (music literacy assessments, video part checks)



GRADING RUBRICS

HOW DO YOU GET GRADED?

Rehearsal Skills Rubric

You will be graded **daily** on rehearsal skills. Your rehearsal skills points totals will be posted on Canvas (**10 possible points** per day in rehearsal).

****You will NOT lose points for excused absences**.**

****1 point "freebie" per day; the other 9 points come from the rubric below****

CATEGORY	MASTERY	GROWTH	EFFORT (1)	NO EVIDENCE (0)
<u>Respect (Rule 1)</u> Listening to directions, talking at appropriate times, respecting peers, taking care of materials 3 points max	Student can rehearse independently without any reminders.	Student may have been redirected once or twice in a class.	Student rarely behaves in the correct manner.	Student has not tried anything asked of them in class.
<u>Preparedness (Rule 2)</u> Timeliness, no gum, having correct materials (binder + sharpened pencil) 3 points max	Student can rehearse independently without any reminders.	Student may have been redirected once or twice in a class.	Student is rarely ready to go/rarely has music out when rehearsing.	Student has not tried anything asked of them in class.
<u>Effort (Rule 3)</u> Staying on-task, actively engaging, following directions, giving best effort, asking questions if confused 3 points max	Student can rehearse independently without any reminders.	Student may have been redirected once or twice in a class.	Student rarely shows effort & has to be redirected multiple times in class.	Student refuses to follow any directions and does not show effort.

GRADING RUBRICS

HOW DO YOU GET GRADED?

Concerts

Students will be assessed on the following items:

- Respectful Behavior (40 points): Student listened to teacher instructions, did not talk on stage, showed professional behavior, & was a good audience member and not disruptive during other performances.
- Preparedness (30 points): Student is in place & ready to sing at call time, in proper concert dress, and brings their choir binder/music if asked to do so.
- Effort (30 points): Student gives full effort and performs to the best of their ability.
- **Concerts are worth 100 points total.**

Stage Etiquette & Dress Rehearsals

Follow the instructions regarding stage placement, entrances, exits, and movement during dress rehearsals and performances. Maintain proper posture, stand tall, and avoid distracting habits or excessive movements that can draw attention away from the music. If a student cannot handle their behavior during the concert dress rehearsal, they will be removed from the dress rehearsal and not allowed to perform in the concert. If they are removed, a supplemental assignment will need to be completed for their concert grade.

SOLO AUDITIONS



The choir occasionally offers solo opportunities for interested members. Auditions are required for solos, and the selection process will be fair and transparent. Make sure to pay attention as to when they are. All students have the right to listen to their audition recording and request their audition rubric score and feedback.

Solo Audition Rubric

CATEGORY	SUPERIOR (5)	EXCELLENT (4)	GOOD (3)	AVERAGE (2)	POOR (1)
Tone Quality	Even tone quality throughout the vocal range, well-supported, resonant, focused, vibrant, good projection.	Some inconsistency in the vocal range, mostly supported, beginning to be resonant.	Much inconsistency between the vocal registers, but beginning to be focused and clear; more breath support needed.	Breathy, unsupported tone in some sections, lacks focus.	Weak, poor tone production.
Intonation /Pitch Accuracy	Always on pitch with correct tones	Always on pitch with a few incorrect notes	Somewhat on pitch with a few incorrect notes.	Recognizable, but rarely on pitch with many incorrect notes.	Never on pitch.
Diction/ Articulation	Articulates clearly and the text of the music is always understandable; shows excellent command of language skills	Articulates words somewhat clearly and text can be understood most of the time; has a few pronunciation issues.	Sometimes articulates the words, but the text is often not discernable; several problems with pronunciation	Rarely articulates the words and the text is not discernable; very little command of language	Never clear.
Musicianship (phrasing, dynamics, rhythmic accuracy, style)	Dynamic levels are obvious and consistent, and phrasing is always consistent and sensitive to the style. Performs with a creative style in response to the score	Dynamic levels and phrasing are usually consistent and sensitive to the style.	Dynamic levels fluctuate but can be discerned. Phrasing is usually consistent and occasionally sensitive to the style. Sometimes performs with creativity.	Attention to dynamic levels is not obvious. Phrasing is rarely consistent and/or rarely sensitive to style. Rarely demonstrates style. Just sings the notes.	No sense of dynamics or phrasing; severe technical flaws overshadow expression.

VOCAL HEALTH



As the teacher, it is my responsibility to ensure safe and healthy singing. We will work on techniques to avoid damaging the vocal folds or otherwise causing harm to your voice.

As the student it is your responsibility to stay in good communication with me about your vocal health. If you are sick, I need to know. If you are straining your voice to reach notes, I need to know. If it hurts to sing, I need to know.

Here are some general vocal health tips to keep in mind.

- Don't sing while you are sick! (You won't be in trouble, just tell me!)
- Drink water BEFORE choir (your body needs time to process the water so it can moisten your vocal folds)
- Use humidifiers and steam to keep your vocal folds moist, especially in the winter months.
- If it hurts to sing, STOP!
- Sleep well, exercise, and eat nutritious food (healthy body=healthy voice)
- Avoid yelling and screaming. This is harmful to your vocal folds.

CHANGING VOICES



ALL VOICES CHANGE (Yes, even for female singers too!).

For the Male Voice:

- Voice cracks are AWESOME. They will be recognized as AWESOME. Hearing a voice crack means despite going through a very natural hormonal change, that student is brave enough to own it. We will always applaud bravery.
- Do not be surprised when you are able to reach SUPER low notes one day, and you can barely sing them the next. Your voice will settle eventually.

For the Female Voice:

- Many females around puberty go through a phase where their voice sounds a little "raspy", "hoarse", or "breathy"...THIS IS COMPLETELY NORMAL!
- Some days you might be able to sing two octaves, and sometimes you may only have five notes that sound good. Don't be frustrated...it's not just allergies (but it can be that sometimes, too)! We will keep track of everyone's progress in their voice stages and help everyone have the best choir experience.

FOR THE PARENTS



Your child's education is of the utmost importance to me and I will strive every day to ensure their success. In order to do this, I need parent support. Please do not ever hesitate to reach out via email or phone with any questions or concerns you may have. Also, do not hesitate to let me know how I can best support your child.

Please also read this handbook carefully. The rules and policies have been meticulously thought out to help your student succeed. **THANK YOU!**

Email: Inewstrom@usd232.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

MISS LAUREN NEWSTROM
Vocal Music Director, MTMS

Email: lnewstrom@usd232.org



Students and parents - do not
hesitate to reach out to me with
any questions you might have.

