Freshman CHOIR - Instructional Plan

Course Overview

Choir provides an opportunity for students to continue instrumental development and introduces students to ensemble performance, focusing on the study and practice of choir repertoire. It emphasizes the development of technical skills, musical interpretation, and collaboration within a large ensemble. There will be extra rehearsals outside of class time, which could include morning or evening rehearsals, sectionals and summer choir. The Summer Choir schedule is determined by the program directors. There is an assessment fee associated with taking this course.

Contact Information

Teacher Name: Shannon Andrade Shannon.andrade@midlandisd.net

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and prepared to engage in learning. Students are expected to demonstrate respect, responsibility, and a commitment to learning. This includes arriving on time, being prepared with necessary materials, actively participating in class discussions and activities, and completing assignments on time. Respect for peers, the teacher, and the learning environment is essential—disruptive behavior, inappropriate language, or bullying will not be tolerated. Students should maintain academic integrity at all times and seek help when needed. A positive, focused attitude and consistent effort will contribute to a productive and supportive classroom community for everyone.

Attendance Policy & Its Importance

Regular school attendance is essential. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's education. The student and parent should avoid unnecessary absences. Two important state laws—one dealing with compulsory attendance and the other with how attendance affects the award of a student's final grade or course credit—are discussed in the MISD Student Handbook.

Please notify the school if your child will be absent. Frequent or extended absences may make it more difficult for your child to learn necessary foundational skills that ensure student success this year and in future school years and could result in loss of credit.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the first semester, students will be able to:

1. Foundations of Music Literacy

This section should cover the core concepts of music theory, providing students with the building blocks they need to understand and perform music.

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- Rhythm and Meter: Teach students to identify and perform various rhythms. Cover note values (whole, half, quarter, etc.), rests, and different time signatures.
- Pitch and Melody: Focus on reading notes on the treble and bass clefs. Students should be able to name notes and understand how to find them on their instrument or with their voice.
- Harmony: Introduce the concept of how notes sound when played together. Teach the basic construction of major and minor scales and how to build simple chords from them, such as the tonic (I), subdominant (IV), and dominant (V).

2. Sight-Reading Skills

This is the practical application of music literacy. Regular, focused practice is key to building confidence and fluency.

- Daily Practice: Dedicate a portion of each class to sight-reading. Start with simple, short exercises and gradually increase the difficulty.
- Methodology: Teach students a systematic approach. This might include:
    - Looking over the piece for a few seconds to identify the key signature, time signature, and any difficult rhythms.
    - Tapping the rhythm with their foot or a finger before playing.
    - Focusing on the musical line and not stopping for mistakes.
- Varied Music: Use a wide range of musical examples for sight-reading practice, including different styles and genres, to challenge students and keep them engaged.

3. Expanding Musical Knowledge and Abilities

This goes beyond the basics to cultivate a deeper appreciation and understanding of music as a whole.

- Critical Listening: Play exemplary musical pieces and guide students in active listening. Ask them to identify different instruments, follow the melody, and notice changes in dynamics, tempo, and style.
- Musical Elements: Introduce and define key terms such as timbre (the unique sound of an instrument), texture (how different musical layers are combined), and form (the structure of a piece, like A-B-A or verse-chorus).
- Performance and Interpretation: Once students have a solid grasp of the foundational elements, they can start to focus on the expressive side of music. Teach them how to interpret a piece, use proper phrasing, and convey emotion through their performance. This is where music moves from being a series of notes to a form of art.

Course Resources

Music Theory and Literacy

- Musictheory.net: A fantastic, free online resource with clear, interactive lessons and exercises on everything from the basics of the staff and note duration to advanced concepts like intervals, chords, and cadences. It's great for independent student learning and for teachers to use in class.
- Printable Worksheets: Sites like Music Teaching Resources offer free, downloadable worksheets on note naming, intervals, and chord construction. These are excellent for in-class practice, homework, and quick quizzes.

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- Textbooks: Consider using a structured textbook for a comprehensive approach. A book that includes a workbook or accompanying exercises can be a strong foundation for your curriculum.
- Videos: YouTube is full of high-quality educational content. Channels that break down music theory concepts with clear visuals can be a great supplement to your lessons.

Sight-Reading and Aural Skills

- Sight Reading Factory: This is a powerful, subscription-based tool that generates unlimited, customized sight-reading exercises on the fly. You can tailor the difficulty, key, and rhythm to match your students' skill levels, and it's compatible with a wide range of instruments.
- MakeMusic Cloud (formerly SmartMusic): This platform offers a vast library of sheet music, including sight-reading exercises. Students can get instant feedback on their pitch and rhythm as they play along with a backing track, making it a very engaging practice tool.
- Solfège and Ear Training: Integrating a melodic reading system like solfège (do-re-mi) is crucial for developing aural skills. Tools that provide ear-training drills, where students identify intervals or melodies by ear, are highly effective.

General Musical Knowledge and Appreciation

- **Carnegie Hall's Music Educators Toolbox**: This free online resource provides a wealth of lesson plans, activities, and videos covering a variety of topics like rhythm, form, and expressive qualities. It's a great source for creative and engaging classroom activities.
- **Music History and Appreciation**: Incorporate listening assignments from different musical periods and genres. Using platforms that allow you to isolate different instruments or musical parts within a song can help students better analyze and understand a piece.
- **Technology**: Tools like **Chrome Music Lab** and other virtual instruments can provide a hands-on, creative way for students to explore concepts of rhythm and harmony without needing a physical instrument.

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Grading Policy

According to Midland ISD Grading Policy:

1. The departmental grading policy will meet the district's framework with 60% of the grade being MAJOR GRADES and 40% being MINOR GRADES.
    a. Major grades will include such things as tests, projects, essays, long-term assignments, etc. There must be two or more grades in the Major category each grading cycle.

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b. Minor grades will include daily grades, homework, quizzes, etc.

Redo Policy

It is the goal of teachers to promote student success and when a student does not succeed on a summative assessment, a redo assessment may be requested. If a student receives a failing grade on a summative assessment, the student may request a redo assignment from his/her teacher.

The following criteria must be met in order to qualify for a redo assignment:

1. The student must have made a significant effort on the original test. Significant effort is defined as:
   - No randomly marked answers and
   - All work/questions are attempted and
   - Work is meaningful and represents deliberate thought

2. The student must complete a reasonable intervention measure as prescribed by a teacher with the aim of improving mastery of the topics covered within the allotted time.

3. The student will have 5 school days from the date of notification of the grade (via in class notification or online grading system) to request a redo assessment.

Once the above criteria are met the teacher will administer the redo at the prearranged time. The following do not qualify for redo:

1. Assessments that students refuse to initially take in class.

2. Redo not completed by the end of the grading cycle (The Wednesday prior to the end of the grading period on Friday).

The opportunity to redo/retake shall exist for major grades included in a student's average except for semester exams. The maximum grade awarded on a redo/retake is 75. Failure to complete the prescribed intervention and/or meet the timeline established by the teacher will result in the student receiving the original grade awarded. Teachers may choose to offer additional redo opportunities for minor or major grades at their discretion.

School-wide System of Communication

MFHS teachers have several ways to communicate with our MFHS families. Teachers will send out notifications every other week via Skyward, Blackboard or Class Dojo to keep families informed of student academic progress and upcoming events.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. We are excited to work together to make this a successful year of learning!