

Bennett's Mill Middle School Chorus Handbook

Purpose

The purpose of the Bennett's Mill Middle School Chorus is to impart the appreciation of music to all of its members through successful study and performance. In addition, those students with the interest, talent and dedication are given the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge that will prepare them for progression into a high school choral program.

There are many benefits that students can realize by being a member of the chorus program. Music classes help develop coordination, organization, teamwork, and mental discipline. Music programs invariably have a high percentage of the school's top ranking academic students. **Scholarship and musicianship go hand in hand.**

In addition to the rigorous curriculum there are aspects of chorus membership that require participation outside of the normal school day. Students and parents should understand that the success of the choral program depends on **each** chorus member performing **their** responsibilities to the group and that participation is required of each member.

Attitude, Effort and Personal Character

Attitude, character, and persistence are the most important factors in determining how successful a young musician will be. Every member has an obligation to the other students, the school, and most importantly to themselves to strive to be the very best that they can be. Students are expected to **always** act like ladies or gentlemen. All students should strive to make a positive reputation for the chorus concerning their musical quality, attitude, and conduct both in and out of class.

General Information and Expectations

Fine Arts Attendance Policy

Music has a unique place in the school curriculum. While it is academic in the sense of having a definite curriculum and expected competencies, there are many aspects of musical ensemble that require participation outside of the normal school day. Such activities are considered to be an extension of the classroom. Much like a sport, the success of a music program is contingent upon each member performing their responsibilities to the group (both in the classroom and beyond).

The attached calendar has almost every event listed for the entire school year. Students are expected to participate in all performances and rehearsals for their musical ensemble unless excused by the director. Known conflicts should be communicated via E-mail, note, or phone call as soon as the conflict is realized. This will open a dialog in between the parent and teacher that, in most cases, will allow us to resolve the conflict. If no resolution can be found after the steps above have been taken, an administrator may be consulted.

Absences are serious and are either excused or unexcused. Examples of **excused** absences are personal illness (with a doctor's note), a serious illness in the family, a death in the family, and a religious conflict (communicated in writing when the in-class preparation begins for the event). Students with an **excused** absence will be given an alternative assignment equal to the time and effort required for the event missed.

- An **unexcused** absence from a **regular rehearsal** will result in a **test grade** of zero. Multiple absences from regular rehearsals may result in the student being removed from an upcoming performance. Regular rehearsals are scheduled practices outside of the normal school day such as mornings or afternoons.
- An unexcused absence from a **dress rehearsal** or **clinic** will result in a test grade of zero and possible removal from the upcoming performance at the discretion of the director. Dress rehearsals are the final rehearsal prior to a performance. Clinics are extended rehearsals that usually involve a guest conductor and are held in the afternoon or on a Saturday.
- An **unexcused** absence from a **performance** will result in a test grade of zero and a possible change in the student's class at the discretion of the director. Students with an **unexcused** absence may become ineligible for field trips and other ensemble privileges.

If an absence occurs from a rehearsal or performance that has not been pre-arranged, it is the responsibility of the student and parent to submit a **written excuse** to the director within **48 hours** of the student's return to school or the absence will be considered **unexcused**. We coordinate our concert calendar around our school calendar and very few conflicts arise due to school sponsored events. Non- school sponsored events are not usually considered as excused.

Student Pick Up from Rehearsals

We will continue with most rehearsals being held in the morning from 7:45-8:05 AM. I will send home a rehearsal schedule a few weeks prior to a concert. Afterschool rehearsals will be limited unless your child is a part of an honors chorus. We will have 3 after school rehearsals in May to prepare for our spring concert. Unless otherwise noted, all afternoon rehearsals end at 5:00 PM. It is expected that parents either pick their student up promptly at 5:00 PM or arrange for alternate transportation. As with most things, communication is the key. Failure to be picked up on time may result in the student being removed from a performing ensemble and/or an advanced class. School and BOE policies will be followed as outlined in the BMMS Student handbook.

Chorus Field Trips

In accordance with county policy, chorus field trips are considered a **privilege**. Therefore, students may be excluded from participation for the following:

- 3 or more administrative detentions
- 3 or more days spent in I.S.S.
- I.S.S. on the day of the trip
- 3 or more discipline referrals to the office
- 3 or more teacher detentions
- Any out of school suspension
- 5 or more unexcused absences during a grading period
- Inappropriate behavior on any previous school field trip
- Any bus suspension
- *Inappropriate behavior during chorus class or at special rehearsals/performances*

Since performing is an integral part of a class such as chorus, it is extremely important that all students remain eligible. If a student becomes ineligible for field trips, placement in an advanced class or performing group will not be possible until that student returns to eligible status. It is up to the director as to whether or not a student regains admission into an advanced class or performing group if eligibility is lost due to reasons of discipline.

In-Class Expectations

- As with any class, **students are expected to follow all instructions and procedures.**
- **Students are expected to be ready for classes and rehearsals on time** with their music/ binder and a sharpened pencil.
- All students should enter the room **quietly** and **prepare** for class. Class begins as soon as students enter the room and continues until the student leaves the chorus room.
- Each student is expected to participate fully without causing a distraction.
- **No food, drink, or gum is allowed in the class room. This includes before and after school, as well at any rehearsal, private lesson, meeting, etc.**

Out-of-Class Practice Expectations

- **All students are expected to participate in ALL rehearsals and performances for their chorus.** (Please see the section entitled "*Attendance and Participation*").

Fund Raising

With every successful music program, fund raising is a necessity. It is impossible for any school board of education to fully fund a chorus program. In order to minimize the number of fundraisers needed, every chorus member is expected to participate through either participation or donation. For those who choose to donate rather than participate in fundraisers, that option is available to you. Details for each fundraising activity will be distributed at a later date.

If you are willing to volunteer, please indicate on the Volunteer Form in the back of the handbook.

Grading Policy

Final numeric averages will be determined by the following formula:

- **Focus/Participation (35%)** - A grade will be given each day for participation. A daily grade of zero will be given if a child does not participate in class on a given day. Points will be subtracted from the day's grade for not having music, pencils, other required equipment, or for not following the rehearsal procedures outlined in the handbook. Causing disruptions during class/rehearsal/concerts will result in a lower Focus grade. A test grade of a zero will be given if a student has an unexcused absence from a rehearsal.
- **Posture (20%)** – A grade will be given for having correct posture while singing. This is necessary to achieve a quality tone while singing.
- **Mouth Position (20%)** – Since achieving a high quality choir will require proper shaping of the mouth a daily grade will be given for students in this area.
- **Tests (25%)** - Written and singing skill tests will be given. A test grade will be given for each *performance and rehearsal*.

BMMS Classroom Rules and Consequences

In order to have a successful learning environment for our chorus students, proper conduct from everyone is essential.

The following ***BMMS Classroom Rules and Consequences*** will be enforced in chorus class:

1. Students should be ready to begin all classes and rehearsals on time. Being ready includes having all needed items, being in their assigned seat, and music folder out. **Students who have been detained by a teacher, an administrator, or the office staff should bring a written excuse with them upon entering a class or rehearsal.**
2. Students are expected to follow instructions *perfectly* the first time they are given.
3. Be respectful of yourself, others and all property. Being a distraction is a serious offense.
4. Do not touch anything that does not belong to you. This includes classroom equipment.
5. Students should not talk during class or be a distraction.
6. Students are expected to sing on a daily basis in class. If they are ill and unable to participate fully, please send a note from home explaining the reason.
7. Follow all school rules as listed in the student and chorus handbooks. This includes never chewing gum during *any* chorus activity.

Since parental involvement is the key to any discipline plan, parents will be contacted if problems arise. Phone calls or e-mails in regards to behavioral issues will be used. A conference will be requested if needed. The BMMS consequence policies will be followed as outlined in the school handbook.

Chorus Concert Expectations

Students should follow these guidelines for their behavior at concerts and rehearsals. The Director may use their discretion to determine if the student is following the proper etiquette necessary for performance.

- Arrive at assigned time, report to assigned spot and be in uniform.
- No chewing gum.
- Do not talk or whisper on or off stage!
- No alarm watches, jingly jewelry or bracelets or any kind.
- Refrain from squirming or “digging” on stage.
- While singing, keep hand at sides unless a song has assigned movements.
- Respect adult helpers at all times.
- No behavior that would disrupt the concert.
- Students are expected to stay for the entire concert.
- **No cell phone use at concerts or rehearsals.** They may be used at the **conclusion of the concert.**

Chorus Classes and Performance Groups

6th Grade Chorus

No experience is necessary but many members will already have a good foundation. I hope to build upon that foundation and take them even further. To begin with the 6th Grade Chorus will mainly sing musical selections by themselves. This group will perform at concerts throughout the year. Additional performances may be added.

7th and 8th Grade “Bronco” Chorus

No experience is necessary but many members will already have a good foundation. This chorus will consist of male changed or unchanged voice students and female students. Depending on how many young men we have will determine how many voice parts our music will include. This group will perform at the winter concert, and spring concert. Additional performances may be added.

7th and 8th Grade “Bellissimo” Chorus

This is the premier performing ensemble at BMMS. Students are selected for this chorus by auditions that are held during week 6 of the first 9 weeks. This group will perform at the winter concert, Pre-Festival concert, Festival, spring concert, school assemblies, community events and other performances as announced. Rehearsals may be required before performances. Please check the chorus calendar for all dates involving your child. To remain a member of this chorus, students are required to excel vocally and meet the performance expectations set for the class, to attend all performances and rehearsals, and to meet all behavior and responsibility expectations.

Additional Performance Opportunities

During the year there will be several extra opportunities for your child to be a part of special once a year choral groups. It is not required that students participate in these and the number of participants is very limited. Some of these require auditions and some are based on teacher selection. There are costs with each of these events that are not covered under the activity fee.

All-State Chorus

In order to help your child musically and emotionally prepare for their All-State Chorus audition, it will be necessary for students to rehearse with me. Advanced 7th & 8th grade students are strongly encouraged to audition. The audition consists of singing the major, minor and chromatic scales, a written/listening portion, a solo (from GMEA list) and sight singing. During the months of September and October, I will be available by appointment for extra help. In addition, sight-reading will be worked on during class. If you would like more information you may go to www.gmea.org. Follow the links to All-State Chorus.

Application packets are available now and are due by September 5, 2013

District Six Honors Chorus

This is a once a year choir for selected 7th & 8th grade students. It will be held November 15th & 16th. The cost will be around \$40 for students to participate. This includes the registration fee and music. Parent chaperones will be needed.

Solo & Ensemble

This event is open to any grade level and will be held on Saturday, April 26, 2014. Registration fees will apply. Information will be sent home before the registration deadline.

Music Department Class Change Policy

Chorus is a year long course. Schedule changes will only be permitted according to the following policy and must have the approval of the *assistant principal of scheduling*. Schedule changes can only occur at the end of a grading period.

- **Teacher request for chorus schedule change for reasons such as disruption, destruction, or lack of work.**
- **Teacher request for chorus schedule change for reason of promotion.**
- **Parent requests for a chorus schedule change:**

The parent should contact the chorus director to discuss the reasons for the change. Often, situations can be easily resolved if the lines of communication are opened. An administrator will be consulted if requested. ***Parents and students need to be aware that if a student drops out, they will not be put back into chorus without chorus director approval.***

Explanation of Fees

Activity Fee

Each student will be expected to pay an activity fee of **\$45.00** which is due by September 18th. While this fee will not cover all of the costs associated with the BMMS Chorus for the entire school year, it will cover the majority.

Items included in the Activity Fee include:

- **Binder/Music:** Student will be issued a binder and music to use for chorus class. They may share a binder with a student from another class that is preparing the same music for a performance.
- **Uniform:** The uniform is grade level-specific. Please see the uniform section for complete information. In all cases, the entire uniform is not provided. Parents will need to provide solid black dress pants and solid black dress shoes & socks for students to perform in. Formal uniforms are rented for the year unless you pay additional money to purchase them. Please contact me to do so.
- **Accompanist Fee:** The chorus will need an accompanist for various events throughout the year and this will ensure we have the resources we need.
- **Choral Festival/Competition Fees:** In the spring we will have several events that will cost money to register for participation in.

Payment of Fees

The school/chorus will accept cash, checks, or money orders for the payment of fees, fund raiser items, etc. All payments should be sealed in an envelope with the student's first and last name clearly written on the envelope. All payments should be given to Mrs. Wilkins. **Due to bank charges, there will be a \$25.00 penalty for all returned checks.** Re-payment for returned checks and the penalty charges will need to be made by **money order** or **cash**. *If a person has more than one check returned, we will no longer be able to accept their checks.*

Please contact Mrs. Wilkins if you need to extend the payment deadline or to ask about a scholarship to help pay for the fee.

Special Performance Opportunity Fees

The following *optional* items will not be covered by the Activity Fee and will be due at times throughout the year as indicated on the calendar or below. Only selected students will be participating in these events.

- **All-State Chorus:** Students wishing to audition for All-State Chorus will pay a fee of **\$20.00**. *Due to the early entry deadline, this fee must be paid by September 5.*
- **District Honors Chorus:** Select 7th & 8th Grade students will be participating in District Honors Chorus. All registration fees and music are the participant's responsibility.

Uniforms

The uniform required for your child's chorus is described below. It is the responsibility of the parents and students to have the necessary uniform prior to the dates needed. The parts of the uniform that are included in the **Activity Fee** include the following:

- BMMS Chorus Polo Shirt (given to all Chorus students)
- Chorus Dresses (**must be returned WASHED & CLEAN at the end of the year**)
- Chorus Tux Pants, Vests, Ties, and Shirts (**must be returned WASHED & CLEAN at the end of the year**)

It is the responsibility of the parents to have all parts of their student's uniform prior to the dates needed. In the event that uniform parts must be replaced, it will be the financial responsibility of the parent.

The Chorus uniform will be clean when it is issued to you, please return them washed & clean at the end of the year. The chorus dress can be machine washed and dried on low. They may be temporarily hemmed- **please do not cut off any fabric from the bottom.**

7th & 8th Grade Students

- **“Casual” uniform:** Chorus polo shirt, black pants and **solid black formal** shoes. This uniform will be worn to in-school performances, and community, and field trip performances.
- **“Formal” uniform:** black tuxedo pants and vests for the boys and solid black formal dresses for the girls. Each boy must provide black socks, and **solid black formal** shoes. The tuxedo pants, shirt, vest, and bow tie will be provided. The girls must provide black hose and **solid black closed toe formal shoes**. *The black formal dress will be provided by the school and returned at the end of the year.*
- **Formal uniforms are machine washable and should be dried on low heat setting. They should be returned washed & clean at the end of the year.**

6th Grade Chorus

The 6th grade Chorus will wear the following uniform:

- **Uniform:** Chorus polo shirt, black pants and **solid black formal** shoes. This uniform will be worn to performances.

Jeans and athletic shoes are not considered acceptable attire for any of the performing groups unless otherwise stated.