

# WESTERN HILLS CHORAL DEPARTMENT

## Handbook

2009-2010

For STUDENTS and PARENTS

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# WESTERN HILLS CHORAL DEPARTMENT

## Introduction

On behalf of our administration and myself, I gladly welcome you to the Western Hills High School Choral Music Program. You are now a very important member of a group that will emphasize superior performance and musical excellence, and I sincerely hope you will enjoy being a part of this organization.

I believe that our choir program offers many things to the individual student: an opportunity to demonstrate and build his/her musical ability; an opportunity to develop leadership skills; an opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility; an opportunity to meet and make new friends; an opportunity to participate in music field trips; an opportunity to perform as a representative of Western Hills High School; and an opportunity to discover the unique thrill of performance. We will be constantly working hard to learn music for our performances. Our participation in concerts, contests, and festivals will keep us busy as well as involved.

As members of the Western Hills Choral Department, we can be as outstanding as we want to be; it all depends on you. Superior music groups are a result of many hours of hard work as well as a strong dedication and commitment from each member. If we work well together and have high expectations for the group, and even higher expectations for ourselves, we will have a successful year.

This handbook is provided to make your orientation to the Western Hills Choral Music Department a quick and easy task. I encourage you and your parents to read this handbook so that you may better understand our policies and regulations, and your obligations. A Western Hills High School Choir Member should be cooperative, strive for the highest possible scholastic record, develop a positive attitude toward the choir, school, and community, and in general, distinguish him/herself by always doing the right thing at the right time.

We are in a new era of choral music at Western Hills with new challenges. I am looking forward to working with each one of you this year. Whether you are new to the program or a seasoned member we will all face many new challenges, but with the right attitude we can make it a fantastic year. Your talent and group effort can make this year at Western Hills very exciting, fun-filled, and musically rewarding for all of us.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Marsh, choral director

## **Western Hills Choral Department Objectives**

Choir is designed as a study in ensemble singing, vocal production, and music fundamentals. Students will have many opportunities to sing for personal enjoyment and perform a variety of choral literature.

Our goals are:

- To develop correct vocal techniques.
- To develop fundamental music skills in notation and sight-singing.
- To recognize musical elements and demonstrate expressive qualities in varying styles of choral music.
- To contribute to the blend, balance, and quality of the ensemble by developing the ability to sing a part securely and independently.
- To develop confidence in performing by practicing performance etiquette and decorum.
- To develop rehearsal skills which allow us to rehearse and perform at the highest level.
- To have opportunities for the enjoyment of music through active participation.
- To develop self-discipline by functioning as a responsible member of the organization.
- To experience successful achievement and pleasure through group involvement.
- To develop personal character traits of leadership, poise, and dependability as well as provide an avenue for self-expression.
- To develop a desire to continue musical experiences.

# Classroom Conduct and Operating Procedures

We are all here because we have something in common; we enjoy singing. How we sound as a group has a lot to do with how we work together. If you will follow the class procedures listed below every day of the year, the result will be a choral group that truly makes beautiful music. The success of our group rests upon your individual self-discipline. Singing in harmony can only be accomplished by working in harmony.

Upon entering the choir room for rehearsal, you are to pick up your folder and **be seated quietly in your assigned seat when the bell rings.**

Students are expected to have a **pencil every day.** Marks in the music are to be made **in pencil only.**

**Gum, candy, food, and drink are not permitted in the choir room.** When we have gum, candy, or food in our mouths, our tonal production and diction are affected. Daily participation points will be deducted as well as other discipline actions may be taken. The only exception to this rule is bottled water.

Students are expected to demonstrate good posture for singing during rehearsal.

**Talking during a rehearsal will not be tolerated.** Rehearse in a professional manner and be courteous to your fellow students.

Sometimes in the course of rehearsal, only one section will be singing. The members of the sections not singing at the time should be **carefully following the musical part that is being rehearsed** so that the total knowledge of the score is achieved.

Every member of the choir is expected to **listen closely for each instruction** given by the director, so that the instruction can be done correctly by every member of the group the first time.

Each student is responsible for **returning his/her folder to its appropriate location** following rehearsal.

Students are expected to rehearse music outside of class. For this reason, **music folders may be checked out overnight;** however, it is imperative that the music folder returns to the room the following rehearsal. Failure to have music in rehearsal will result in a loss of rehearsal points.

Please exhibit **common courtesy** toward others at all times. Treat others as you would want them to treat you.

Students are expected to **exhibit their best behavior and rehearsal skills** when a guest is in the classroom. This includes substitutes, student teachers, guest directors, Western Hills staff, and visiting students.

**No restroom passes** will be given during choir, except in an extreme emergency. Please take care of everything before you come to class.

# Grading

Grades are based primarily on participation. One-third of the student's grade results from daily participation demonstrating cooperation, enthusiasm, preparedness, attentiveness, good vocal technique, and effort. Performances and performance-type assessments make up one-third. (Some grading periods have more performances than others.) Musical skills tests, in-class assessments, and written work will comprise the remaining one-third.

## **Grading Scale**

92-100%	=	A
83-91%	=	B
74-82%	=	C
65-73%	=	D
Below 65%	=	F

\*\*Any grade below C is grounds for dismissal from the choir.

## **Daily Participation**

A typical week will have 50 (10 per class) possible participation points. A student will start the week with all 50 points. Deductions will be made for any or all of the following:

- lack of effort in rehearsal
- demonstrating a poor singing posture
- poor attitude
- not following directions
- no noticeable attempt to improve in skill areas
- not cooperating with other choir members/section leaders
- not having a pencil in rehearsal
- not having music for rehearsal
- having gum, food, candy, or drink (other than water) in rehearsal
- tardiness to class
- disruption in rehearsal
- unexcused absence from class or truancy

## **Performances and Performance Quizzes**

Performance quizzes take place in class and are announced several days ahead. They involve singing an assigned piece or section of a piece in small groups. Each performance quiz has different expectations and requirements. At least one performance quiz is given each term. Grading periods with few or no performances will have at least two performance quizzes.

## **Musical Skills Tests and Assignments**

Each choir has skill objectives specific to that class (see section specific to your choir). As these skills are presented and practiced in class, assessments (in written and/or oral forms) will be given. Vocal skill and technique assessments may be recorded onto cassette or videotape in a practice room during class time. Written assessments will include both in-class and out of class work.

# Attendance

## Daily Participation/Attendance

Attendance is crucial for every choir member! Due to the nature of the course, when a student is absent from school, he/she misses rehearsal and explanations that cannot be made up. In addition, the entire choir suffers because that student was not in school to learn his/her part along with the rest of the choir. If a student's absence is excused, he/she may make up the participation points by doing extra credit. This privilege is not extended for any unexcused absences or truancies. It is the student's responsibility to talk to Mrs. Marsh following an absence to determine if make-up work is to be given.

Students who are unable to sing 100% in a rehearsal should write a short note for Mrs. Marsh and give it to her at the start of class before rehearsal begins. A persisting lack of vocal participation will require a parental or doctor's note and may require an outside assignment.

## Extra Rehearsals

Many times the difference between a superior and a poor musical performance is determined by the amount of rehearsal time spent in preparation. Extra rehearsals allow for many things: individual and small group work, help from visiting clinicians, and more time for that "extra polishing." They are vital for any good performing organizations. Please consult your schedules for rehearsals that will take place outside of class time. **ALL EXTRA REHEARSALS ARE REQUIRED** and they **will not** be scheduled unless **absolutely necessary**. You will always be notified of an extra rehearsal well enough in advance in order to make arrangements to attend. If students are late or have to leave early, they must have a written note from their parent or guardian. Excuses will be accepted for missing extra rehearsals only if notification is received *prior* to the rehearsal date. The director will determine whether an absence is excused or unexcused.

## Performance Attendance

This is a performing organization. We work constantly to be prepared to perform. When performing, students receive a deeper appreciation of music and a greater feeling of unity from the organization and the people with whom they are involved. Every member of the choir plays a vital role in the success of the entire organization.

There is no other way as a director to duplicate a performance for the student who is absent. There is no other means to make-up the unique thrill of performing. Due to this, the following policies regarding performance attendance apply:

All performances on the schedule at the beginning of the semester, as well as those with at least four weeks notice, are **required** performances. Should you have a conflict that cannot be resolved, notify Mrs. Marsh **at least two weeks ahead of time** verbally **and** in writing. The further ahead problems are discovered, the easier they are to deal with. Parents should call the choral department office at 875-8400 or e-mail, and leave a message explaining the situation.

Excused absences include personal illness, death in the family, or an emergency over which the student has no control. **Work is not an excused absence for a performance that was scheduled at least four weeks in advance.** If an absence is excused, it is the student's responsibility to get a make-up assignment from Mrs. Marsh. If an absence is unexcused, the student will not be given the privilege of making up the points lost due to the absence. It is a good idea to give a copy of the performance schedule to employers. Mrs. Marsh is willing to write a note to an employer if necessary.

Grades for each performance will be based on the following:

- **Punctuality**
- **Proper Dress**
- **Following Instructions**
- **Proper Concert Etiquette**
- **Singing to the best of one's ability**
- **Staying for entire concert**

### **Sectionals**

Weekly sectionals will be implemented as needed for Advanced Chorale members. Sectionals are additional after school rehearsals for specific voice parts. They will be scheduled for each voice part in the week following the beginning of classes. For members of Men's Chorus and Women's Chorale sectionals may be called if specific work with a particular voice part is required.

### **Student Activity Conflicts**

Although we try our best to avoid scheduling performances at the same time as other school related events, occasionally conflicts do arise which cannot be remedied.

When a practice or rehearsal and an event (game, contest, concert) are scheduled simultaneously, the EVENT takes precedent.

When two events are scheduled simultaneously, a District competition event takes precedence over a regular event, a Regional event takes precedence over a District event, a State event takes precedence over a Regional event, and a National event takes precedence over a Regional event.

When two practices or rehearsals are scheduled simultaneously, the students may SELECT the event in which she/he will participate. **He/She should make the decision, whenever possible, at least seven (7) days in advance. He/she should advise the sponsors/teachers/coaches affected by the conflict immediately.** Under NO circumstance will the student be penalized for his/her decision; that is, class grades are not to be lowered or unreasonable make-up work required, the student will not be benched, nor will the student's ability to earn a letter be impaired because of the decision.

In case of a disagreement among the parties concerned, the matter should be referred to the administrator or administrators in charge for a solution.

# Performance Attire

Our choir has a reputation of looking very professional in performance. In order for us to look this way, we must all wear the same outfits. Formal concert attire is provided for rental to members of the Western Hills High School Chorale, Women's Chorale, and Chamber Choir. These garments will be issued to students before the first performance. They are to be used strictly for the purpose of choral performances (NO EXCEPTIONS). **Each family of a choral student is provided the opportunity to rent the attire from the WHHS Chorus Boosters in the amount of \$35.00 to cover the costs of up-keep of choral attire. This rental fee will be used for the purpose of dry cleaning, maintenance of the garments, and purchase of new pieces. If this rental is not from the WHHS Chorus Boosters tuxedos may be rented from a local tuxedo rental (i.e. Suit City) or tuxedos and dresses must be purchased from the attire company (Formal Fashions).** If garments should need cleaning during the year it will be the responsibility of the individual student. All uniforms must be wrinkle-free and in top condition for **ALL** performances. Students not wearing appropriate attire for a performance will lose points on their performance grade and may not be allowed to perform. Please read the section pertaining to your choir to determine your uniform requirements.

**\*Make checks payable to Western Hills High School Chorus Boosters and bring to choir class.**

## Women's Chorale and women of Advanced Chorale

*Ladies* - will be assigned a properly fitted dress (skirt and shirt). Only "tan" or "neutral" hose should be worn. Black shoes (pumps with closed toes) will be required.

- Small/minimal jewelry is allowed.

## Men's Chorus and men of Advanced Chorale

*Gentlemen* - will be assigned a black tuxedo (coat and pants), shirt, bow tie, and cummerbund. It is the student's responsibility to provide black socks and shoes (no athletic shoes).

### **READ THIS CAREFULLY!!!**

An extreme amount of time, effort, and money has been given (by students, parents, and teachers) to assure that the Western Hills choirs are outfitted professionally. Fines for missing uniforms may be assessed depending on the cost of replacement. This would include loss of the bow tie or cummerbund or any part of the garment that is damaged by negligence.

## All Choirs

We will also have a casual uniform (typically consisting of a t-shirt) for less formal performances, travel, and to wear to school on performance days. You will receive more information on this soon.

# Course Description and Goals

## Men's Chorus

### Course Description

This chorus is designed primarily for beginning choral instruction. It will provide an understanding of the fundamentals of proper vocal techniques, choral techniques, and music theory. We will also focus on musical language, developing music reading skills, and learning about various styles of music. Special attention will be given to individual vocal development. Students will also be prepared for future membership in Western Hills' advanced choir. There will be three performances a year.

### Goals

- Vocal development
- Reading musical notation
- Writing in musical notation
- Working with others as a team toward common goals
- Listening to and analyzing performances of choral music
- Learn music of various cultures and languages
- Performing choral music in concert once each semester

### 1st Quarter

- Read and perform basic rhythm patterns
- Sing major scales in tune, alone and with the group
- Sight-sing short patterns of diatonic intervals
- Identify the notes of the treble and bass clefs
- Learn the basic parts of the vocal mechanism and build solid technique
- Prepare music for Fall Concert

### 2nd Quarter

- Continue to work on solid vocal technique
- Sing in small ensembles and maintain voice part
- Identify and demonstrate basic expressive marks in music
- Identify basic meter signatures
- Prepare music for Winter Concert
- Work on solo and ensemble music

### 3rd Quarter

- Perform in Solo and Ensemble Contest
- Sight-sing short patterns using accidentals and half-steps
- Identify melodic and harmonic intervals visually and aurally
- Identify Major Key signatures
- Prepare music for Spring Concert

### 4th Quarter

- Identify music from at least three cultures
- Sing in at least two foreign languages
- Identify music from at least three historical periods
- Refine music for Spring Concert

# Women's Chorale

## Course Description

This chorus is designed for beginning to intermediate choral instruction. It will provide an understanding of the fundamentals of proper vocal techniques, choral techniques, and music theory. We will also focus on musical language, developing music reading skills, and learning about various styles of music. Special attention will be given to individual vocal development through individualized vocal instruction. There will be three choral performances and participation in district choral assessment.

## Goals

Vocal development through individualized vocal instruction and group instruction

Reading musical notation

Writing in musical notation

Working with others as a team toward common goals

Listening to and analyzing performances of choral music

Learn music of various cultures and languages

Performing choral music in concert and solo repertoire in recital

## 1st Quarter

Read and perform basic rhythm patterns

Sing major scales in tune, alone and with the group

Sight-sing short patterns of diatonic intervals

Identify the notes of the treble and bass clefs

Learn the basic parts of the vocal mechanism and build solid technique

Prepare music for Fall Concert

## 2nd Quarter

Continue to work on solid vocal technique

Sing in small ensembles and maintain voice part

Identify and demonstrate basic expressive marks in music

Identify basic meter signatures

Prepare music for Winter Concert

Work on solo and ensemble music

## 3rd Quarter

Perform in Solo and Ensemble Contest

Sight-sing short patterns using accidentals and half-steps

Identify melodic and harmonic intervals visually and aurally

Identify Major Key signatures

Prepare music for Spring Concert and other performance events

## 4th Quarter

Sight-sing harmonic examples in at least two parts

Identify music from at least three cultures

Sing in at least two foreign languages

Identify music from at least three historical periods

Refine music for Spring Concert

# **Western Hills Advanced Chorale**

## **Course Description**

The Western Hills Chorale serves as the advanced vocal ensemble of the choral department at Western Hills. "Chorale" is a performance-oriented class geared to expose students to a wide variety of choral literature, ranging from the various historical styles through rehearsal and performance. Students will be given the opportunity to learn proper vocal/choral techniques, breathing skills, sight-reading skills, and basic musicianship (theory and history). Performances will take place throughout the school year and students will be given opportunities to participate individually, as well as in the choral ensemble. Western Hills Chorale is open to students by audition.

## **Goals**

- Improve vocal technique in each singer
- Improve sight-singing skills, which leads to vocal independence
- Learn music from various time periods
- Learn music of various cultures and languages
- Learn music of various styles
- Produce high-quality programs

## **1st Quarter**

- Establish and refine vocal technique
- Work on "ensemble" sound
- Begin sight-singing process (rhythmic, melodic)
- Begin at least one contest level piece
- Prepare music for Fall Concert, All-State, and other fall festivals

## **2nd Quarter**

- Explore vocal timbres as related to musical style
- Continue sight-singing process (harmonic, rhythmic, melodic)
- Work on at least two contest level pieces
- Begin working on solos and ensembles for contest
- Prepare music for Winter Concert

## **3rd Quarter**

- Perfect solos and ensembles for District and State contest
- Continue to refine ensemble skills
- Focus on music for district contest
- Continue sight-singing (increase in harmonic activity and rhythmic complexity)
- Begin music for Spring Concert and other performance events

## **4th Quarter**

- Concentrated study of music for district contest
- Continue refining sight-singing skills
- Identify time periods of music performed
- Refine music for Spring Concert

# **Extra Performance and Involvement Opportunities**

## **Western Hills Chamber Choir**

The Western Hills Chamber Choir is an after school choral ensemble that meets once a week to give students more opportunity to study and perform challenging choral music in preparation for our annual concerts, the University of Louisville Margaret Comstock Chamber Choir Competition, and District Contest. This group has had success in the past year achieving 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the UofL Chamber Choir Competition in 2005 and 2008 and receiving distinguished ratings at District Contest. This is an auditioned group. A rehearsal day is set at our first meeting when school begins; this will be announced in class.

## **Western Hills Ladies' Ensemble**

The Western Hills Ladies' Ensemble is an after school choral ensemble that meets once a week and performs a collection of lighter repertoire. This group performs at the winter and spring concerts and has the opportunity to perform at Solo & Ensemble Contest. The Ladies' Ensemble is open to anyone who is interested.

## **Western Hills Men's Ensemble**

The Western Hills Men's Ensemble is an after school choral ensemble that meets once a week and specializes in men's vocal repertoire particularly barbershop. This group performs at the winter and spring concerts and has the opportunity to perform at Solo & Ensemble Contest. The Men's Ensemble is open to anyone who is interested.

## **Extracurricular Performing**

There will be a variety of additional performance opportunities available to the Western Hills choral students throughout the year. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, UK Bluegrass Festival, All-State Choir, UofL Honor Choir, American Choral Directors Association Honor Choir, Solo and Ensemble Contest, UK Male Chorus Day, and drama/musical productions. The music department strongly encourages students to participate in these activities to expand their musical horizons. Involvement in these activities carries with it an expectation of hard work and excellence. These activities should be considered a privilege and an honor. Look for information about these opportunities throughout the year.

## **Tri-M Music Honor Society**

Western Hills High School supports a chapter of the Tri-M Music Honor Society. This is an international society for middle school and high school students involved in music. Since this is an honor society students will be selected by Mrs. Marsh to become a member. Generally sophomores, juniors, and seniors are nominated. The criterion for membership includes: exceptional scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Nominations and inductions typically occur in November. You may go to the Tri-M website at <http://www.menc.org/information/trim/TriMMain1.html> and find out more information about the Tri-M Music Honor Society.

# **Guidelines for Success**

## **Responsibilities of Choral Members:**

To attend school and rehearsals regularly and account for all absences.

To make a real effort to learn and improve daily.

To become responsible for actions and assume the consequences thereof.

To respect oneself and fellow classmates.

To have proper respect for those in authority.

To follow the classroom rules, school regulations, and travel instructions.

To be respectful of school property.

To cooperate with fellow choir members and to share with them the responsibilities and privileges that are part of the choral program.

To contribute positively to the music education of others by performing to the best of one's talents and abilities.

To gain understanding of music and to develop good listening habits.

## **How Parents Can Help**

Show an interest in the music study of your son/daughter.

Keep a record of your son/daughter's various music activities.

Notify Mrs. Marsh if your son/daughter is to be absent or tardy at rehearsals or performances.

Teach your son/daughter to be punctual at rehearsals and performances.

See to it that your son/daughter keeps up with classroom studies and makes up missed work.

Discuss with the director anything that will help her understand your son/daughter.

Become a choral booster member and help with choral activities. We strongly urge parents to get involved with this very fine organization that provides many services and monetary support to every singer in the choral department.

Attend concerts and other events involving your child. Show your support!

# IMPORTANT!!!

Students and Parents -- read, sign, and return

This handbook was written for all choir members and their families. After reading the handbook, please fill in this page, and return it to Mrs. Marsh by **Wednesday, August 19th**. This will count as a 100 point written assignment grade.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ student \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the Western Hills High School Choral Department Handbook. I feel as though I can make a positive contribution to the choir program at Western Hills and that I will follow all rules and procedures outlined herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Choir Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Choir Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number to best reach you

## **Media Release**

The WHHS Choral Department supports a website ([www.westernhillschoir.org](http://www.westernhillschoir.org)) that contains information of events and activities of the choral department and also displays photos of students in activities sponsored by the WHHS choral department. To do this permission is needed by parents.

- Yes, I give permission to disclose my child's photograph or video of his/her image.
- No, I do not give permission to disclose my child's photograph or video of his/her image.

## **Parent Communication Information**

A newsletter will be sent home with students several times during the year to update information on all choral activities. Please contact Mrs. Marsh if you do not receive these.

If you have email, please consider making that your choice method, as it will be the simplest way for me to send information to you and for you to reply back to me.

Parents, please fill in the information below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent(s)' Name(s)

How do you prefer to be contacted?

Email      Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. mail      Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Student brings home info (note: this is not effective in many cases)