

# Helena Middle School Choral Handbook

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Dear Choir Students and Parents,

Welcome! I am so happy that you have chosen to be in choir this year. Choral singing is an exciting elective offering skills in musicianship, teamwork, communication, leadership, and community. Students should expect to have a variety of performance opportunities, develop vocal abilities, and have a place where they are valued as an individual within a group setting.

The goal of our choral program is to develop independent choral musicianship, to understand cultural diversity, to establish a program committed to choral excellence, and to instill a love for singing. *Music is a discipline which requires goal setting, concentration, individual responsibility, group conformity, quick decision making, and thriving under pressure.* These are skills that leaders and productive citizens retain as they grow. I wish to teach these music skills to my students, as well as guide them in transferring these skills to other areas of their lives. Success in our program leads to success in life.

As you participate in this class, you will become aware of the amount of time, dedication, and effort that goes into being a part of an extraordinary choir. Students realize that they are a part of something larger than themselves. Our goal, as stated by Robert Shaw, “Either you feel the fellow next to you is an important human being, and you *like* him, and you try desperately to understand how he feels about what he sings about, and pool your creative passions to make something a [great] sight bigger than either of you could make alone—or this isn’t your kind of choir.”

More than any musical accomplishment of our choirs, I want our students to learn to care for each other individually. A caring environment is a shared responsibility. The students must actively encourage and allow that kind of atmosphere to exist. I truly want all students involved in our choral program to earn a feeling of accomplishment, but not at the expense of the group. I attend to them as citizens first. Cooperation and discipline are top priorities in the class.

I have an exciting and busy year planned for us. The enclosed requirements, guidelines and grading procedures are established to ensure a learning environment that will enable every student to develop to his/her full musical potential. Please read the booklet carefully and discuss the content. After reading the handbook, you will find a consent form and a link to input contact info and volunteer info. ***An informative meeting has been scheduled for August 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm in the Choir room.*** If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to share them with me.

## Choir is a Wonderful and Large Commitment Please Read

## Charms Log-in

(School Code—HelenaMSchoir)

We use a program called Charms to help us organize and maintain the choir. This software will allow you to see information about your singer's choral account, including fundraising revenues, amounts due for the spring trip, order extra t-shirts for parents, and make all of it easier to access. Another perk is that instead of the annual need to re-enter all of your info each year, you can enter it once, and adjust as needed. Need to change your email address? Log-in, fix, and done.

1. Follow the link on the website to Charms. Input school code (above) and student code/password (attached to the *Welcome to choir* form).
2. If you are new, change your password-This is kinda like a username/password in one, as you don't get a username. Make it too common or easy, and other folks could accidentally open your file.
3. Update your info. I would like at least one adult's name, email address, and phone number. Occupation should really just read "skills that may be useful to the choir." If you play the oboe, that's a nice thing to know.
4. Feel free to explore the rest.
5. Done

## Calendar of Events

\* is now located online and on our website. Easiest way to access it is to type "Helena Middle School Choir" into your favorite internet search engine (google, etc). We should be top of the list. Check the panel for calendar. Choose "Choir Calendar." It's also listed in your Charms account.

## Curriculum and Evaluation

- I. All choral students will be expected to learn proper vocal performance technique, music fundamentals, sight-singing skills, music for performance, and other information/skills covered in class. Evaluations will be made daily, weekly, and by nine-week grading periods in the following areas
  - a. Participation in class activities
  - b. Rehearsal notes in music
  - c. Extra rehearsal and performance attendance
  
- II. Students' Grades will be comprised of the following:
  - a. 75% In-Class Performance
    - i. The nature of a choir rehearsal is a constant and continuous assessment of the individual singers and of the class as a whole.
    - ii. This is a subjective assessment.
    - iii. Students will be assessed daily as an individual for best effort on all activities and performance behaviors during the rehearsal. Examples include:
      1. Singing, performing, sight-reading, theory training, listening, movement.
      2. Posture, focus (where are your eyes?).
      3. Folder checks
    - iv. All grades are zero or ten
      1. I will be fair. People aren't their best every day, but I expect the best they have when they arrive.
      2. Students must maintain an 90% average on in-class performance to attend field trips and perform in concerts.
  - b. 25% Performances/Concerts
    - i. No 1<sup>st</sup> nine weeks performance. In-class performance will be 100%
    - ii. Choir concerts, rehearsals, state performance evaluations, etc.
  
- Each student will be issued an assigned choral rehearsal folder and expected to turn that folder in at the end of the year. Students should make sure they have two sharpened pencils in their folder at all times. Students will use pencils to mark rehearsal notes in their music, and complete assignments in class. Students may not write with ink in their music. The rehearsal folder will be stored in the choir room. The student will be expected to pay the cost of any damaged music, or lost choral folders.

## Rehearsals and Performances

This is very important

Enrollment to the choral program comes with a commitment to perform in all of our concerts. All performing groups may require extra, combined rehearsals before each performance. It is very important **that all choir members be present at combined rehearsals and performances.** By their very nature, rehearsals and performances demand attendance. Our public performances are the culmination of many weeks of hard work. A careless or unnecessary absence from a performance by any individual member can make that performance less than its best. This is neither good for the individual nor fair to the group. Your understanding and cooperation in assuring your child's attendance at rehearsals and performances is vital to the success of our program.

Please do not remove your child from our concerts because of academic difficulties in other classes. These concerts represent a final exam for the students' progress and work in a core subject. Our students' concerts depend on attendance. Committing to be in choir shows that you understand the importance of your child's participation in these concerts.

Students have months of advanced notice for required rehearsals and performances. Students will be given at least a two week notice before any performance or rehearsal that is not already on the calendar. Students who have to miss a rehearsal or performance for circumstances you cannot control will be excused. A note from a parent is required in order to allow the student to make up the work. A student who does not bring a note from a parent will be considered unexcused.

If a student or parents lets me know of an extenuating circumstance ahead of time, there is a greater possibility that something satisfactory can be worked out to everyone's benefit. I will be as fair and flexible as possible in scheduling rehearsals and performances around other Helena middle school events.

Unexcused absences will result in a zero. An excused absence enables the student to make up 100% of the missed grade by completing a nine weeks exam. It is the individual student's responsibility to arrange to make-up the performance by the due date.

**Remember...no matter how large the choir, each individual member of the choir is the only one who can do his/her part. Unlike an athletic team, there are no substitutions in a performing group. Everyone is important.**

## The Rules

In order for valuable learning to occur in a positive environment, the following classroom rules must be obeyed at all times.

1. **Be respectful to everyone at all times**
2. **You must have permission to talk**
3. **Raise your hand**
4. **Be Prepared to sing every day**
5. **Be punctual**
6. **No complaining**
7. **Don't argue with the ref**
8. **Follow the rules and regulations set forth in the Shelby County Code of Conduct**

### **Consequences of Misbehavior**

Choir will continue to operate on the 3-Strikes system. If a student receives 3 strikes from me over the course of one week, that student will be referred to administration for detention. Larger quantities of strikes and repeated 3-Strike offences will result in higher levels of disciplinary action. Defiance automatically results in a detention.

**Note:** Incidents (as listed above) are class I violations as described in the Shelby County Code of conduct. Violations of a class II or higher will be immediately referred to the administration.

Choir Members are ambassadors of our community, our school, and our choir. Students should be aware that participation on any field trips, in competitions, or concerts is at the choral director's discretion. Students who cannot maintain responsible behavior in class will not be allowed to represent the school, or the program in performance activities.

# Uniform Information

Please read this carefully

## 1. *Why choir uniforms?*

- a. They look GREAT on stage!
- b. Required for participation in school concerts, many of our festivals, and contests.
- c. A professional look is proven to aid in performance and discipline.
- d. The first impression a choir makes on the audience is its appearance.
- e. Removes visual distractions during a performance (reduces visible movement).
- f. Aids in keeping groups together.

## 2. *How much do they cost?*

- a. Costs are listed on the HMS Choir Website under “Choir Fees and Uniforms.”

## 3. *What do we need to wear?*

### a. **Female** :

- i. Black choral dress (Rented by the choral department)
- ii. Black dress shoes-no sneakers
  1. Bring your own, I do not order
  2. Low heel is recommended for comfort
  3. No open toed or open heeled shoes
- iii. **No sport bras**-This looks terrible in a formal dress.
- iv. Conservative jewelry (Parents please help us with this. On-stage jewelry will glitter)

### b. **Male**:

- i. White Wing-Collar Tuxedo shirt, black bow-tie, and cummerbund.
  1. You can rent all of this from the choral department
- ii. Black dress pants-
  1. You may bring your own, or I can order tuxedo pants for you for \$35.00, which will include the hemming.
  2. No jeans
- iii. Black DRESS shoes
  1. Bring your own. I do not order.
  2. no sneakers
- iv. Black socks

## 4. *When do I need to turn in my money?*

- a. Money is due September 27th.
- b. Students are required to have a choir uniform to perform in school concerts.

## 5. Choir T-shirts

- a. We will wear Choir t-shirts for performances during almost all in-school performances (pep rallies, Veteran's day, NJHS etc), the winter recruiting trip, the spring recruiting trip, the Shelby County Choral Festival, and our Spring Trip.
- b. Choir t-shirts are required for the above performances (including the spring trip).
- c. Cost of choir t-shirt: \$12.00 (small-XL) \$13.00 (XXL) \$15.00 for larger
- d. Parents may order shirts as well for the same price.

## **A little note about Choral Fees (\$35.00)**

Like any worthy endeavor, choir costs money. We simply can't do the things we set out to do without it. Aside from my salary, the choir receives little to no funding from the county or the state (between \$0 and \$500 depending on the year). We are a very active group. This fee helps pay for our wonderful accompanist, required memberships for festivals, site usage fees, sound equipment that is continuing to be upgraded, folders, chairs, pencils, substitutes, professional development, ink for the printers, office materials, class materials, etc. That's before we even begin to purchase the music, which will run about \$4000.

If this fee would place a large burden on your family, please contact me. I am more than willing to make payment arrangements if necessary.

## HMS Choirs

All HMS choirs perform in four major concerts over the course of the year: The Winter Concert, The Festival Concert, State Performance Assessment, and the Spring Concert. All choirs perform in the annual Shelby County Choral Festival. Select 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade singers will be given the opportunity to audition for All-State. All singers are welcome to audition for the Music Machine Show Choir. All singers are welcome on the Spring Trip. All choirs meet during the school day, except Music Machine, which is an extra-curricular activity.

**Treble Makers** -6<sup>th</sup> Grade Choir

**The Helena Singers**- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Gals Choir

**Men of Note**-7<sup>th</sup> Grade Guys choir

**The Music Machine**-Show Choir

**Bella Voci**-7<sup>th</sup> Grade Gals Choir

## How do we spend our fee money, and why is fundraising so important?

• <b><u>Total expected revenue from fees when (100%) collected:</u></b>	<b><u>Approx. \$6000.00</u></b>
• Professional accompaniment fees:	
○ Fall Recording session	\$75.00
○ Veterans Day	\$50.00
○ HIS Winter Concert	\$50.00
○ Shelby County Choral Music Festival	\$75.00
○ Winter Concert (preparation and rehearsal)	\$250.00
○ Performance Assessment Concert & Exhibition	\$350.00
○ Spring recording session	\$75.00
○ Spring Concert	\$250.00
▪ <u>Total accompanist</u>	<u>\$1175.00</u>
• Site Usage fees for concerts 2 times a year total	\$600.00
• Classroom Supplies (pencils, folders, office supplies, overhead bulbs, envelopes, cd's, dvd's, recordings, paper, ink, etc...)	\$1000.00
• Mandatory Professional Memberships	
▪ Required for festival participation	
○ Music Educators National Conference	\$120.00
○ American Choral Directors Association	\$100.00
• Professional Development-Choral director continuing education	
○ AMEA Annual Conference	\$300.00
○ AMEA Fall Workshop	\$75.00
○ ACDA Summer Workshop	\$100.00
• Buses	
○ Shelby County Choral Music Festival	\$400.00
○ HIS Winter Recruiting Trip	\$140.00
○ HIS Spring Recruiting Trip	\$140.00
○ Winter Concert Rehearsal	\$300.00
○ Spring Concert Rehearsal	\$300.00
• Substitute Costs for Field Trips, Auditions, Development	
○ 10 days at \$80.00 a day	\$800.00
• <u>Cost of Music at avg. \$2.00 per piece, per student</u>	<u>approx \$3096.00</u>
○ These are our choral textbooks, and they are EXPENSIVE.	
• <u>Total Cost for above mentioned items</u>	<u>\$8646.00</u>
• <b>Remaining funds to raise =</b>	<b>\$2646.00</b>

**Our Wish List-** Aside from operating costs, these are items that will help us become better musicians and promote what we do to our schools and the community.

2	rolling mirror panels	\$1200
8	mini speakers for devices and ipads	\$20
2	Metronomes	\$35
3	Pitch Pipes	\$15
10	I-pads for class use	\$2940

# **PARENT POWER**

Simple ways you can help make this year a very successful experience for your student.

1. Communicate with your child. There are many responsibilities that come with being in a chorus, and they often need your advice.
2. Attend your child's concert—It means so much to them. Be attentive—they've worked hard! Compliment them.
3. Be proud of your child for being in the chorus. They are proud—you should be too!
4. Support any teacher who you find is dedicated to your child's well-being. Allow a teacher to help your child in his/her way, even if it's different from what you're used to.
5. Remember that we all make mistakes. Actually it's not a "mistake" if some sort of learning took place.
6. Take your child to a chorus concert. This area has many community, college, church, high school, middle school, and elementary choirs! The University of Montevallo is 20 minutes away, and puts on exceptional choral concerts by semester.
7. Buy a choral recording for your child as a gift.
8. Offer your time and talents to the choral program.
9. **Tell everyone you know how much you enjoy your child being in the Helena Choral Program!**

## Helena Middle School Choir

### All-State Choir

Dear Choir Students and Parents,

**All-State Festival** is an opportunity for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students with outstanding ability and initiative to receive public recognition for their talents, to sing under the direction of one of the finest choral directors in the country, and to perform exciting and challenging choral literature with one of the best choirs in the country. This is the highest honor a Middle School Choral Student can receive in the State of Alabama. All-State Festival is a wonderful two-day music festival that features the best choral talent in the State. This group will rigorously rehearse for two days, and perform in a professionally recorded concert.

This year's All-State festival will be held on March 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> at Samford University. Students wishing to participate will need \$20.00 to cover the cost of music and a rehearsal cd. Audition money is due **Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup>**. This will allow me to make purchases of music and rehearsal cd's with ample time for students to prepare for their auditions. Students will be required to learn all of their music in preparation for their audition which will be either November 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> in Tuscaloosa. I will arrange for transportation. Students must demonstrate proficiency in all of their pieces, and be able to sing their parts by themselves.

It is a tough audition, but successful individuals will be rewarded with the opportunity to participate in the best choir they have ever been a part of. Students must know their music cold. If they don't know it, they will not be allowed to travel for the audition. While I am available to aid the student, practice and memorization will be the student's responsibility. It is an excellent opportunity for talented young singers. The cost of festival registration will be \$35.00 for students that make the choir. Students will perform a free concert in the evening on March 8<sup>th</sup> for family and friends at Samford University. It will be an amazing event.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. If you're not sure if this is an event you will be successful auditioning for, ask me and I will be honest with you.

Sincerely,

Frank Andrews  
fandrews@shelbyed.org

## **2018-19 Choir Fees**

	<b>Due</b>	<b>Cost</b>
• Choral Fees	9/6	\$35
• Choral T-shirt	9/6	\$12
• State Festival Fees	2/8	\$10
○ <b><u>Your Choir Fee Total</u></b>		<b><u>\$57</u></b>

## **Choral Uniform**

	<b>Due</b>	<b>Cost</b>
• <i>Gals</i>	10/5	
○ Dress annual rental		\$25
• <i>Guys options</i>	10/5	
○ Used Tuxedo annual uniform rental		\$18
○ Shirt, cummerbund, bowtie (no pants)		
○ <b>(optional)</b> New tuxedo pants		\$35

\*Rental fees are used to maintain existing uniforms and to purchase new uniforms as needed

\*Students may use earnings from fundraisers to help cover choir expenses.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO HELENA MIDDLE SCHOOL (HMS). Please enclose all checks in a sealed envelope with your singer's name, class period, and what it is for written on the envelope. Please include the singer's name somewhere on the check.**

If you can, please avoid sending cash. I will accept cash, but I cannot be responsible if the student loses money before it gets to my hand.

I am convinced that the investment is a fantastic one when you consider how much these students learn, experience, and share with each other as a result of participating in a performing group such as this. These are the memories our students will carry with them, and the events that will define their middle school experiences. This class offers opportunities for expression and team work that are unique to any other organization at Helena Middle School.