



Pirate Choir Handbook

2026-2027

Jeffrey Bowling

Head Director

jeffrey.bowling@wylieisd.net

Emily Mara

Associate Director

emily.mara@wylieisd.net

Grace Capshaw

Assistant Director

grace.capshaw@wylieisd.net

Choral Department Website: www.wyliechoir.com

The Wylie High School Choral Department would like to continue a rich tradition of musical excellence based on high musical standards. Our commitment for the 2026-2027 school year is to become a visible choral music department, actively involving over 250 choral students in consistent corporate and individual musical excellence.

Mission Statement

On every stage Pirate Choir performs with musicianship, discipline, pride, and integrity while exemplifying the AHMO spirit.

Choir Objectives

- To provide aesthetic expression and outlets for creativity through music as a performing **ART**.
- To develop an **APPRECIATION** of and exposure to different styles of music.
- To instill in each member the desire to **SUCCEED** in his/her endeavors.
- To develop the social and **CHARACTER** qualities of self-discipline, respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity and accountability.
- To educate each member as to the importance of **TEAMWORK** and cooperation in all facets of life.
- To **REPRESENT WISD** in school, community, and regional events.
- To be all that you can be, and be the **BEST** that you can be!

This handbook is designed to introduce you to the Wylie High School Choral tradition of excellence and to provide you with valuable information regarding policies, eligibility, uniforms, fees, fundraising, trips and calendars. Throughout the school year, any additions or changes will be provided to the student.

Please read this handbook carefully and enter registration, payment, and acknowledgement [HERE](#). The acknowledgement form and payment are required for participation in choir and are due by Monday, August 24th, 2026.

You may also choose to pay Region Choir Audition Fees and Solo/Ensemble Fees at the above link as well.

Choir Rehearsals and Guidelines

All students are required to attend extra rehearsals and concerts. All extra rehearsals count as daily/weekly grades, while concerts count as a major test grade. (*See Grading Policy*)

Students will **NOT** be excused from extra rehearsals, with the following exceptions:

- Illnesses/Doctor's Appointments with a doctor's note for the director.
- Excused absence from school on the day of the extra rehearsal.
- School conflict (athletics, drill team, etc.) with **prior** notification (minimum 36 hours) to the director about the conflict.

Students who miss extra rehearsals (for reasons other than those stated above) will receive a 0 grade for the rehearsal. This includes (but is not limited to) work, Driver's Ed, and babysitting.

Students will **NOT** be excused from concerts, with the following exceptions:

- **School conflict (athletics, drill team, etc.)** with **prior** notification (minimum 36 hours) as long as every effort has already been made to attend the choir concert.
- Illness on the day of the concert with communication from the student or student's parent.
- **If a student misses a concert he/she will be allowed to make up the grade by completing a makeup assignment at the director's discretion.**

Classroom Expectations and Behavior Management

The Wylie High School Choral Department Discipline Management plan will be utilized for all behavioral issues. Students will observe the following classroom expectations at all times.

- ❖ **NO GUM, FOOD, CANDY, OR DRINKS IN THE CHOIR ROOM!**
- ❖ Come to class on time. Students are expected to be at their seats with materials for class when the bell rings. Failure to do so will result in a lower participation grade. Wylie High School's official tardy policy will be followed in the choir department.
- ❖ Sit in your assigned seat at all times, unless asked to move.
- ❖ No personal items (electronics) are allowed on the risers or at the student's seat. Per Texas State Law, cell phones must be off and in the student's backpack. Water IS allowed.
- ❖ Have your materials (music, folder, pencil) at each class/rehearsal or lose points on your daily grade.
- ❖ Check the screen for important announcements.
- ❖ Do not talk while others are singing. Study your own music instead!
- ❖ Pick up after yourself. All materials **MUST** be put away after **EACH** rehearsal.
- ❖ Respect yourself and all others in the classroom at all times.

No electronic devices will be allowed during class, rehearsals, or concerts. You are to put them away in your backpacks/purses and turn them off as you enter the classroom.

Concert Behavior

You model good concert behavior to younger and older audience members – lead by example.

- ❖ Be on time with the necessary materials. Students not in their designated area at the appointed time will be considered tardy and **lose points off their grade at the director's discretion.**
- ❖ Under no circumstances is cell phone use allowed during a concert/performance. Points will be deducted from the grade of any singer found using a cell phone once a performance has begun.
- ❖ Be in concert attire (see next section). Uniforms should be **wrinkle free** and **clean** for each performance. **Choir Uniform Officers will check to be sure you are properly attired for the performance. Students who are deemed to be inappropriately attired WILL NOT be allowed to perform and receive a zero for a major performance grade.**
- ❖ Ladies – have hair and make-up fixed **BEFORE** you arrive. (Limit hairspray)
- ❖ Have a professional attitude towards each performance – **PRIDE!**
- ❖ Each choir member is **required** to stay for the duration of the concert. You may not leave after your choir is finished performing. If you leave a concert early, points will be deducted from your major grade.
- ❖ You will sit with your choir during each concert. You may not sit with friends or family, unless otherwise directed.
- ❖ Use the restroom before the concert – you will not be allowed to leave your seat once the program has begun.
- ❖ There will be no whistling, yelling, etc. before, during, or after **any** choir performance. This simply will **not** be tolerated. This is not a sporting event or rock concert, so performance expectations are reserved to enthusiastic applause. Your grade will be based in part on your observance of appropriate concert etiquette!

Wylie High School Choir Uniform Policy

A concert begins with appearance. Choir uniforms are to be worn with pride as they represent the work done in the choir program. They are not intended to reflect personal style, rather uniformity. Each student issued an outfit is required to return the dress, tuxedo jacket, pants, tie and cummerbund at the end of the school year for inventory. A replacement cost will be assessed if neglect or abuse to the garment is observed. The uniform maintenance cost is included in the uniform/supply fee. Any garment that requires additional cleaning throughout the year should be done by a professional dry cleaner and is the responsibility of the student. Students will return concert outfits at the end of the year.

Dresses

Ladies in all choirs will wear school-owned concert attire. The school-owned dresses are very durable and can be maintained easily. Students are to take full responsibility for their uniform during the school year. Any obvious abuse or damage to the dress will result in a fine to repair or replace the garment.

Each dress has a number identifying the garment checked out to the student. Failure to return the same dress will result in a replacement fine for the item. If there is need for a dress change, it must be notated through the choir uniform officer or one of the directors.

- **Hem length** – Students are responsible for having their dress professionally hemmed. Please do not repair any hem length with hemming tape, sewing tape, masking tape or staples as it will damage the uniform. Please do not cut the fabric. *Whatever method of hemming you choose needs to be reversible so that the next student who owns the garment can alter it to their height.*
- **Shoes** – Should be black, comfortable, and yet dressy enough for evening wear. **Black flats are preferred.** No flip-flops, sandals, boots, sneakers, vans, etc. will be allowed for any performance. Heels should not be more than 2" since this adds risk to a student tripping or becoming too tired due to the pressure placed on the feet. ***If shoes are not concert appropriate, the student will not be allowed to perform on stage.***
- **Hair/Jewelry** – No jewelry may be worn inside the dress neckline. Only stud earrings may be worn. Hair is to be worn up or down so long as it is back behind the shoulders, providing a visible shoulder line. We want to see your expressive face to its fullest. **Do not use perfume or heavily scented hair spray while styling hair, as this can cause respiratory problems or distraction to others around you.**

Tuxedo Pants/Tie/Cummerbund/Jacket

- All guys will be issued a tux jacket, cummerbund, tie, and pants.
- **All men will be responsible for purchasing a tuxedo shirt to be worn with the rest of their choir uniform.**
- School-owned uniforms are to be worn for choir events only. Proper care of these garments is expected. Any damage or obvious abuse of the garment will result in a fine to repair or replace. Make certain the uniform is hung up to "air out" after each performance so moisture does not create a problem.
- Each piece of the school-owned uniform has a number. The uniform checked out to the student is the same one to be returned. Any changes in uniform must go through the choir uniform officer or one of the directors. **We will make every attempt to fit students with the available outfits. However, it may be necessary for the student to have professional alterations made to the outfit, which will be at the expense of the student.**

End-of-the-year return of uniforms:

All students must have their uniform dry cleaned. If you are returning to choir and your uniform still fits you may keep it. If you are not returning to choir or graduating your uniform must be returned in the dry cleaning bag with receipt attached. Place your uniform inside your garment bag and return it to the choir room.

Grading Policy

All choir grading policies are consistent with WISD and WHS policies

Daily grades – 40%

Choir is a participation/performance-based class. If all expectations are met during the class period (participation, cooperation, materials), the student will receive a 100 for the daily grade. Factors that may contribute to a lower grade include (but not limited to) lack of participation, inappropriate singing posture or failure to use hand signs, disruptive behavior, forgetting to bring folder with music and pencil, and talking while other sections are rehearsing. Usually, one daily grade will be taken each week.

However, multiple grades may be taken and averaged during one week. Mandatory before/after school rehearsals are also counted as daily grades as they are curriculum-based and an extension of the classroom.

Test grades – 60%

Tests may include sight-reading, ear-training, and written assessments. Students can expect three major grades per nine weeks, including at least one sight-reading assessment per nine-week grading period.

Every performance is a test grade. Please keep in mind that a performance is the culmination of many weeks of preparation and hard work for all choir members! Missing wardrobe items, tardies, and inappropriate behavior during a concert can severely impact a performance and your grade.

Field Trips

Each choir member will ride to and from all events on his/her assigned bus, when bus travel is required. Exceptions must be cleared WELL IN ADVANCE with a written note from parents. All students participating in field trips must have a Medical Release Form (found in online registration) on file. Choir members will be expected to adhere to school board policies concerning the riding of buses. School dress code applies to all field trips!!!

Social Media

We take pride in maintaining a robust and active [Facebook page](#) and [Instagram page](#) so that parents and community members can see the amazing work your singers put in every day. This means that we are constantly taking pictures and videos to disseminate on our social media. When we post, we try to post pictures of as many Pirate Choir Singers as possible. When you sign the handbook acknowledgement and pay your student's choir fees, you are giving your consent for us to post pictures of your child on our social media accounts. If you would NOT like for your child's photo to appear online, you may notify us in writing by email at any time.

Financial Requirements for Choir

Card payments are preferred and can be made online [HERE](#).

Make checks or money orders payable to WHS Choir. **On the memo line, please write “student's name, choir fees.”** Money should be placed in an envelope clearly marked indicating what the money is for along with the student's name.

Fees are due by August 24th, 2026.

- Music will be provided along with a folder. Any student who loses their folder will be charged the replacement cost.
- A choir fee of **\$100 is required of all choir students. This fee covers uniform rental, uniform garment bag, choir binder, program supplies, clinicians, guest judges, choir accompanists, choir t-shirts, lanyard, drawstring bag, car vinyl sticker and yard sign.**
- As discussed in the uniform section, you will be required to purchase additional items for your singer, like a tuxedo shirt or concert appropriate dress shoes.
- Competing in Region Choir auditions and the Wylie Vocal Music Festival (Solo & Ensemble) incur an extra cost and are optional, but highly encouraged.

ALL INITIAL FEES ARE DUE AS OUTLINED BY THE DIRECTORS

Fundraising

Since funding for the Arts continues to erode, it has become necessary for programs to raise funds to supplement those provided by the state and local school districts. Students are expected to participate in choir fund-raising in order to maintain the highest level of program quality.

Each HS Choral department has a student activity account. This account includes, but is not limited to, choir uniform fees, special events, trips, or anything else considered appropriate for student activities. This account is under the direct supervision of the Head Choir Director and monitored by campus financial secretary, Principal, and policies of Wylie Independent School District.

If a student participates in a choir-related fundraiser, they are agreeing to place their funds into the general Choir Activity Account along with other students. These funds will be used for the choir program, but consideration will be given towards funds placed into the activity account by individual students. Typically, fund-raisers yield students 40-50% profit of the total sales (each company profit varies). At times, funds from a fund-raiser will be used entirely towards a specific project to benefit the entire choir program. Students and parents will have clear communication regarding these specific efforts. This is not an account that belongs to the student. It is the property of the WHS Choir department. Though we try to assist students with the funds they have submitted, there should be no “guaranteed expectation” that every dollar they contribute will be available to them. Students may only use these funds towards choir related expenses should the funds be available.

Recording

The use of recording equipment (audio/video) and photography will be part of the promotional and instructional process of choir. Unless notified by the parent in writing, all students will be allowed to be recorded or photographed.

Choir Achievement Awards

In an effort to recognize the outstanding efforts of highly motivated students in each choir, the following award program is being implemented. All members of the Choral Department have the opportunity to letter in choir each year they participate in the program. A high school student may only receive one jacket during their high school attendance. Please note the various levels of achievement available to each student. Those who meet the basic requirements, and already have a jacket from another organization, will receive a choir letter. Distinguished point recipients' names will be added to the plaques hanging in the choir room. The choir officers and director will enter points related to choir membership, TMEA auditions and UIL participation. All other jacket points are to be submitted by each student using the official form and including appropriate documentation by the deadline in order to receive the award at the choir banquet and awards ceremony. All other points submitted after that deadline will be forwarded to the following school year and awards earned will be given in the following spring.

Choir Point Categories and Values

You must earn 800 points to earn a letter jacket.

500 points must come from categories 1, 2, and/or 3

1. Campus	Choir Membership Each Year	100
2. Region/State	District/Region Choir Auditions Student must have been approved and auditioned. All-Region Choir Performer Student must have rehearsed and performed. Pre-Area Audition Student must have auditioned Area Audition Student must have auditioned All-State Choir Student must have attended rehearsals and performance.	150 per round 300 400 500 800
3. WVMF (Wylie Vocal Music Festival, also referred to as Solo & Ensemble)	Solo/Ensemble Contest Student may do one solo & one ensemble Student must be approved and participate Solo/Ensemble Division 1 Rating Earn a "1" on a solo or ensemble at WVMF Solo/Ensemble Division 2 Earn a "2" on a solo or ensemble at competition Honors Recital Performer Student must demonstrate preparedness and perform as a chosen soloist or ensemble member.	50/event 100/event 50/event 50/event
4. Community	Civic/Church Chorus Student is an ACTIVE and CONSISTENT participant in a community choir and provides a letter from its director regarding participation.	50 per year 25-100

	<i>continued...</i> Director Approved Musical Event Participation in a community musical event that requires significant commitment and contributes artistic value. Individual Solo Performance (50 Max) Student is chosen to perform at the Dinner Show or Spring Concert. Outside Performance Attendance (100 Max) Student attends a performance of artistic value outside the WHS Choral Department. Students must provide proof with documentation such as a program or ticket stub.	25/event 25/event
5. Service/Leadership	Concessions (25/shift) All-Region Audition Volunteer (50/shift) WVMF Worker (25/shift)	100 max
6. Community Service Project	Student produces a letter from coordinator of a community service project to help those less fortunate in the community, or for community improvement. Letter must include hours of work.	10 points/hour, 100 max

TMEA All State Choir Process

The pride of Texas vocal music is the Texas All-State Choir. In order to make this elite choir, you must earn a place in the All-Region Choir. Students who wish to audition for All-Region Choir must work diligently on the audition music they are given in August. There are hundreds of students who audition for Region Choir. Many attend camps during the summer to help them prepare! We will provide you with the literature you must learn (usually three selections). You will be required to learn certain pieces of music, and sight-read 8 measures. You will audition before a panel of 5 judges who do not see you, and you will not see them. You will be judged not only on knowing the music, but also on musicality, intonation, diction, breathing, etc . . .

Sight-reading is a major component of your audition and should be practiced. If you are not 100% committed to preparing for your audition, please do not waste your time and ours. **All audition dates must be cleared for your participation. If you advance, you are EXPECTED to compete at the next level.**

If you plan to audition, you must attend rehearsals with your directors beginning in September. Rehearsals will be held before/after school. There will also be time for individual tutoring and we will have a Wylie ISD region camp on July 28th-31st. All students who plan to compete will be required to participate in the Region Mock Auditions approximately 2 weeks before the event after school. Do not come to Region rehearsals expecting to be taught the music. This time is to be spent perfecting the music. You are expected to work with your practice track at home, or with your voice teacher, and come to sectionals with questions or areas of the music that you need additional help preparing. Interested students should talk with the director for additional information on dates and expectations. *All Students are invited to participate in All-Region auditions and Solo/Ensemble Contest. Students in Chamber Singers, students in Tempo, and students in voice lessons are required to participate in both All-Region auditions and Solo/Ensemble Contest.*

Wylie Vocal Music Festival

You may choose to enter a solo or small ensemble for Solo & Ensemble contest on February 20th, 2027. Songs are from a UIL Prescribed list. The entry fee for solos is \$10, but you will also have to pay for an accompanist. Ensemble entry fee is \$5 per ensemble member. Deadline for the commitment form and entry fee(s) is February 5th, 2027. Students will be provided music and tracks will be available on wyliechoir.com. The directors are available to help you one-on-one if you schedule time with them, but they will NOT teach you the music. You must be eligible to participate in this contest. The entry fee is non-refundable in the event you do not compete.

WISD Music Enrichment Program

WISD High School Choir programs offer a private voice lesson program on campus during classes. Students will leave class for a brief lesson, or take after school lessons as times fill. Specific information regarding price, policies and procedures for the program can be found at the end of this handbook. All fees and necessary forms will be submitted to the private teacher per their instructions. Openings for the program are on a first come basis, so students interested in the program should sign up early. The WHS Choir Boosters intend to support the lesson program by offering a limited amount of financial aid to worthy students. Application forms can be found in the form packet or at www.wyliechoir.com. *Students in A Cappella are strongly encouraged to participate.*

WHS Choir Booster Club

The WHS Choir Program has a Parent Resource/Booster Club which is an active group of parents who help support the choir department in various ways. We need many, many volunteers with ideas, knowledge, contacts, or just a desire to get to know some of the other choir parents! This is an opportunity to show your student how strongly you support their choir experience. Last year, parents assisted with choir concerts, fundraisers, trips, Coffee House, Tempo Show, the musical, concessions, and Spring Banquet. There are chaperone/volunteer opportunities attached to each choir event. You can also respond to emails sent home by the directors. In order to volunteer you must complete the Criminal Background Check form located on the Wylie ISD website. No one will be allowed to volunteer without this form on record. We are looking forward to working with you this year.

Wylie High School Music Honor Cord Policy

An honor cord for graduation shows high aptitude in a certain area that distinguishes them as having achieved a certain distinction in that area. To earn an honor cord in music from Wylie High School, a member of the band, choir, or orchestra must participate, maintain, and achieve the items listed.

- Auditioned for the All-Region band/orchestra/choir at least 2 years
- Performed a solo or ensemble every year
- Not missed any performances
- Maintained an A average in music courses
- Maintained a B average in academics

Should an individual achieve all items listed, they are eligible for a music honor cord. Cords are confirmed by the director of the music organization. After confirmation, students will make a \$10 payment to order the cord for their graduation regalia.

Wylie Music Enrichment Program

Guidelines for Participation Supplemental Music Lessons

Supplemental music lessons are offered as enrichment to classroom instruction and are designed to utilize the broad scope of characteristic literature available for every instrument or voice. Rather than stress the singular goal of competition preparation, the emphasis instead is on nurturing the independent thinking and individual performance skills critical to the development of the maturing musician. The focus is on acquiring refined levels of sight-reading and technical proficiency in tandem with the attainment of an advanced sense of musical instinct and interpretation.

Participation

Although optional, participation in the supplemental lesson program is encouraged and available to all students. Those who elect not to participate in supplemental lessons will not be penalized in grading, chair placement, or choir assignment.

Enrollment

- Enrollment in the supplemental music lesson program is on a voluntary basis.
- Termination of lessons by the student, supplemental music teacher, or choir director will be accomplished by written notice to the student or teacher and the choir director.
- Supplemental music teachers are assigned as requested by the student, if possible. In some cases, individual schedules will not allow the requested teacher.
- Questions concerning assignment of supplemental music teachers should be directed to your student's choir director.
- Questions concerning lesson dates and times, or number of lessons taught, should be directed to your student's supplemental music teacher.

Student's Responsibility to the Private Teacher

- Prepare each lesson fully
- Follow attendance rules
- Provide documentation and exhibit evidence of practice
- Supply materials required by instructor
- Participate in all activities required as a condition of study

Private Teacher's Responsibility to the Student

- Provide each student a quality private lesson which will contribute positively to the development and continual improvement of the student as a musician and performer.
- Instill an appreciation for each instrument(s)/vocal solo repertoire.
- Cultivate the desire within each student to make music a lifelong activity.

- Exhibit professional characteristics and demeanor in attitude, appearance, behavior and responsibility in every activity germane to private lesson instruction.

Lesson Location and Scheduling

- Lessons during the day will be taught in the school the student attends.
- The band/choir director of each school, in cooperation with the private instructor, will schedule lessons for the students who desire to participate.
- It is recommended that the student receive a lesson each week.
- The cost of each lesson for the 20224-2025 school year is \$25.00.
- The Director of Fine Arts determines the amount charged for lessons annually.
- Lessons may be scheduled during the student's choir period and before or after school.
- No lessons will be scheduled during non-music classes.
- It will be the responsibility of the student to notify his/her supplemental music instructor at least twenty-four hours in advance if a lesson is to be canceled unless a serious emergency arises. This courtesy is also the responsibility of the supplemental music instructor if he/she must cancel a lesson.
- The band/choir director will aid the student in advising the supplemental music teacher of concerts, programs, holidays, etc., which would result in any interruption of the regular lesson schedule.

Financial Considerations

Payment will be made directly from the student to the private lesson teacher at the beginning of every month so that lessons will be paid for one month in advance.

Checks should be made payable to the individual private lesson teacher.

Financial Assistance

Limited financial aid for supplemental music lessons may be available to qualified students. The aid is awarded according to need. Applications may be obtained from the student's choir director.