Shepard Middle School Choirs
Parent & Student Handbook

Updated 8/20/2024

Director

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Welcome

Hello and welcome to the Shepard Choral Music Program! I am looking forward to a fun, positive year of choir at Shepard Middle School. We have several program changes, rehearsal day changes, and fun new opportunities for students!

The Shepard Middle School Choir Program forms a vital and important part of the total middle school experience. The main emphasis of the choir program is on musicianship and the pride of accomplishment, followed closely by citizenship, tradition, morale, spirit, and loyalty. It is the pride of a job well done and the accomplishments achieved that make the sacrifices and commitment worthwhile. It is possible, by managing activities and academics carefully, to have a highly successful choral experience in middle school and still maintain high scholastic standing.

The Shepard Choral Program is dedicated to providing high quality individual and group singing experiences for all students. In addition to our fall and spring choral concerts, here are some of the other exciting events we have planned this year:

- Fall social event
- November Illinois Honors Chorus performance opportunities
- November DHS field trip performance on the DHS fall choir concert
- December holiday caroling around the neighborhood
- Solo & Ensemble performance opportunities
- Weekend musical field trip (if possible)
- Illinois Honors Chorus performance opportunities
- Spring movie night with Band and Orchestra
- End of year party

The Shepard Middle School Choir program offers students an opportunity to perform and sing in concert performances at school and various other venues. Students are encouraged to explore their creativity through the aesthetic communication of various styles of choral music, and this year will have input on our rehearsal and performance song choices.

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CHORAL MUSIC CURRICULUM:

Vocal production: Consistent tone; breathing through a phrase; intonation; vowel placements; diction
Rehearsal techniques and strategies: Effort; focus and concentration; listening; teamwork
Tonal Blend: harmony; balance; a cappella
Musical Aesthetic/Stylistic Elements of Singing: Phrasing; dynamics; tone quality; balance
Concert Etiquette: Posture; focus and concentration; attentive listening
Listening Skills: Aural discrimination; recall; critical analysis of performances
Music Theory: Note reading; rhythmic dictation; melodic dictation
Music History: Contextual information on music and cultures
Various Styles of Music: Baroque; Classical; Contemporary; Broadway; Jazz; Popular

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS:

The Shepard Middle School Choir program is a year-long commitment. Students are expected to show effort in daily rehearsals and working as a team. Listening and following directions are important to building and developing the choir. Selections of music are chosen to compliment the skills and proficiencies of the various choral groups, and to expose students to a wide variety of genres and styles of music.

This year, we have two grade level-based choirs: Boys and Girls Chorus (6th grade) and Boys and Girls Ensemble (7th & 8th grade). Because these choirs are grade level-based this year, each student will participate in a brief vocal placement session as an opportunity to determine a comfortable voice part and meet with the director, but this is not an audition. We will also continue to offer an additional audition-only vocal jazz and a cappella Chamber Singers group. Open to all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students via audition (details below and online), these students will participate in their grade level Chorus or Ensemble, and additionally participate in Chamber Singers as an advanced small group extension.

CONTACT AND COMMUNICATION:

email: cprintz@dps109.org **website:** www.shepardmusicroom.weebly.com
Primary parent and student contact will take place through **email**; please be sure to fill out this information in the Vocal Placement form online.
Attendance will be taken and recorded via **ClassDojo**.
Practice materials and resources will be in place on **Google Classroom.** Students and parents will be given a code and access to join as soon as rehearsals begin.

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Remind codes will be sent out for each choir on the Google Classroom page.

GROUPS AND PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

For returning members and families, please note program changes and new opportunities.

6th Grade: Boys and Girls Chorus

These groups sing 2-3 part choral literature. Students rehearse separately for most of the year, and together the week before a concert.

7th & 8th Grade: Boys Ensemble, Girls Ensemble

These groups sing 3-4 part choral literature, Boys and Girls Ensemble will perform together and separately within their own boy/girl groups when possible.

6th, 7th, & 8th Grade: Chamber Singers

This group will rehearse an additional 1 day per week before or after school as the group decides. This group is audition-only and open to all Shepard Middle School students. Chamber Singers will sing 4+ part advanced, sometimes a cappella choral and jazz literature and perform at all district choir concerts, and some venues in the community.

VOCAL PLACEMENT GUIDELINES: (ALL STUDENTS)

- All students please fill out the online placement form.
- Takes place after school during the end of August/beginning of September between 3:00-4:00 pm. Students may also make an appointment with Dr. Printz.
- All students should use the online vocal placement form to select a time and attend a brief vocal placement session with Dr. Printz. If you choose to audition for for Chamber Singers, that audition takes place during your vocal placement.
- Everyone who fills out the online audition form and attends a Vocal Placement session will be placed in their grade level choir. YOU'RE IN!
- During the vocal placement session, every student will go through some **simple vocalizing exercises** to determine range and vocal part. No preparation is required for this step.
- **Every student prepares one minute of a song** (choose something appropriate for your voice and range, some general song examples are online). Be prepared to sing a cappella (without backing music); I am happy to provide a starting note.

AUDITIONS FOR CHAMBER SINGERS: (OPTIONAL)

- Anyone in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade may audition for Shepard Chamber Singers.
- You will take part in the same beginning steps above: fill out the online vocal placement form, sign up and attend a vocal placement session. You will let me know at your vocal placement time if you want to audition for Chamber Singers.
- Please choose, prepare, and sing ONE of the online sightreading examples.

- Be prepared to do some simple harmonization, vocalizing, and additional simple sightreading.
- Anyone selected for Chamber Singers MUST also participate in their grade level choral ensemble, regardless of Show Choir participation, so plan accordingly.
- Chamber Singers will meet once per week on either Tuesdays or Fridays from 3:05-4:00; after vocal placements, this group will work together to decide a rehearsal time.
- Chamber Singers audition results will be posted on Tuesday, September 5 @ Shepard Music Room 408.

To confirm your place in the Shepard Choral Program, all students and parents should read this handbook information, and then sign and submit the Choral Commitment Form.

REHEARSAL DAYS AND TIMES

Choral rehearsals have been carefully coordinated NOT to conflict with Chamber Orchestra, Jazz Band, or Show Choir rehearsals. If a conflict arises, please communicate with me to resolve the issue together. Clear communication helps all students, families, and directors to stay informed and work together.

SHEPARD CHOIR CONCERT ATTIRE

ALL STUDENTS
- White plain dressy short or long sleeve dress shirt, plain white collar button-down shirts are fine (no logos or T-shirts) - Plain black dress pants OR plain black skirt with black tights - Plain black dress shoes and black socks (no heels)

REHEARSAL & CONCERT ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Shepard Choral Program is a year-long commitment to all rehearsals and performances September through the middle of May. While we do understand that sickness and other circumstances arise, students should make every effort to attend all rehearsals and performances, and should communicate with the director *prior to* an absence.

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Excused Absences
Excused absences include severe illness, death of a family member or close friend, or an emergency. Absences need to be reported by a guardian in order for the absence to be excused. While academics are very important, any meetings with teachers should be arranged *around* rehearsals, not during.

Unexcused Absences
Students who choose to not show up for a concert or fail to make appropriate plans to attend a concert are considered unexcused. If students miss a concert and do not turn in a written excuse signed by a parent, they will also not be excused from a concert.

Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to:
• A cold/sore throat (severe and/or contagious sickness are excused with parent email)
• Not having transportation to school (please arrange carpools as necessary)
• Not having concert attire

Failure to attend a concert and/or 3 unexcused absences will result in a phone call home and possible removal from the Choral Program

Shepard Choir Important Dates 2024-2025

Please add ALL of these dates to your calendar. While certain events are not mandatory (those events will be explained in rehearsal), it would be best to add all dates to the calendar just to be safe. If you have a concern with anything listed on the calendar, please let your director know immediately. Attendance at all dress rehearsals and concerts outside of the school day is expected as part of the Choir commitment.

CHORAL COMMITMENT

Students and parents, the choral commitment is important for a strong program, the establishment of a positive musical community and culture, and healthy for each individual student as well as the entire group. If a conflict arises with rehearsals, transportation, other activities, please communicate proactively to resolve the issue.

Please note: the school-mandated Choral Activity Fee is $60. If the student participates in more than one musical ensemble, they should not be assessed more than one music activity fee.

To finalize the choral commitment, please read and sign the online commitment form by September 3.

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COMMUNICATION AND PRACTICE MUSIC

We will use the following communication strategies:

- **Email distribution list:** all parent and student emails listed on the vocal placement forms will be added to a distribution list to be used for the school year to communicate upcoming events, concerts, performance opportunities, and other important choir program information. If there is an error or omission, please alert Dr. Printz immediately via email to be added to the list.
- **Smore:** I will use Smore to share important concert information and other events.
- **Remind:** We will use Remind to update students about rehearsal changes or upcoming events. Students and parents will be given a join code in early September.
- **Edmodo:** We will use Edmodo for practice songs, polling votes for song choices, and upcoming event information. Students will be given a join code at the first rehearsal.
- **Google calendar:** access via http://shepardmusicroom.weebly.com/calendar.html to see the most updated information regarding field trips, rehearsal and concert times, and social events throughout the year.
- **Choir Folders:** Each student will be issued a numbered choir folder. Each student is responsible for his or her own folder and the music contained within throughout the year. Folders may be brought home with permission for practice. Failure to return folder and any choir music before the end of the school year will result in the family's responsibility to pay for lost folders and/or music, requisite with the price of the materials not returned.

DPS109 EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY CODE OF CONDUCT

Students who elect to participate in the Shepard Choral Program agree to adhere to the following established student code of conduct:

The District believes that extracurricular activities are an integral part of the total growth of a student and encourage every participant to establish as their first priority a commitment to academics. The following is a list of guidelines that students are expected to follow in order to participate in school sponsored activities. This list is not intended to be inclusive, and any acts committed by students that are illegal or that, in the opinion of staff, reflect poorly upon District 109 may be subject to consequences.

To insure that students and families are aware of this Code of Conduct, parents and students should read and review the requirements. Students will agree to the following:

- **I will** maintain a score of 2 or better in all of my academic classes and a score of 3 or better in my habits of success. I understand that the school office will frequently run an eligibility list. The coach, sponsor, or supervisor will monitor my academic progress and if they observe a score less than a 2 in my academic classes or a score less than a 3 in my habits of success they will initiate an improvement plan with the appropriate teacher(s). I will have the plan signed by my parent(s)/guardian, teacher, and coach. The plan will be monitored by the coach, sponsor, or supervisor and if at any time I do not perform satisfactorily regarding my part of the plan, I will be subject to the agreed upon consequences in the contract until I do meet the expectations in the improvement plan and/or my score(s) improve to a score of 2 or better in all of my academic classes and a 3 or better in my habits of success.
- **I will** be current with all required coursework.
- **I will** display good citizenship throughout the school day, at practices, and at events.
- **I will** attend all practices, rehearsals, and events unless excused by the coach or sponsor.
- As a participant in band or orchestra, I understand I **MUST** attend practices scheduled on the event date unless excused by the director.
- **I will** check the schedule carefully before trying out, and **I will** discuss attendance conflicts with the coach, supervisor or sponsor **BEFORE** the tryout date.
- **I will** dress appropriately on all event days, as explained by my coach, sponsor, or supervisor.
- **I will** respect and follow all directions from my coach, supervisor or sponsor and abide by all team/squad/cast rules and eligibility requirements.
- **I understand** that school attendance is **mandatory** on the date of events to participate in the activity**.** In the event of an appointment or family emergency, participation will be approved at the discretion of the coach, sponsor, supervisor, or activities coordinator and administration. If I am absent as the result of illness, I understand that I cannot participate.
- To ensure my safety, **I understand** that if I am unable to participate in my physical education coursework, then I am also unable to participate in extra-curricular activities that include a physical component.
- **I understand** that my coach, sponsor, or supervisor will articulate transportation needs for events away from school. Bussing may be provided either one way, both ways, or not at all.
- **I understand** that failure to meet these obligations will result in consequences ranging from student conferences and an improvement plan, removal from practices for academic support, suspension from activities or removal from the team, cast, or squad.

The aforementioned guidelines are in effect for the duration of the extra-curricular activity and consequences for infractions are cumulative. The signed and dated *Extra-Curricular Activities Code of Conduct Contract* must be given to the appropriate coach, sponsor, or supervisor before participating in try outs for any activity.

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Attendance at School-Sponsored Events and Activities

Attendance at school-sponsored events is a privilege. All school rules, including the school's discipline code and dress code are in effect during school-sponsored events. Students who violate the school's discipline code will be required to leave the event immediately and the student's parent/guardian will be contacted. The school may also impose other discipline as outlined in the school's discipline code.

Signing the online Choral Participation Form indicates that student and parent(s) or guardians have read and agree to follow procedures and conduct outlined in the Shepard Choirs Parent/Student Handbook.