

Highlands Middle School

Vocal Music Handbook



2025-2026

Singers and Parents/Caretakers,

Welcome to the Highlands Middle School Vocal Music Department! You've committed to an extraordinary opportunity to build a team through vocal musical performance.

It is my privilege to work with you this year.

This handbook is designed to explain and clarify expectations, policies, and requirements for choir members and their families.

The best way to reach me is by email: tcleveland@nvps.net.

Warmly,
Tara Cleveland
Vocal Music Director

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Choirs at Highlands middle are designed to teach:

- Fundamentals of vocal music theory
- Beginning sight reading
- Music history and cultural significance
- Ensemble musicianship (teamwork!)
- Performance skills

BUT these ensembles are so much MORE than a group of singers! It is my hope that these ensembles thrive musically and aid in developing quality relationships between students and the director!

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR CLASS:

Students and Families are responsible for the following:

- Plastic pocket folder with 3 hole fasteners -OR- 1" three ring binder. Please nothing larger than 1" - they do not fit in our cubbies.
- Pencils
- Highlighter

We will use the above materials all year long. It is your responsibility to come prepared! If folders rip/break/get lost students need to replace them.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS:

In addition to Highlands Middle School **WILDCAT WAY** expectations, Choir Students should be aware of the following:

- No gum, food, or candy is allowed during class unless explicitly approved by the teacher. Singers are, however, **encouraged** to bring their own water bottles so we can limit hallway passes to the fountain. Your daily grade **will be lowered** if this policy is not followed.
- Bathroom pass policy will be discussed in the first week of class. Students should utilize their passing time to use the restroom. Our classes are short. Please be responsible with your time and use the bathroom before coming to class.
- Make sure your folder and music are up to date. You can take your folder with you each day or leave it in your personal cubby. You should have your folder with you at every rehearsal, even the day of the concert. If you do not have the appropriate materials with you each day, you will lose points.
- A **PENCIL** is a requirement of this class and many others. Only use pencil to mark your music so you may erase if you need to. **Highlighters** may be used on certain scores and can be useful tools.
- **Chromebooks** can be amazing tools for learning. We will navigate how we will appropriately use them in our class by creating some expectations and norms surrounding the use of technology. The Students and teacher will partner to create these norms and form an agreement.
- Anytime the Highlands choirs are performing on or off of the school campus each member of the Vocal Music Department is expected to dress and behave appropriately. Cell phones and other electronics are not appropriate at performances. Each student represents themselves, their parents/grown ups, Highlands, and NVPS. Any inappropriate behavior will be dealt with immediately up to, and including, removal from the group and/or a failing grade for that assignment.

GRADING

DAILY CHOIR CONTRIBUTION POINT SYSTEM

Please read the language in each category carefully to fully understand the expectations of this class.

Daily Grade (out of 100%)

100% (Rehearsal Mastery)

- a. Student actively demonstrates proper choral etiquette and musicianship **most of the time**
- b. Student **actively engages** in classroom tasks with focused leadership
- c. Student **does not disrupt** class climate and upholds the **WILDCAT WAY**

80% (moderate effort)

- a. Student willingly demonstrates proper choral etiquette and musicianship, but contributes **80% of class time (Our classes are 40 mins long, so 80% is 32 mins)**.
- b. Student **partially engages** in classroom tasks with some leadership
- c. Student **does not disrupt** class climate and upholds aspects of the **WILDCAT WAY**

65% (below expectations)

- a. Student does not demonstrate proper choral etiquette and musicianship, contributing **65% of the time (Our classes are 40 mins long so 65% is 26 mins)**.
- b. Student **does not engage** in classroom tasks and displays no leadership
- c. Student **disrupts class** climate and breaks the **WILDCAT WAY**

0 points: chewing gum, inappropriate physical contact with others, destroying property, talking back to the teacher inappropriately, inappropriate language, teasing/bullying, screaming, etc.

Following the **WILDCAT WAY** in the choir room:

RESPONSIBLE

Students in assigned seat, folder ready and organized, pencil & highlighter each day!

RESPECTFUL

No talking while the class is working. Every choir member deserves our kindness, including the adults - Yes substitute and guest teachers too.

SAFE

Hands/Feet/Body/Objects to self. Give personal space. No food/gum in class.

CONCERTS/PERFORMANCES:

I am so grateful that there is the opportunity to perform LIVE this year! Our Performing Arts Center, "THE MAX", has recently been updated with brand new seating and lighting. We are so grateful to use that space! There will be two public showcases of your singers' skills this year.

- **Thursday, December 4th - Fall Semester Concert at "The Max" Northview Performing Arts Center. 5th grade @6:30pm, 6th grade @7:30pm**
- **Wednesday, May 13th - Spring Pop's Concert at "The Max" Northview Performing Arts Center. 5th grade @6:30pm, 6th grade @7:30pm**

****Students should arrive 10 mins early to each concert for warm ups****

Concert and Event Grading Policy.

Concerts are a requirement for 5-12th grade music students in our NVPS music curriculum. Public performances are also a requirement as part of Michigan and national music education standards. Concerts are worth 50 points and are a MAJOR assessment grade.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 5 points | Student arrives on time and checks in accordingly |
| 5 points | Student demonstrates a concerted team effort during their concert |
| 20 points | Student demonstrates age appropriate musical elements of performance in the following categories: Tone quality, Expression, Dynamics, Memorization |
| 20 points | Student demonstrates a mastery of concert etiquette throughout the entire concert duration, even if in the audience. |

Concert Absence Policy

- Every member of the Vocal Music Department is important. By enrolling in this class, each member is expected to attend each performance of their team. All performances will be announced to the student in writing (see above dates) on district calendars, and our vocal music webpage.
- At NVPS, 5th grade is the year musical performances become a **graded component** in our music education curriculum.
- *It is the responsibility of the student and parents to double check obligations - PLEASE PLAN AHEAD.* Serious illness/Hospitalization or a death in the family are the only automatically excused absences.
- Concerts/Performances are considered academic and take precedence over athletic practices/competitions.

If a family foresees a scheduling conflict and must be excused from a concert, written communication by parents/guardians must be given to Mrs. Cleveland at least one week before the concert. If a student becomes ill on the evening of the concert and is absent, a parent must contact Mrs. Cleveland within one week to excuse the absence. The decision to excuse an absence belongs to the director.

- Unexcused absences will result in **a zero**. This may be detrimental to a student's grade in class as concerts are a MAJOR assessment grade.
- Make-ups: You cannot truly make up a public ensemble performance as there are over 200 students in our concerts each semester. A solo is simply not the same. A student can recover up to 70% of the concert grade by recording themselves on video, singing and dancing (if applicable) through their part on each piece and sending the recording to Mrs. Cleveland within one week of the missed performance. tcleveland@nvps.net

UNIFORMS:

Our Uniform consists of our Highlands themed t-shirt (black) and school appropriate slacks/pants on the bottom. Blue jeans or nice black leggings or joggers are both considered acceptable. Closed toe shoes for safety. Please no flip flops, crocs, or heels.

*****If there are concerns about the required uniform, please contact Mrs. Cleveland directly so we can find a solution. I'm here to problem solve****

PHYSICAL WARM UPS

Vocal music (and LIFE!) is a full body activity. We will intentionally be moving our bodies in different ways during our physical warm up time. That may look like abdominal work, stretching, and breathing exercises. Teachers are called to provide the most thorough education for our students. That includes how to use our bodies productively to help us overcome difficult situations. Breath and movement will help make our children more resilient and better equipped to encounter and persevere through the hard stuff that life throws at us.