

# 2024-2025 Vocal Handbook

## Objectives

- Provide a comprehensive music literacy program.
- To develop individual and group performance skills through the teaching of strong vocal technique.
- To educate students on different periods and styles of music and how they relate to their time.
- To expose students to a variety of musical experiences and educate them on various performance venues, styles and cultures.
- Develop student leadership and teamwork skills.
- To provide the musical needs of both school and community by serving them with our talent.
- Encourage the development of life skills, organizational habits and practice skills. • To develop well-trained, well-disciplined and independent musicians who love choral music.

## SOA Artistic Probation Policy

SOA students in grades 7-11 with an average of 60% to 79% must pass a re-audition to remain at SOA. The average will be determined at the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Interim to allow time to schedule the re-audition. Students in grades 6-11 who fail their art major class, earning below a 60 for the end of the year average are unable to return to SOA.

## Student Expectations

Every member of the choral department at SOA is expected to:

- Participate 100% in class
- Listen to and execute all instruction
- Sit with correct posture
- No verbal communication with other students
- No outbursts or noise that isn't instruction related
- Keep positive attitudes
- Respect all classmates, teachers, and visitors
- Do not waste time in class on personal business
- Enter the classroom quietly with respect to a professional music environment
- Keep the room neat, do not write on boards in classroom, throw all trash away
- Be a member of the team

## Expectations: Professional Rehearsal Practices

We make every effort to teach students more than just the musical and vocational skills they will need in a work environment. In the vocal class, students are expected to learn and demonstrate a strong work ethic, professional and respectful conduct, and good communication skills that are required in every workplace. In class and especially in the community, students are expected to show up early to events, prepared with the materials and attitude they need to perform their best, and with a

respectful, responsible, and positive demeanor toward themselves, each other, and their teachers, parents, and community members.

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Vocal classes have two to three times the number of students as a normal class, and certain special rules are put in place so that the class does not have three times the number of bathroom distractions; it is just too disruptive. Students will be given time before and after class to use the restrooms, but they are not to use the restroom during rehearsal unless it is an emergency. Students with a medical excuse from a doctor will be allowed to use the restroom when necessary. Therefore, **do not get up and leave the classroom to go to the restroom unless you have permission from the vocal teacher!**

## **Performing In Concerts and Student Participation for Field Trips and Vocal Events**

In order for a student to participate in concerts/field trips/competitions/auditions, he or she must be in good academic standing in all classes, have no discipline infractions for the quarter and have a consistently positive attitude and strong work ethic. **Students who do not have an 80 or higher in the vocal classes will not be permitted to participate in these events and will be given an alternative assignment.** Parents will be notified should a student not meet these expectations.

In the vocal major, students work primarily in a group setting. Students are expected to rehearse, perform and travel in groups sometimes as large as 175. These experiences are a curricular requirement and necessary for the student to progress and succeed as a vocal major.

## **Grades**

Below is a breakdown of how your grades will be determined:

### 1. Weekly Classroom Grades - 40 %

Technique:

- Sing independently with accurate intonation and in rhythm, using appropriate timbre, diction, breath control, and good posture while maintaining a steady tempo.
- Use Takadimi or Solfege to sight-read rhythms, tonal patterns and melodies
- Identify symbols and traditional terms referring to dynamics, tempo, and articulation and interpret them correctly when performing.

Supplies: Does the student come with the supplies needed for the class? Every student should plan to come with their sheet music, white board, music notebook, charged chromebook, headphones, and a pencil every day! In addition, bookbags are placed to the sides of the room, phones are in cell phone parking, no hats, hoodies, gum, food or drinks (except water) are allowed.

Attitude/Work Ethic: Is the student a positive, approachable learner? Is the student contributing to the general success of the class? Are they respectful to the teacher and the other students in the class? A choir classroom only functions properly when everyone is working toward a common goal. One person's behavior DOES impact other people. We are a team and only as strong as our weakest member.

Participation: Is the student an active member of the class? Are they responding and applying the instruction, listening attentively and singing with energy? The only way to develop the skill of singing and performing is to DO it.

## 2. Assignments/Tests -30 %

1. Music Theory, Ear-training, Technique and Part Tests
2. Classwork: Students will often have classwork to include melodic and rhythmic dictation composition, evaluation and error detection of music or musical example.

## 3. Rehearsal/Concert Participation - 30 %

Concerts and after-school rehearsals are considered part of the class requirement for vocal majors. Good communication between teachers, students, and parents can prevent misunderstandings. Please communicate immediately with the director(s) when there are problems and schedule conflicts.

### **Absences from Performances**

The SOA Singer's performance calendar is on our website at [www.soasingers.com](http://www.soasingers.com). Students who do not participate and are unexcused will receive a zero. Students who come to a concert in unacceptable attire will not be able to perform. Students with jobs are expected to request that their work schedules be arranged to accommodate all after-school rehearsals and performances. Employers should be informed that vocal is a class, not an extra-curricular activity. Rehearsals and performances are a required part of class, and school policy states that work is not an excused reason for missing class, rehearsals and performances. Verbal or written statements from students are not excused.

Absences and tardies are only excused when parents send a written note or an email informing the director of one of the following:

#### **1. The student is too ill to attend school.**

The parent should send a written note/email to the director as soon as possible. In most cases, a signed doctor's medical excuse will exempt the student from making up the grade. Students who were present at school on both the day of the after-school event and also the day after will not be excused without a note from the doctor.

#### **2. There is a death in the family or comparable family emergency.**

The parent should send a written note/email to the director as soon as possible. If the student's family crisis is a death in the family or comparable, the student will be exempt from making up the grade. All other cases are excused at the discretion of the directors; unexcused absences will earn a zero, and excused absences must submit a recording as described below.

#### **3. The student has a prior commitment that was planned before the rehearsal or concert was announced.**

The parent must communicate this conflict using the Prior Commitment Form at the end of the handbook. Established religious holidays are excused but should be communicated by the parent using the prior commitment form. If we have a schedule change during the year, and we sometimes do, parents will be emailed about the calendar change and given ten days to inform the director of conflicts. Students with excused prior commitments are allowed to make up their event grade by submitting a recording before the date missed as described below.

### **Making Up the Grade for Excused Absences**

Students with excused prior commitments, illnesses without a doctor's excuse, and family emergencies that are not comparable to "death in the family" must make up the grade of the event missed. To make up the grade, students must record themselves performing all of the music from the event that will be missed. This recording will be graded and will replace the zero for the grade of the event missed. Ten percent will be deducted from the grade for every day the recording is late. For prior

commitments, the recording must be submitted to the director before the date of the missed event. For illness and family emergency, the recording must be submitted within three days after the end of the absence. Students who miss a significant amount of in-school or after-school rehearsals for excused or unexcused reasons may lose their leadership seating, and if necessary, will not be allowed to perform at the concert. This applies to students who miss...

- More than 20% of the classes in the six weeks leading up to a concert
- More than 40% of the classes in the last two weeks before the concert
- Unexcused absences from any required after-school rehearsals or dress rehearsals before the concert.

## Musical Items

### Repertoire/Music Selection

We are here to educate our singers and to provide them with a well-rounded music education. All styles and kinds of music will be represented within the curriculum for a vocal major as in any college, university or conservatory. Vocal study will consist of sacred and secular music ranging from Gregorian Chant to 20<sup>th</sup> century music. Students will also sing in several foreign languages including Hebrew, French, Latin, Italian, and German and many different styles like classical, jazz, patriotic, holiday, pop, religious and Broadway. Our position at SOA is to teach our students about ALL kinds of music so they may use this education later in life to be a more professional musician.

### Solos

When selecting a soloist there are many factors that we will consider including tone quality, size of the voice, expressiveness, stage presence, and intonation. For students who want to sing solos it is important to be prepared and understand that there are many people who are talented in the group. We may simply select a soloist or have an audition process to find the singer who will best enhance the song and therefore make the whole group more effective.

### High School All-State Chorus Auditions and Weekend

All-State Chorus auditions will take place at Cayce United Methodist Church in Columbia in November. **All State weekend will be at Winthrop in March.** Singers who have maintained exceptional standing in the SOA vocal program will be able to audition at the sponsor's/teacher's discretion.. All participants must abide by the All-State guidelines, which are determined by the State Choral Association, MENC. If a student makes All-State Chorus, he/she must agree that they will participate in the All-State weekend. If a student does not participate in the All-State weekend after being selected for the choir, our school will be placed on probation and will not be allowed to audition the following year.

### ACDA All-State Chorus Auditions and Weekend

ACDA All-State Chorus auditions are held each year in September. ACDA All-State weekend is yearly in January. Audition registrations are at the sponsor's/teacher discretion. If a student makes All State Chorus, he/she must agree that they will participate in the All-State weekend.

### Senior Thesis

Senior vocal students who successfully complete the thesis application and pass the jury will be permitted to present a recital. Students who do not complete the application, pass the jury and perform the recital will not be awarded a thesis medal and will not be recognized at graduation. Please see the student handbook regarding thesis performance make-up rules.

### Seniors Performing at Graduation

It is our goal for all seniors to sing at graduation representing the vocal department, however

the number of students permitted to perform vary from year to year. Only seniors with an

“A” average in their vocal classes for each quarter, a positive attitude and strong character will be able to perform. The directors will select appropriate repertoire for graduation. Students will be able to make suggestions, but the directors will have the final decision on the repertoire.

### High School Student Placement

Every May after the Spring Concert, each student will audition to determine his or her class placement for the next school year. The audition will consist of four sections: prepared song in a quartet, sight reading, tonal dictation, and fourth quarter participation grade. A packet of audition information will be posted on soavocal.com and will also be distributed during class well in advance of the testing days. All 9-11 grade chorus members will take the placement test. All SOA High School vocal majors are required to take at least one year of Chorus 1 and Chorus 2. The ensembles within the vocal department will change from year to year based on personnel (SATB, SSAA, 50 singers, 30 singers, etc.). **Seniors are not automatically placed in the advanced class just because they are in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Seniors will be placed in their respective vocal class determined by their demonstrated level of vocal skill and their positive attitude and strong character.**

## Rehearsal and Concert Information

### Uniform Dress

It is absolutely essential that all people in a performing group dress and groom themselves uniformly. Concert jewelry, hairstyles, make-up, and attire need to be such as not to call attention to you as an individual. If a student shows up to a performance with incomplete concert attire (ex. no black socks, no character shoes, the wrong dress, etc.), **brightly colored hair/make-up or over the top accessories... he/she will NOT sing in the concert.** This will in turn greatly affect your grade.

The following are requirements for Professional Black Concert Attire:

Ladies: - Concert Evening Dress

- Black character shoes
- Off black hose or knee highs
- NO Jewelry except the (HS) rhinestone earrings
- NO Jewelry except the (MS) pearl earrings & necklace provided
- Conservative make-up (no bright colors) & (HS) Red Lipstick
- Hair off of the face, pulled back into a low-bun (**no abnormal colored hair**)

Men: - Tuxedo

- Black Bow-Tie & Cummerbund - Clean shaven or neatly trimmed beard - Black dress shoes and black socks - Neat, polished, and professional!!

- Jewelry: no earrings, chains or necklaces - Hair out of the face pulled back (**no abnormal colored hair**)

## Money Matters

### Fundraising

As with every organization, it takes money to support the efforts of the SOA choral program. Each and every member must carry out his or her share and portion of fund-raising for our group to be a success. You will have the opportunity to set up an individual fundraising profit account through the booster club which can help pay for trips. We know that you understand that being a part of this group means you are willing to do your full share of fund raising. We realize the importance of fundraising and appreciate the 100% effort to support the wonderful

work of our students. The expectation of profit for each student is \$200 for SnapRaise. If a student/family does not wish to participate in SnapRaise for the \$200 profit, a donation of \$200 can be paid in place of the fundraiser. For 2024-2025, we have several fundraisers planned. For *The Sound of Music* (HS musical ) and the MS Musical (TBA,) the general program funding will be used from the SnapRaise program. For the New York trip (HS) and (MS) Cruise, a variety of fundraisers will be held respectively.

### **Vocal Fee \$250 This fee covers:**

- Music First account for all students (\$14 each)
- Registration and audition fees for choral clinics, All-State and competitions
- Music and supplies
- Instrumentalists and tech equipment and services for performances
- Payment for guest conductors and composers/arrangers
- Facility rental for events
- Vocal t-shirt

**NOTE: If this fee is not paid by the end of the school year, the student's report card and schedule for the following year will be held at school until this fee is paid.**

### **Turning in Money**

**Please pay all vocal fees and any other fees online. Invoices will be emailed to parents.**

### **Parents' Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of every parent and guardian to see that the policies outlined in the handbook are followed and that the contract form is signed and returned that is located on the last page of this handbook. Parents are responsible for the attendance of their children at school functions, and to make sure their children practice during a designated time in a quiet place at home.

### **How Parents Can Help**

When questions about the Vocal department arise, it is important to go to the right source in order to receive correct factual information. If the questions pertain to vocal class, grades and policies, contact the directors. If the question is about fees, field trips, fundraisers, or other booster issues, please contact the booster president who will answer your question, or direct you to someone who can. Other ways parents can help include the following:

- Attend booster meetings, parent meetings, and concerts
  - Read emails to make sure you get important updates about events
  - Check the website [www.soasingers.com](http://www.soasingers.com) for information and calendar events
  - Communicate with the directors and ask questions when they arise
  - Communicate with your child about family events and vocal events to avoid conflicts between the two
  - Teach your child the importance of keeping a calendar and being on time
  - Turn in money and forms on time
  - Encourage friends and family to attend performances

Sincerely,

*Robin A. Rogers & Heather Hammond Caffarel*

Robin A. Rogers & Heather Hammond Caffarel  
Vocal Directors