

Choral Handbook

John Champe High School



Choral Handbook

2026–2027

The John Champe High School Choral Program
Melanie L. Black, Director of Choral Activities

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Welcome to the John Champe Choral Department

Welcome!

I hope you are as excited as I am for you to be a part of the John Champe Choir tradition. I am excited to work with the many talented students in this choral program. My number one goal is to develop and encourage students' success.

This year promises to be an exciting adventure filled with performances, learning to sing with proper vocal technique, and events. Students will be challenged to rise to the highest levels of competency and artistry in each ensemble. Students will participate in unique performing opportunities. Also, students will connect with each other, through the music, to effectively convey the expression of the music.

This handbook is designed to provide you with all necessary information to be an active and successful member of the John Champe High School Choral Program. I hope you will enjoy your time singing and learning with us. My door is always open to discuss anything on your mind whether it is about choir or just life in general. You may also contact me via email at melanie.black@lcps.org.

Our Mission

To instill in all people an awareness of music's important role in the enrichment of the human experience!

For updated information, visit <http://www.jchschoir.com>

John Champe High School Choral Program Handbook

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Instructor: Melanie Black

Room #: 1812

Year: 2026-2027

Course Number: Treble Chorus (286001-001) Bass Chorus (284001-001)

Adv Mixed Chorus H (282100-001) Small Vocal Ensemble H (278100-001) Adv Treble Chorus H (286100-001)

Supplementary Texts or Special Materials:

- Two sharpened pencils, tuning fork, and a bottle of water at every class.
- Auditioned choirs are required Tuning Forks can be purchased through the school or using the link below. Paying through the school is \$20 for the tuning fork and online on your own is \$26. This includes shipping prices.
- Auditioned choirs are required to purchase a JCHS Choir t-shirt for the cluster concert

Please purchase this specific tuning fork:

<https://www.westmusic.com/d-addario-pwtf-a-a-tuning-fork-4-long-500222>

Learning Objectives

Students of the John Champe High School Choral Program will...

1. Develop skills leading to excellent musical performances.
 - a. Vocal skills development, sight-singing, ear training, and singing in harmony.
2. Acquire basic knowledge of the elements of music.
 - a. Read and interpret vocal scores, name and identify various musical terms and symbols, understand the fundamentals of rhythm, pitch, melody, and harmony.
3. Demonstrate a positive attitude in the JCHS Choral Program
 - a. Encourage positive support for everyone, establish an attitude of mutual respect and trust, portray a sense of pride in our department and a willingness to serve, demonstrate concert etiquette as a performer and listener, participate in District and State events if desired.
4. Evaluate music that represents various historical, stylistic, and cultural contexts.

Students will be performing a balance of music that is both sacred and secular, music from various historical time periods, and in different languages.

Rehearsal Technique

Students are taught proper rehearsal technique as part of choir class. Therefore, each student is evaluated every day on their demonstration of rehearsal technique.

Vocal Health and Duress

Choir classes require students to sing and participate each day in rehearsal. You are expected to keep your voice healthy so you can participate in class. Drink plenty of water. Get rest. Do not yell or excessively strain your voice. If a student is unable to sing due to vocal duress, they are still expected to participate in class, to the fullest extent possible, including staying focused on the music being studied, making all markings, audiation, etc. Communicate any issues with the director prior to class.

Expectations and Tips for Success:

Expectations

Students are expected to:

1. Show respect for their fellow choir members in every aspect
2. Have music in folder every day (*If music is misplaced, students will be charged accordingly for each piece of missing music*)
3. Bring a pencil and water bottle to every rehearsal
4. Bring a positive attitude to the classroom everyday
5. Be on time and in assigned seats by the start of every class, ready to begin
6. Have no cell phones in class unless specifically asked (Phones will be placed in their correct slot in the phone cubby everyday and will be used to take attendance).
7. Have no food or drink in class (except water)
8. Have no gum (period)
9. Follow all policies outlined for students of John Champe High School and Loudoun County Public Schools, both on campus and off campus. Each student is a member of this school and represents the Choral Department every day. This includes guidelines established for tobacco, alcohol, illegal substances, weapons, dress code, and general conduct.
10. BE PRESENT.

Tips for Success

1. Attend class
2. Work on your vocal technique
3. Work together
4. Bring Water
5. Perform with maximum effort
6. Be kind, make good choices, and work hard.

Grading Policies and Procedures:

Phoenix, Schoology, and Sight Reading Factory are used for grading, communication, and attendance. That is where to go for the most up-to-date information. To access the grades on sight reading factory before they are uploaded into the gradebook; your student will need to log into their account.

<i>Assignment Type</i>	<i>Formative</i>	<i>Minor Summative</i>	<i>Major Summative</i>
<i>Category percentage</i>	10%	40%	50%
<i>Minimum number of assignments</i>	One per Major Summative	4	2
<i>Maximum number of assignments</i>	n/a	n/a	4

50 FLOOR POLICY

Policy 5030: For high school courses, the floor of 50 is only applied to the **quarter 1, 2, 3 grades.**

Reasonable Effort

Policy 5030: Reasonable effort occurs when a student submits an assignment, formative, or summative in which they have **made an attempt to complete it using the information provided during instruction.**

Reassessments

Policy 5030: Students who scored below a **70%** on a major summative assessment AND have demonstrated **reasonable effort to complete all homework and formative assessments before the initial assessment** are eligible for a reassessment. The highest a student can earn is **70%**.

Academic Integrity

If dishonesty is determined where a summative assessment is concerned, students may complete a reassessment up to 70% to demonstrate learning. The following actions are prohibited:

- Sight reading for another student
- Signing another student in or out of a concert
- Having personal device out during a concert

Concert Grading

- Points will be deducted for not signing in AND/OR out of the concert. The grade will drop one letter grade for each
- Points will be deducted from a student's concert etiquette grade for the items below. The grade will drop half a letter grade for each of the following categories:
 - Arriving late
 - Lack of proper attire/wrinkled attire
 - Being disruptive during performances
 - Not staying for the entire performance

Concert Absence

If a concert absence is **excused**:

- Students will perform all of their music and will be graded on accuracy AND writing a two page paper single spaced on the repertoire for the concert.

If a concert absence is **unexcused**:

- Students who attended the academic school day and DO NOT attend the concert will invoke policy 5030: "Late work will not be accepted after the major summative assessment associated with the content has been administered."

Excused Absence

- Illness, parent/guardian must contact Mrs. Black
- Family obligations with at least ONE MONTH notice
- Emergencies, parent/guardian must contact Mrs. Black as soon as they are able

Unexcused Absences (not a complete list)

- Illness AND student attended school that day
- Family obligations without one-month notice
- Lack of Transportation
- Lack of Appropriate Attire
- Work/Birthdays
- Sports Conflicts

Regulations for attendance at major summative assessments (dress rehearsals and concerts) are required because:

- **Unable to replicate the experience gained from the performance/rehearsal.**
- **The quality of the experience for those in attendance is adversely affected by other's absenteeism.**

Concert Policies and Procedures:

Concert Etiquette

We are representatives of John Champe High School every time we perform and it is our job to represent the school and the program well.

- Appropriate etiquette includes:
 - Active listening, singing, participating in the music making process
 - Sitting quietly when not performing
 - Never call attention to mistakes of yourself OR others while performing.
 - Applauding performances of other groups while attending the ENTIRE program.
 - Cell phones must be put in the choir room phone cubby lock box that is assigned to each class.

Attendance

Concerts and dress rehearsals are the culmination of months of in class rehearsals. **Attendance is mandatory at all concerts and dress rehearsals. A full schedule is given out at the end of this document and on the JCHS Choirs website.** If there are any changes, those will be given with as much notice as possible.

Concert and dress rehearsal dates are given at the beginning of the year so that enough time is given to arrange work schedules, vacations, family visits, extracurricular conflicts, etc. Students are expected to keep this calendar and inform Mrs. Black of any conflicts immediately. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements to attend each performance.

If an extreme family emergency arises which prevents the student's participation in a performance, an alternate assignment will be provided after consulting with the parent, student, counselor, and or principal.

Lack of Transportation

Transportation problems are not acceptable excuses for missing concerts. High school students must learn how to manage their own schedules and to think ahead. Students and parents are given concert dates at the beginning of the school year. As a concert date approaches, make appropriate arrangements for transportation to and from the concert.

Sports Conflicts

If a student plays a sport, it is up to the student to keep track of the game schedule and report to the coach that they have a previous commitment with choir and that it is a graded summative assessment.

The staff at Champe makes every effort to collaborate schedules so that students are not forced to make a choice of one activity over another. Below is the list of hierarchy of how JCHS Choirs handles conflicts between sporting events and choir events:

Choir Event:	Sports Event:	Student Attends:
Dress Rehearsal	Practice	Dress Rehearsal
Dress Rehearsal	Scrimmage	Dress Rehearsal
Dress Rehearsal	Away Game (starter on the team)	Away Game
Dress Rehearsal	Away Game (not a starter)	Dress Rehearsal
Dress Rehearsal	Home Game	Dress Rehearsal/Game after rehearsal
Concert	Home or Away Game	Concert
Concert	Play off game (starter on the team)	Play off game (states or regionals)

Attire and Appearance

We have been working to create a safe environment for all students and by doing so, we have a gender-neutral uniform. All students will be expected to wear:

- Black dress shirt and black dress pants (Provided by JCHS Choirs)
- Student Choice: black socks or black nylons and black closed-toed shoes with a short heel (preferably less than 2 inches) or flats.
- Students are not permitted to wear tennis shoes, boots, or any casual shoes. No large or excessive jewelry. Only small stud earrings permitted.
- Please wear deodorant but NO perfume or lotion due to allergies.

Attire and Appearance Continued

Uniforms must be hung up in the provided garment bag to prevent them from getting wrinkled. If the student doesn't return the uniform at the end of the year, a deficiency will be written. Students must check to see if their uniforms still fit throughout the school year. If a uniform doesn't fit and a student lets the uniform coordinators know two weeks ahead of time, then we can see if there is another size available for use. If there is no other size available or not enough time has been given, students will have to purchase appropriate fitting clothes for the concert.

Attire Opt. Out

If a student does not feel comfortable in the uniform provided, they are more than welcome to purchase their own dress shirt and dress pants. Students must bring in or provide a picture of the purchased uniform for it to be approved by the uniform coordinators. The purchased uniform must be the same cut and style as the provided uniform i.e. black long-sleeved dress shirt and black dress pants.

John Champe High School Vision & Motto:

Our mission is to create a supportive environment that encourages every individual to become the best version of themselves in order to make a meaningful contribution to the world.

JCHS SCHOOL MOTTO

"We believe in M.A.G.I.C."

MAKING A GREATER INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT!!

Social Media

As a part of creating a community, we will occasionally be using photos for social media and our website. If you or your student does not feel comfortable with this, please email Mrs. Black and request an additional permission form to opt-out of photos or posts.

JCHS Choral Booster

Part of the long-term success of the program at John Champe High School is due to the parent involvement. The concerts, outside events, fundraising, and trips cannot be done without the support of the parents through the Choral Boosters. That being said, there are going to be many opportunities for you to volunteer or bring food for events. If you wish to opt-out of emails from the choral booster organization, please email me and request an additional permission click to opt out of emails from the organization.

Ensemble Descriptions:

Curriculum & Repertoire

In terms of curriculum, a strong emphasis will be placed on music literacy as well as developmental sequencing. In order for students to be lifelong learners, it is important to structure the class so that success can be achieved and growth is sought out. The Kodály method with solfege-inspired teaching is the foundation for the lessons and learning of pieces.

Along the lines of repertoire, the students will experience a variety of choral literature including classical music, jazz music, show tunes, folk tunes of countries around the world, sacred pieces as well as secular pieces. This broad spectrum will encourage openness and help the students broaden perspectives on the world around them.

Decibelles (286001-001)

Grades 09-12

Credit: 1

Prerequisite: None

This class is open to all treble voices who have an interest in singing. There is no audition requirement. The students will learn techniques for tone production, including breathing techniques, singing posture, and proper diction. Students are expected to learn basic music theory as related to choral music. Performance is required as a necessary demonstration of the skills learned in class. Repertoire will include unison, two-part and three-part singing in a variety of styles, and will range from easy to medium difficulty levels. As a co-curricular ensemble, rehearsals and performances outside regular school hours are a requirement.

ConChords (284001-001)

Grades 09-12

Credit: 1

Prerequisite: None

This class is open to all tenor and bass voices who have an interest in singing. There is no audition requirement. The students will learn techniques for tone production, including breathing techniques, singing posture, and proper diction. Students are expected to learn basic music theory as related to choral music. Performance is required as a necessary demonstration of the skills learned in class. Repertoire will include unison, two-part and three-part singing in a variety of styles, and will range from easy to medium difficulty levels. As a co-curricular ensemble, rehearsals and performances outside regular school hours are a requirement.

Champe Singers (282100-001)**Grades 09-12****Credit: 1****Prerequisite: Audition**

This class is for treble, tenor, and bass voices in grades 09-12 and requires recommendation and/or audition by the choral director. This is a select group of highly motivated and committed students who are seeking a more intense performance experience. Members of this group will continue to build their individual skills by performing in a variety of settings. Students will develop choral literacy by singing a wide variety of choral literature that is both sacred and secular. Sight-singing and music theory will be an integral part of the class. Students will learn to sing expressively by responding to the director's cues. Repertoire will range from medium to difficult levels. This class is offered as an honors course for honors credit. As a co-curricular ensemble, rehearsals and performances outside regular school hours are a requirement.

Bella Voce (286100-001)**Grades 09-12****Credit: 1****Prerequisite: Audition**

This class is open to treble voices in grades 09-12 and requires recommendation and/or audition by the choral director. This is a select group of highly motivated and committed students who are seeking a more intense performance experience. Members of this group will continue to build their individual skills by performing in a variety of settings. Students will develop choral literacy by singing a wide variety of choral literature that is both sacred and secular. Sight-singing and music theory will be an integral part of the class. Students will learn to sing expressively by responding to the director's cues. Repertoire will range from medium to difficult levels. This class is offered as an honors course for honors credit. As a co-curricular ensemble, rehearsals and performances outside regular school hours are a requirement.

Chamber Choir (278100-001)**Grades 09-12****Credit: 1****Prerequisite: Audition**

This class is open to treble voices in grades 09-12 and requires recommendation and/or audition by the choral director. This is a select group of highly motivated and committed students who are seeking a more intense performance experience. Members of this group will continue to build their individual skills by performing in a variety of settings. Students will develop choral literacy by singing a wide variety of choral literature that is both sacred and secular. Sight-singing and music theory will be an integral part of the class. Students will learn to sing expressively by responding to the director's cues. Repertoire will range from medium to difficult levels. This class is offered as an honors course for honors credit. As a co-curricular ensemble, rehearsals and performances outside regular school hours are a requirement.

Choral Program Event Schedule

The following is a list of performance dates and program dates for this school year. Students are held accountable for being present at all required performances per the schedule. Please see the section in this document on attendance policies. Attendance at required performances is an integral part of each student's quarterly grade. Choir is a performance based class, and the importance of participating in performances cannot be overstated. **Please add these dates to your family's calendar as soon as possible. In rare cases, dates may change and additional performances may be added. If that is the case, students and parents will be given as much notice as possible.**

JCHS CHORAL CALENDAR

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Dear Students,

Welcome to the John Champe Choral Department! I have been looking forward to all the new and exciting music we will be making. Our goal this year is all about team building, professionalism, and tone quality. We will be able to take your individual talents and collectively merge them with other voices in the community.

The true miracle of choral singing is found when each singer makes an individual commitment to artistic ideals that are beyond those currently known to exist. We can make a difference if we all work together and look past our differences. We will be working to increase our knowledge of choral music but also become more aware of different communities around us.

That's why I am excited about John Champe High School choral music. I think you have already sensed that this will require each of us to bring more to the table in each rehearsal experience as we search for artistic expression and how it might resonate in our collective and individual minds. We will work harder to strive for rhythmic and notational accuracy. We will be more diligent about singing with a healthy and beautiful tone. But lastly, we'll ask ourselves harder questions about how to accept everyone. That is the value of the process. Not the answers found in the performance, but the questions asked in rehearsal. The concert is a celebration of what has already happened.

I apologize in advance for the fast pace of these next few weeks, but it is imperative that we overcome the limitations of the written page in order to focus and dwell on the artistry that lies below the surface. Music is more than just the notes and rhythms on the page, it is all about how you convey it to yourself. You are the storyteller for the composer. Everyone around you will be telling a slightly different story but that is the beauty of artistic differences. Don't spend time in the practice room because it is required. Do it because you have a once in a lifetime opportunity to work with other gifted musicians - each of whom have so much to give if only each one of us does our own part, it really does take a village!

-Mrs. Black