

# APPLETON EAST **CHOIRS**

## HANDBOOK & SYLLABUS

**2022-2023**

***Welcome to the Appleton East High School Choral Program!***

Please take time to read ALL of this with your family!  
You are responsible for all information in this handbook!

This information can also be found at:

[www.aechoirs.com](http://www.aechoirs.com)

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*Any great work of art revives and readapts time and space, and the measure of its success is the extent to which it makes you an inhabitant of that world — the extent to which it invites you in and lets you breathe its strange, special air.*

*- Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)*

# **APPLETON EAST HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR GOALS**

(What will I learn?)

- 1) Create a welcoming community where members treat each other with respect and kindness
- 2) Learn to read and understand the language of musical notation
- 3) Develop rehearsal skills and strategies
- 4) Develop singing, tuning, and listening skills
- 5) Develop performance confidence, poise, etiquette, and instinct
- 6) Experience music as an essential element of history and culture
- 7) Sing expressively. Sing from the heart. Sing for life.

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

(What should I do?)

- 1) **Be on time** to class. (Be ready when the bell *begins* to ring)
- 2) **Have all materials** ready each day (pencil, music, folder, paper, water bottle)
- 3) **No food, candy, drink, or gum** allowed in the rehearsal area. Exception = WATER.
- 4) **Bathroom trips** should take place during passing time. Please plan accordingly.
- 5) **Bags, backpacks, books, Chromebooks:** Not in the rehearsal area. Leave them in the hall.
- 6) **Cell phones, earbuds, etc.** Off your person. Be present.
- 7) **If you're unable to sing:** Inform the teacher and remain involved as you are able.
- 8) **Focus on ensemble goals:** Be mentally involved, even if you are not physically singing.

## **COMMUNITY & REHEARSAL AGREEMENTS**

(How do we get along?)

- 1) Listen (to the music, to the director, to each other)
- 2) Be kind.
- 3) Act with the interests of others in mind.
- 4) Communicate effectively.
- 5) Be open to the unfamiliar.
- 6) Be aware (of time, of space, of each other, of the music)

# MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

- 1) Students will be assigned a folder with music for class. Each individual is responsible for the folder and its contents. Failure to return music or folders in appropriate condition will result in a charge.
- 2) The only markings that should appear in music are with ***erasable pencil*** and within proper score marking procedures. Please don't doodle!
- 3) You may take your folder and music home at any time during the school year, but you must have it in class each day.
- 4) We have many pieces of fine equipment in the music department, including electronics and instruments. Please respect all of these items. Permission must be obtained before using this equipment.
- 5) Permission must be granted to use the choir practice rooms before or after school. Please keep them clean. No food or drink (except water) should be in the practice rooms. Do not use the piano as a table or move it from its location.

## CONCERT ATTIRE

### Uniform Fee for each choir = \$25 (due in the fall)

The following guidelines explain expectations for student performance attire. This fee is used to cover the cost of rental, repairs, replacement, and dry cleaning. It is the student's responsibility to keep the concert attire in professional shape. In other words, don't leave it lying at the bottom of a closet or in your trunk. (Let it air out!) *There is to be absolutely no smoking/vaping in concert attire.* Students are responsible for lost or damaged attire. If your family is unable to pay the uniform fee, please let the director know and we will make other arrangements.

- 1) Dress or tux (pant, shirt, jacket, tie, pocket square) will be provided by the school
- 2) Student should provide proper black footwear (including black socks). No flip-flops, sandals, athletic shoes, or open-toed footwear. Shoes should be flats (no heels) if possible.
- 3) Accessories should be limited to small items that do not draw attention away from the ensemble.
- 4) Hair should be simple and out of your face/eyes.

If you have any concerns about concert attire, please communicate with your teacher!

## CONCERT & DRESS REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE

***Attendance at every concert listed on the Choir Calendar is an expectation for this course.***

Concert (and dress rehearsal) attendance is expected of all members of all choruses at East HS. Concerts are the culmination of weeks of preparation, musical development and ensemble building. In chorus you have a unique opportunity to share your hard work with peers, parents, and the entire Appleton community. Your fellow chorus members count on you for vocal, physical, and moral support.

If you have an unavoidable conflict, please inform Mr. Van Sickle or Mrs. Conn as soon as you know (at least three weeks prior, or preferably at the beginning of each quarter). All concert absences must be followed up with parental contact to Mr. Van Sickle or Mrs. Conn to determine if the absence can be excused. Exercise your communication skills and tell your employer when your concerts/rehearsals occur so there will be no misunderstandings about your concert commitments.

If you lack transportation for a concert or rehearsal, please ask a director for help. We want you to be there and we will work to make that happen – but we need to know so that we can help!

The directors reserve the right to deny permission to any member of the group to perform in any concert based on the number of rehearsal absences, rehearsal participation and conduct, or any other insufficient rehearsal preparation. We appreciate your taking this responsibility seriously as a member of the East Choral Music Program.

## REHEARSAL ATTENDANCE

Because each individual is part of the choral ensemble, attendance at all rehearsals is expected. Unlike many other disciplines, the learning in a choir rehearsal cannot be made-up in the traditional sense. If you miss a rehearsal (excused or unexcused), you will be expected to discuss what you missed with the teacher and demonstrate your understanding and performance of the material for the director. Absence make-ups will be handled on a case-by-case basis and may include attendance at flex time, after school lessons, or audio/video progress submissions.

## CELL PHONE & ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

**In accordance with school rules, cell phones or other electronic devices that are used inappropriately or disrespectfully during class time will be taken to student services.** Your parent or guardian may pick the phone up at the end of the school day during business hours. If a parent or guardian is not available, you may pick up the device on the following school day.

When class is in progress - even if you are not singing - you are expected to be, physically and mentally, in the *present moment*. Splitting attention between the classroom and your cellphone (*continuous partial attention*) is detrimental to your focus and limits your investment in the rehearsal process. Be present and stay connected to the real-life people around you!

Please inform friends and parents that you will likely not be able to respond to texts, status updates, tweets, or other messages during choir time.

On certain days or during certain activities, cell phones and Chromebooks will be utilized at the discretion of the teacher. During these and all times, respectful electronic device usage is required.

In short: **More singing, less screening!**

# **ODDS & ENDS**

## **SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION**

Each year the Fine Arts Department Awards the Menn Scholarship to a deserving senior. This student must be involved in the arts and be an excellent student academically. Along with this scholarship, there are scholarships awarded from Heid Music and from other organizations. Students may receive scholarships to participate in honor choirs, music camps, and college through participation in the choral program at East High School. More information will be made available throughout the year.

## **CO-CURRICULAR VOCAL ENSEMBLES**

Students who are enrolled in curricular performance ensembles at East may choose to audition for one of the co-curricular vocal ensembles available to students at East High School. As these ensembles are built upon the skills developed in the curricular choirs, students who are interested in participating in the co-curricular groups are asked to be enrolled in a curricular choir as well. Additional information about these ensembles will be presented in class.

## **CONCERT ETIQUETTE**

As performers, you will need to help with this one! Your family needs to know that our concert is not an athletic event. It is not appropriate to talk or use your cellphone disrespectfully, as this can disturb others around you. You should not enter the concert hall during a song – instead, enter only during applause. No food, drink, or candy should be brought into the auditorium.

A small child who is hungry or sleepy might make a noise that is distracting to other audience members and the performers. Please ask your parents to think very hard before bringing small children to the concerts. If they simply must bring a child, remind them to sit near a rear exit in order to make an “escape” that is not distracting!

We record all of our concerts! Noises and distractions can ruin these recordings. Please help educate your families that we take great pride in our music making, and we expect excellent etiquette from our audiences as well as our performers. Thank you!

## **SOLO & ENSEMBLE FESTIVAL**

The Wisconsin School Music Association Solo and Ensemble Festival is an excellent performance opportunity for all students in the choir program. The event occurs on the final Saturday in February. Participation in this event is optional, but recommended. The preparation process for this festival improves individual singing and technique more than any other event. As individual singers become stronger, so does the choir. A portion of the registration costs for district solo/ensemble festivals must be paid by participating students. Cost will depend upon the events/ensembles in which each student participates. Details will be sent home with students at the beginning of the second semester.

## CHOIR TRAVEL

Making music with your friends and classmates is extremely rewarding, but sharing this music with others throughout the world can be life-changing! The Easterners sang in the National Cathedral in Washington, DC in 2019, and in the summer of 2017, choir students sang in Memphis and outside the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. During the summer of 2015, the Easterners took their music on the road to New York City, where they sang in St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Two years prior, the Easterners traveled to New Orleans, and before that – Puerto Rico! Past trips have taken East students to Chicago, Milwaukee, and even Europe!

All of the fundraising your family does will help you pay your way on these trips. We encourage all students to participate in the fundraising activities as they are able. The rewards are priceless!

## THE EAST CHOIRS READ!

Knowledge is power! By participating in the East choir program, you'll learn music literacy skills that will help you decipher the markings found in a piece of music. Whether you have no idea what a quarter note is, or if you've already written your own symphony, we strive to give you the power to be an independent musician! These skills are meant to prepare students to handle the challenging literature performed by the upper class choirs and give them the skills necessary to continue being a lifelong musician.

Students in all choirs participate in a "skill builder" program that teaches rhythm counting and pitch relationships. These skills are necessary for successful participation in the choir program. Skills will be practiced in class, but some practice is suggested outside of the choir rehearsal. You can feel great pride in learning these skills, although they can be frustrating at times. Keep trying, and it will pay off!

## CONCERT TICKETS

**Tickets for some concerts will be available ONLINE as RESERVED SEATS.** A link will be placed on the website ([www.aechoirs.com](http://www.aechoirs.com)) approximately two weeks prior to the event so that tickets can be reserved.

Tickets can also be reserved before the event from Mr. Van Sickle or Mrs. Conn if you are unable to purchase tickets online. Tickets will also be available at the box office prior to events.

Ticket sales help us to create a professional and quality music program. The funds raised at each concert help to pay for choir supplies such as music, tuxes, dresses, and rental supplies, and also to help us hire the best accompanists, accompanying musicians, and technical help. THANK YOU for supporting us.

If your family is unable to purchase tickets due to financial difficulties, PLEASE let us know. We want you to be in the seats to see and hear your children and we won't turn you away!

## FUNDRAISING ACCOUNTS

Students can raise money to help pay expenses for the following: choir travel, voice lessons, and summer music camps. The money raised by a student is placed into his/her own music activity account at East High School. This account is kept under the student's name during his/her time in choir and may be transferred to a sibling in the music program if not used by the student. This transfer must be made before the graduating student leaves the choral program, and the person receiving the funds must be either in the program already or entering the program the following year. The money is not transferable to any other students other than siblings, nor is it transferable to other individual East High School accounts or activities. Because we are a non-profit school organization, money not used by students cannot be given to them when they leave the choral program.

# STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT in CHOIR

## OVERVIEW

Standards-Based Assessment places emphasis on progress towards mastery as the chief factor in grading students. It is an assessment format that is designed to better report student understanding in a given subject. A student's grade in choir is determined by their ability to master concepts by the end of a grading period. In essence, we will be replacing *assignments* in the gradebook with specific *concepts* that will be taught.

- **Standards** are general topics and concepts which indicate what students should know or be able to do.
- **Formative assessments** will take place continually throughout the semester, both in large and small group settings. These formative assessments are used to *provide feedback* and guide students to a greater understanding and achievement level.
- **Summative assessments** are culminating projects that show the level of mastery of a given standard.
- *Student grades will be based upon their ability to understand concepts, not on an average of individual assignments.*

Eventually all classes at the secondary level will be assessed using Standards-Based Assessment. In a performance ensemble, students demonstrate *knowing by doing*. This new framework shifts the emphasis away from “getting all of the points” to focusing on the true nature of assessment - improving (as a musician) through the ongoing cycle of practice and meaningful feedback. (In class, we define the process using these terms: Rehearse - Evaluate - Refine) This is really the same basic way music classes have always been assessed. We are simply shifting our reporting methods to make the grading process more meaningful and valid.

## STANDARDS (adapted from WMEA State Music Standards)

- **STANDARD #1: Develop, refine, and convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. [PERFORMING]**
  - **REHEARSE, EVALUATE, AND REFINE:** Evaluate and refine personal and ensemble performances, individually or in collaboration with others
  - **PRESENT:** Perform expressively, with appropriate interpretation and technical accuracy, and in a manner appropriate to the audience and context
- **STANDARD #2: Apply criteria to evaluate work. [RESPONDING]**
  - **EVALUATE:** Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis interpretation, and established criteria.
- **STANDARD #3: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music. [CONNECTING]**
  - **PERSONALIZE:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music.

## STUDENT SCORES

Student scores represent a skill level: Mastery, Competent, Developing, Beginning, and Insufficient Evidence. The numbers representing each classification are the only numbers you will see in the gradebook. As we enter into this new grading format, we are waiting for technology to catch-up, so these numbers have been “translated” for gradebook entry purposes in an attempt to place each skill level in the middle of the percent that typically represents its letter grade.

| SKILL LEVEL<br>(Official Term) | SKILL LEVEL<br>(Performance Translation) | GRADEBOOK ENTRY | PERCENTAGE |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Mastery                        | Standing Ovation                         | 4               | 100        |
| Competent                      | Performance Ready                        | 3.8             | 95         |
| Developing                     | Rehearsing                               | 3.4             | 85         |
| Beginning                      | First rehearsal                          | 3               | 75         |
| Insufficient Evidence          | Not at rehearsal                         | 2.2             | 55         |

## **ASSESSMENT DETAILS**

### **Summative Assessments (Quizzes, Tests, and other Cumulative Projects)**

- Concert and dress rehearsal performances (see [concert calendar](#) for details)
- Music literacy test and quizzes.
- Classroom performance assessments
- Vocal/skill assessments based on predetermined rubrics

### **Formative Assessments (Homework, Class Work, or other Practice Opportunities)**

*Choir is a rehearsal and performance based class. There may be a few homework assignments throughout the year, but mainly the work is done in class, with the concert being a public display of the learning. Formative assessments in choir occur constantly, moment-to-moment, as the musical rehearsal inspires a constant loop of individual/group feedback and response to this feedback. Becoming a skilled musician requires active practice to train the mind, ears, and physical anatomy that produces sound. The skill and muscular coordination required for singing as an individual and as a member of the collaborative choir can not be learned or refined without active practice and class participation.*

- Demonstrating active individual musicianship skills (daily)
- Demonstrating rehearsal skills (daily)
- Written assignments or projects (as assigned)
- Music literacy practice and application within the music being studied (daily)
- Sight reading activities (daily)

### **Revisions, Redos, and Retakes**

- **Retaking summative assessment/cumulative projects:** Students who fail to attend performances will be given the opportunity to complete a make up performance/project to demonstrate their learning. While nothing can truly recreate a concert experience, students will be given the opportunity to perform up to one week after the concert at the discretion of the teacher. Examples may include performing selections from the concert music for the class, creating a video of themselves performing the music, etc.
- **Retaking formative assessments:** Students will be able to redo classwork as needed to show proficiency in their learning.
- Students wishing to show additional evidence of their learning will be able to do so by scheduling a voice lesson with the teacher during flex time to demonstrate mastery of the skills or to receive additional help.

### **Academic Integrity**

- There is little opportunity in choir for academic dishonesty as most of our assessments and work is face to face in real time. However, on occasion we will have written work. All written work should be completed with integrity. Students who copy others' work will be required to contact their parents, complete an alternative assignment, and may be subject to consequences from administration.
- Due to the collaborative nature of choir, students who do not do their own work hurt themselves by not learning the material, but they also hurt the group that relies on each individual member.

### **Attendance**

- Students in choir are generally able to "catch up" from short term absences like mild illness or appointments by actively rehearsing in class. Students with extended absences may need to come in for additional work during flex. Students may also be paired with a section leader to work on their own time.
- Attendance at concerts is required as stated above.

### **Group Work**

- Choir, by nature, is group work. All choir members must take an active role in the music making process. This includes actively singing, using music, being attentive to the conductor, intentionally improving their music literacy skills.
- Students can expect the teachers to be moving around the room, walking through the risers, listening to individuals to assess individuals in the group.

### **Missing and Late Work**

- Music literacy/theory work should be completed by the deadline stated. It is to the student's advantage to turn in work on time to ensure timely and effective feedback. Timely work completion allows both the student and the teacher adequate time for additional teaching or extra practice as needed to reach proficiency.

## **Career and Life Skills - AASD High School Rubric Adapted for AEChoirs**

- **Standard #1 - Acts Responsibly & Respectfully**

- Manages time and project deadlines effectively to complete tasks on time
- Makes ethical choices in both personal and school-wide expectations
- Participates actively and shows reliability, accountability, and punctuality

***IN THE CHOIR ROOM, THIS TRANSLATES TO:***

- *Student is in the room when the bell rings, ready to contribute*
- *Student brings music folder, music, and a pencil daily*
- *Student demonstrates that music is equivalent to a textbook and should be treated with respect.*
- *Student does not bring food, gum, soda or non-water beverages to rehearsal*
- *Students will fill water bottle/get a drink and use the restroom before class.*
- *Student acts in self control by not interrupting, talking during a song, or during a teaching moment.*
- *Student recognizes proper cell phone & electronic device usage.*
- *Student meets assignment/project/rehearsal deadlines to complete tasks on time*

- **Standard #2 - Communicates Effectively & Works Collaboratively**

- Communicates appropriately across various settings to engage diverse audiences
- Works collaboratively with others to complete tasks, solve problems, resolve conflicts, provide information, and offer support.
- Is open to ideas and opinions of others
- Responds openly and effectively to different ideas, groups, and opinions of others

***IN THE CHOIR ROOM, THIS TRANSLATES TO:***

- *Student uses respectful and appropriate language and actions and understands that unruly behavior disrupts the environment required for an effective choral rehearsal and limits the growth of the individual and the ensemble as a whole.*
- *Student maintains appropriate voice level, tone, and word choice during class.*
- *Student contributes to class discussion at the appropriate time with a quality response.*
- *Student is open to learning music from many styles, cultures, and languages.*
- *Student sings while the group is singing and is quiet when not singing so that others can hear what they are supposed to be singing.*
- *Student is following along in the music while other students are taking their turn to sing and is ready to return to singing for their next turn.*
- *Student attends all performances.*
- *Student completes well done work on time*

- **Standard #3 - Think Critically & Creatively**

- Applies informed decision making and reasoning that leads to ideas, innovation, and personal growth
- Seeks and evaluates feedback in order to make necessary adjustments

***IN THE CHOIR ROOM, THIS TRANSLATES TO:***

- *Student asks questions when in need of further clarification or when more practice of a certain musical passage is needed.*
- *Student applies feedback from teacher to improve.*
- *Student sings out to make the most of their rehearsal*
- *Student approaches difficult music/techniques with perseverance and determination rather than giving up when things get hard.*
- *Student engages in active and informed music making*



## WHY SHOULD YOU SING?

Group music making has been a source of inspiration, comfort, and community throughout history.

Singing originates from an instinctive human desire to *express oneself* and *be heard*.

Through group singing, we connect with others to share these innate desires.

When I sing with my neighbor, I acknowledge their need to be heard,  
and they, in turn, reaffirm the same need in me.

This connection builds relationships and unifies souls.

In fact, those who sing together literally *breathe* together!

The students in our classroom are learning how to navigate life in many different capacities: as students, as family members, as friends, as citizens of the local community, and as members of the larger global society. All of these groups are built upon a foundation of relationships. If students can develop the capacity to see the world through the eyes of others and work towards relationships of empathetic understanding, their individual journeys can be self-fulfilling *and* strengthen the world around them.

Yes, school is about many things. We need to *know* things. We need to learn facts.

We want students to become confident and comfortable in their own skin.

Everyone should learn to read music. (We're biased, of course.)

But all of this doesn't matter much if we can't get along...

Group singing gives everyone a chance to build common ground and form connections with others, but it wouldn't feel right saying that's the *only* reason to do it.

The truth is, it just *feels good* to sing with others.

Scientists can prove this through research and experimentation,  
but we don't need the facts to justify the activity.

Let's just trust our guts.

So, let's rephrase the question:

## Why *shouldn't* you sing?

