

Paw Paw High School

Choir Handbook



2026-2027

Dear Students and Parents,

Greetings and welcome to the start to the 2026-27 school year! I am thrilled to have the privilege to work with the talented students of Paw Paw High School this year. It's been so rewarding to see the growth of the program over the last few years, and I'm excited to see the new heights that we will reach this year!

The choral handbook is designed to explain the choir policies at Paw Paw High School. Included is a calendar with all of the known performance dates at this point. Please note that there may be extra performances that are not yet scheduled. This year, the guidelines agreement and comprehensive permission slip will be completed and turned in digitally. You will find a QR code and a link at the end of this handbook that will allow you to fill that out. This is necessary to have on file when students participate in concerts and events that involve travel. Students and parents/guardians should complete this together and have it returned by **Thursday, September 3** for a grade.

As you read through this handbook, please note any questions or concerns that you may have. It is always better to get these things cleared up at the beginning of the year when possible so that we can work out a plan as a team. A successful school year requires the teacher, students, and parents/guardians to all be on the same page.

I am beyond excited for the opportunity to teach in a community and school system that supports music so enthusiastically! I am looking forward to making music with the students. Please feel free to contact me anytime with questions.

Sincerely,

Maxwell Wagner
Vocal Music Teacher
Phone: 269-415-5675
E-mail: maxwell.wagner@ppps.org

Policies and Expectations

- Tardy policies, hall pass policies and behavioral standards will be as outlined in the Paw Paw High School handbook.
- Treat your classmates, your teacher, and yourself with respect at all times. There will be zero tolerance for rude, disrespectful, or bullying behaviors.
- Arrive to class on time with all of your required materials. Be in your seat and ready for class within one minute of the bell.
- Bring your music, a pencil, and a water bottle to class every day.
- For safety, proper vocal production and cleanliness, you are expected to refrain from chewing gum, eating and drinking during class (with the exception of water).
- All students are expected to treat sheet music, equipment and the facilities with respect. Damaged/lost choir materials will need to be replaced/paid for by the student.
- Late assignments will experience a letter grade deduction for each day late.
- Per school policy, cell phones and earbuds/headphones are not allowed in the classroom, and school policies and procedures regarding these devices will be enforced. Cell phones distract us from learning and working together as a group.
- Because choir is a participation class with very little individual work time, there will be few opportunities to use the restroom during class. Make sure to plan your day accordingly! Fill your water bottle before class starts to limit disruptions.
- Students must enroll and commit to staying in choir for the entire school year (all 3 trimesters). If a student has a scheduling issue that prevents them from enrolling in all 3 trimesters, it is up to the student to explore all options to change their schedule. Approval may be given to a student to take 2 trimesters only, but this must be arranged at the beginning of the school year.
- Abide by all other classroom rules and expectations laid out throughout the school year.
- Have a positive attitude, and always bring your best effort!

Grading Scale

Final grades will be determined at the end of a grading period by the amount of points earned. Points will be earned through daily participation, performances, and tests.

Rehearsal Skills – 48%

Students will receive 5 points each day for a daily rehearsal grade (25 points per week). Students must show mastery in the following areas to earn their points: vocal technique, performance practice, preparedness, participation, and focus. A breakdown of the behaviors that are expected is shown in the table on the next page. Points may be lost in any of those areas, with common examples including poor posture, inappropriate behavior, talking at inappropriate times, lack of participation, use of phone in class, failure to have the assigned music or a pencil in class, chewing gum, and eating/drinking during class (except water). A significant part of the daily grade is determined by effort and attitude. Maximum effort is expected, and classroom rules must be followed. If students are absent from their choir class for any reason, they must complete a short make-up assignment to earn their rehearsal points for the day. The assignment is

essentially a practice log and can be found in Google Classroom, with physical copies available in the choir room. Students must complete this assignment within 2 school days of their return from their absence.

<u>Rehearsal Element</u>	<u>Visible Behaviors</u>
Vocal Technique	The student displays proper vocal technique and good breath support. They create space and form the correct vowel shape with their mouth. They take deep, expansive breaths. They keep their chin parallel to the floor when they sing.
Performance Practice	The student displays physical engagement throughout the rehearsal. They understand and show proper singing posture when sitting and standing. They show an understanding of the meaning to the music with their body.
Preparedness	The student has their required materials for class, including their binder (with all pieces of music), pencil, water bottle, and any additional assignments. They are ready to sing when rehearsal starts.
Participation	The student fully participates in all rehearsal activities. They ask relevant questions at appropriate times and add constructively to discussion and rehearsal. They display confidence in their understanding of the music/material.
Focus	The student listens when the teacher speaks, and watches when the teacher conducts. They do not talk during the rehearsal process. They have a confident command of musical changes and respond sensitively to the directions given by the conductor.

Performances – 40%

Students will receive 100 points for each major performance, and 50 points for all minor performances and required after-school rehearsals. Performance grades are based on attendance at the event. Students must be on time for warm-ups, in proper uniform, have their music memorized, and show proper performance etiquette both on and off stage to earn maximum points. See the policy on performance absences on the next page for further information.

Tests/Written Work – 12%

Written work may be assigned covering musical terminology, theory, listening, history, and in review of a performance. Occasional singing and sight-reading tests may also be conducted in order for Mr. Wagner to assess the progress of each individual singer. Tests/exams will cover large units of work in music theory, sight-reading, and prepared music.

Choir is an elective class. You are here because you like to sing and perform. As a member of the choir, it is very important to remember that what you do directly impacts all members of the group. Remember: what you gain from a class is largely dependent on what you contribute.

Uniform Requirements

Treble Choir

Black top (*provided*)
 Black dress pants/slacks OR
 Black floor-length skirt
 Black socks/nylons
 Black shoes

Tenor-Bass Choir

Black dress shirt (*provided*)
 Black dress pants w/ black belt
 Black socks
 Black dress shoes
 Red/gray plaid tie (*provided*)

Voices of the Future

Option 1:

Dress (*provided*)
 Pearls (*provided*)
 Black nylons
 Black shoes (flats)

Option 2:

Tuxedo jacket and pants (*provided*)
 White Tuxedo Shirt (*provided*)
 Tie/Bowtie (*provided*)
 Black socks
 Black dress shoes

Other options may be discussed.

*All provided uniform elements must be turned in by **Friday, May 21, 2027**. Treble and Tenor-Bass Choir shirts just need to be turned in immediately after the Spring Concert, while Voices of the Future dresses and tuxes must be dry cleaned. If the uniforms are not turned in by the designated date, a debt will be placed on the student's account, and the student will not be able to receive their diploma until the uniform is turned in or the debt is paid.

**Treble Choir students may wear the Tenor-Bass Choir uniform and vice versa if they so desire. Please communicate with Mr. Wagner if you have any questions or concerns.

Unless otherwise noted, it is the student's responsibility to provide the required elements of the uniform. If a student does not own one or more of the uniform pieces and acquiring them is not possible, let Mr. Wagner as soon as possible so that a solution may be reached.

Equipment

Each vocal music student is responsible for the care of his/her own music, uniform, etc. If a student loses or damages school assigned property, they will owe the cost of the property back to the choral program. Examples of such items may include:

Sheet Music
 Folder/Binder
 School-assigned Choral Uniform

Choir Event Schedule

Please put these dates on your calendar, and look early on for potential conflicts. If you must miss a required event, please see the policy for performance absences.

Day	Date	Event	Location	Groups	Call Time	Perf. Time
-----	9/11 - 9/25	Choir Fundraiser	Online	All	-----	-----
Tuesday	10/6	Regional Honors Choir Audition Deadline	-----	Any	-----	-----
Monday	10/12	Rising Stars Talent Show Auditions	PAC	Any	3:00-5:00 pm	-----
Thursday	10/22	Talent Show Dress Rehearsal	PAC	VF	3:00-5:30 pm	-----
Saturday	10/24	^{ss} Rising Stars Talent Show	PAC	VF	6:00 pm	7:00 pm
Tuesday	10/27	Collage Concert Rehearsal	PAC	All	3:00-5:00 pm	-----
Wednesday	10/28	^{ss} Collage Concert	PAC	All	6:00 pm	7:00 pm
Wednesday	11/4	District 6 Tenor-Bass Invitational	Andrews University	TB	TBD (Bus Provided)	TBD
Tuesday	11/10	District 6 Treble Invitational	PAC	TR	TBD	TBD
Friday	12/4	Holiday Tour	<i>Paw Paw Community</i>	VF	-----	-----
Saturday	12/5	Regional Honors Choir	WMU	Any	7:30 am	4:00 pm
Friday	12/11	District S&E Registration Deadline	-----	Any	-----	-----
Wednesday	12/16	Holiday Concert	PAC	All	6:00 pm	7:00 pm
Thursday - Saturday	1/21 - 1/23	State Honors Choir	Devos Place (GR)	Any	-----	-----
Friday - Sunday	1/29 - 1/31	Legally Blonde (Musical)	PAC	Any	-----	7:00 pm (Fri/Sat) 2:00 pm (Sun)
Saturday	2/6	District Solo & Ensemble	SW Michigan College	Any (DB & STE)	-----	-----
Wednesday	2/10	Pre-Festival Concerts (Two Concerts)	PAC	TB, DB, VF	5:30 pm	6:00 pm
				TR, STE, VF	7:00 pm	7:30 pm
Monday - Wednesday	2/22 - 2/24	District Choral Festival	The Chapel (St. Joseph)	All	TBD (Bus Provided)	TBD
Week of...	3/15-3/19	Elem. Recruiting Tour	PP Later El.	VF	-----	-----

Day	Date	Event	Location	Groups	Call Time	Perf. Time
Monday - Tuesday	3/22 - 3/23	2027-28 Advanced Choir Auditions	HS Choir Room	Any	-----	-----
Friday - Saturday	4/16 - 4/17	State Solo & Ensemble	Allendale HS	Any (DB & STE)	-----	-----
Monday - Tuesday	4/26 - 4/27	**State Choral Festival	Mason HS (South Site)	**All	TBD (Bus Provided)	TBD
Monday - Wednesday	5/3 - 5/5		TBD (West Site)	**All		
Wednesday	5/12	Spring Concert	PAC	All	6:00 pm	7:00 pm
Thursday - Saturday	5/13 - 5/15	<i>All-State Festival (for HC and S&E participants only)</i>	Michigan State University	Any	-----	-----

BOLD = Required/Graded Event *Italics = Tentative date; to be confirmed at a later time*

TB = Tenor-Bass Choir, TR = Treble Choir, VF = Voices of the Future
DB = DownBeat, STE = Select Treble Ensemble

\$\$Ticketed event (\$5). Acts as a fundraiser for the choir program.

**Required for all choirs that received Division 1 rating at District Festival event. Two sets of sites/dates are listed, but we will only attend one.

Fundraiser

The choir department will run a fundraiser through an online platform called TeamFi. It will essentially just consist of online donations, but through a very efficient, streamlined process. While most online fundraising platforms typically collect about 20-30% of fundraised money as profit, TeamFi only collects credit card fees, meaning that we retain over 95% of all money donated. This makes the fundraiser both extremely convenient for students/parents (no items or products to sell/deliver) and profitable for our program. The kick-off date listed below is the date that students will be logging in to TeamFi to enter contacts into the platform, while the open and close dates indicate the first and last dates the site will accept donations. Primarily, we are fundraising to cover program costs including: new uniform elements (replacing worn out items and supplementing sizing needs), invitational/festival registrations, pianist fees, and new music. Please note that the fundraiser is optional, but extremely beneficial to the success of our music program!

Kick-off: **Thursday, September 3**
Fundraiser Opens: **Friday, September 11**
Fundraiser Closes: **Friday, September 25**

Choir Awards

Each year, the choir program rewards its senior members. The students may fall into one of the following three categories. Students must be enrolled in choir their senior year in order to qualify for these awards.

- Outstanding Vocal Music Award:** Awarded to at least one, and up to three, senior choir members. The award goes to the most dedicated students, with considerations given to years in choir, years in auditioned/extracurricular choirs, and participation in honors choirs and solo & ensemble festivals. Presented at Senior Awards Night.
- Four-Year Choir Award:** Awarded to all seniors that participated in four years of choir (must be enrolled all three trimesters to be considered a full year). Presented at the Spring Concert.
- Senior Choir Award:** Awarded to all seniors that completed their senior year of choir. Presented at the Spring Concert.

Extra Opportunities

The following are not required to participate in the Paw Paw HS Choir Program, but they help supplement the music education that the students are receiving.

Regional/State/All-State Honors Choir

These choirs consist of some of the best high school singers in the state of Michigan. Students initially audition by sending a recording of themselves singing their voice part to a predetermined piece of music. There are three tiers of choirs, starting at the Regional level. Paw Paw HS students will be required to check in with Mr. Wagner to show their progress in learning their music. A \$15 fee and a signed permission form are required for the initial audition, and there are additional fees for each tier the student is selected for. Dates are listed below.

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| Regional audition deadline: | October 6, 2026 (online) |
| Regional performance: | December 5, 2026 at Western Michigan University |
| State rehearsals/performance: | January 21-23, 2027 at DeVos Place, Grand Rapids |
| All-State rehearsals/performance: | May 13-15, 2027 at Michigan State University |

Solo & Ensemble Festival

This festival provides an opportunity for students to work on their solo singing voices. Students must choose two pieces of contrasting style, and they should be classical in nature. If a student receives a high enough score at the District level, then they can move on to the State festival. A

Music with a Sacred Text

The Michigan School Vocal Music Association believes that the use of good music with sacred texts is vital to choral music education and to the choral art. MSVMA supports and has adopted the position statement of the American Choral Directors Association in regard to this issue. The following statement is printed with the permission of the ACDA:

Choral music educators recognize that choral music may fulfill diverse objectives. At one end of the spectrum are aesthetic education and artistic performance that can insure development of musicality and sensitivity. At the opposite end of the spectrum is pure entertainment. Between these two poles may be found opportunities to enhance knowledge and understanding through a growing awareness and perspective of history and art as reflected in great music. To achieve any selected educational objective, the quality of repertoire is of paramount importance.

An assessment of the quality of repertoire which can fulfill the highest objectives of aesthetic education necessitates careful examination of the relationship of text and musical setting. The wealth of choral literature which represents and reflects peoples, cultures, and traditions of all lands and compositional styles of all eras includes much music in which the composer has utilized a sacred text. The term "sacred" refers to all manner of religious belief and not only to the practices of the Judeo-Christian teachings. It is important that almost all of the significant choral music composed before the 17th century was associated with a sacred text.

To study and perform music in which the musical setting of a text is artistically accomplished is a highly commendable objective. While public school teaching objectives and criteria for repertoire selection should not include religious indoctrination, the selection of quality repertoire will invariably include within its broad scope music with a sacred text. To exclude from a public school curriculum all choral music which has religious meaning associated with the text is to severely limit the possibilities of teaching for artistic understanding and responsiveness. Such an exclusion has as its parallel the study of art without any paintings related to the various religions of the world, the study of literature without mention of the Bible, or the study of architecture without reference to the great temples and cathedrals of the world.

Since choral music with a sacred text comprises such a substantial portion of the artistic repertoire representative of the choral medium and the history of music, it should have an important place in music education. Its study and artistic performance have nothing to do with the First Amendment to the Constitution and the doctrine which advocates separation of Church and State.

*This statement has been endorsed by the
National Board of Directors
of the American Choral Directors Association*

Guidelines Agreement & Comprehensive Permission Form

PLEASE COMPLETE DIGITAL FORM BY:

Thursday, September 3

This year, the Guidelines Agreement and Comprehensive Permission Form will be completed digitally. Please use the QR code or link below to access the Handbook Form. Both the student and a parent/guardian must go through the form together and complete a digital signature at the end. This must be completed by Thursday, September 3 for a grade, and students will not be able to perform until this form is turned in.

PPHS Choir Handbook Form



Volunteer Background Check Form

Please fill out these forms and submit them to the office if you plan on volunteering, chaperoning, or helping during the school year.