



6th-8th Grade Chorus & Wildcat Voices Handbook 2025-2026

Welcome!

This school year in the WMS Chorus Department is going to be ***incredible***. We hope that you are as excited as we are to get started on some truly wonderful and challenging music, take advantage of new performing opportunities, make recordings, get involved with Junior Districts, and so much more.

The Weston Public Schools hold a rich and long-lasting tradition of musical excellence. We will strive to further such traditions and excellence with you. The success of our Choral Program begins in the elementary schools, gains momentum at the middle school level, and peaks with a display of vocal maturity, strong rehearsal and performance practice, and well-sung challenging repertoire in high school.

We emphasize the concept of ***ensemble***, or team/family. As a member of our team, you are making a commitment to do your part in making the Choral Program as successful as possible, both in rehearsal and at performances. We will fine-tune everyday life skills throughout the year as the rehearsal setting has been proven an excellent place to do just that. The utilization of social, cognitive, kinesthetic, expressive, logical, linguistic, cooperative, and comprehensive skills is what will make this year a success.

Membership in Chorus at Weston Middle School **presupposes that a student *wishes to sing, perform, and learn*, and that students and parents understand a high level of focus, maturity, and excellence is expected during rehearsal and performances.**

Within this Handbook, you will find information about evaluation, procedures, extracurricular offerings, dress requirements, mandatory dates, and other relevant materials.

After singers and parents have carefully read this document, please fill out the appropriate Commitment Form electronically by Friday, September 19, 2025.

Here we go!!!

Course Descriptions

- 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Choruses at Weston Middle School meet twice a week. Each chorus occurring during the regular school day is open to any student who enjoys singing and is willing to commit to a group performance effort. During rehearsals, students are expected to concentrate on greater refinement of previously acquired choral skills. Such skills include diction, articulation, dynamics, music reading, and producing an appropriate musical sound. Emphasis on part-singing and sight reading is also incorporated into the curriculum. Repertoire will be selected from varying time periods, styles, languages, and genres.
- Wildcat Voices meets once per week at Weston Middle School in addition to monthly rehearsals before school on Thursday mornings (X Block). This specialized vocal ensemble is made up of members who auditioned and were accepted into the group. Here, we rehearse and perform a wide variety of more challenging repertoire personalized for smaller vocal ensembles. Because we rehearse only one time per week, strong musicianship and focus will be required of you at all times in rehearsal. You will also need to practice your music on your own outside of rehearsal for our ensemble to be as successful as possible. We will be participating in new and fun gigs as well as a few recording sessions throughout the school year. Therefore, you must be willing to sing out, take creative risks, and always give 100%. It is expected that members of the Wildcat Voices audition for Jr. Districts.

Purpose of the 6th-8th Grade Chorus and Wildcat Voices

- To advance musicianship and life skills on an individual and ensemble basis
- To promote responsibility, leadership, and self-discipline
- To encourage lifelong appreciation and performance of music
- To provide opportunities for the diverse student population

Expectations and Assessments

- Grades in 6th-8th Grade Chorus and Wildcat Voices are based on the singer's willingness and work to achieve what they are capable of as an individual musician and as a positively-contributing member of the ensembles. There is **no penalty** if a singer cannot yet read music. Those skills will be improved throughout the school year. Gum chewing and the use of cell phones and laptops unless directed to use in rehearsal will negatively impact a singer's grade. ***The Chorus Room is a device-free room.***
- Assessment Breakdown:
 - **Daily Grade** 50%
(cooperation, teamwork, participation, preparedness, rehearsal technique)
 - **Performance Grade** 30%
(this includes timeliness and proper concert dress)
 - **Part Check/Comprehensive Musicianship/Concert Reviews/Sight Singing** 20%

Performance Attendance (All Groups) and Extra Rehearsals (WCV Only)

- There are **four mandatory** concerts this year. Attendance at each is **required**. If a singer misses a required performance due to illness or family emergency, a make-up assignment will be given. Notification of the illness or emergency must be given to Mrs. Cote/Mr. Eldridge in advance of the performance by a parent. Please make note of the extra rehearsals (for Wildcat Voices), concert, and snow dates in your personal calendars now. Dates are listed later in this Handbook. Please note:
 - Homework, sports activities, rehearsals for other shows/performances, birthday parties, vacations, and recitals, for example, are not considered valid reasons for being absent from a concert.
 - Parents of students anticipating transportation issues affecting their singer's concert participation should contact me prior to a concert. We will make every effort to help facilitate the singer's participation.
 - Singers who do not live in Weston may have the opportunity to stay at school

between the end of the school day and the extra rehearsal or concert.

Concert Dates (All Groups) and Required Additional Rehearsals (WCV)

- **Click this [link](#) to add the WMS Chorus '25-'26 Google Calendar to your own Google Calendar to easily see all concert dates for the whole school year on your Google Calendar!**

- Here are the dates also listed below:
 - **MS/HS Chorus Masquerade**
 - Wednesday, October 29, 2025, 7:30pm, WHS Auditorium
 - Call time 6:30pm (subject to being adjusted slightly)
 - **WMS Winter Chorus Concert**
 - Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 7:00pm, WHS Auditorium
 - Call time 6:15pm
 - **SNOW DATE:** Thursday, December 18, 2025
 - **Spring Sing**
 - Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 7:00pm, Field School Gym
 - Call time 6:15pm
 - **SNOW DATE:** Thursday, March 12, 2026
 - **WMS Spring Chorus Concert**
 - Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 7:00pm, WHS Auditorium
 - Call time 6:15pm
 - **Music Department Field Trip**
 - Thursday, June 11, 2026; all day event
 - **Wildcat Voices X-Block Rehearsals 7:35am-8:30am (does not apply to 6th-8th Grade Chorus)**
 - Thursday, September 18, 2025
 - Thursday, October 23, 2025
 - Thursday, November 20, 2025
 - Thursday, January 22, 2026
 - Thursday, March 5, 2026
 - Thursday, April 2, 2026
 - Thursday, May 26, 2026

- *Note: other concert and performance opportunities will become available throughout the school year (ie: caroling, nursing home sings, and town/sporting events, etc.). Singers are expected to be willing to participate at additional performance opportunities.*

Concert Dress

- **White, long or short-sleeved blouse (must have some sort of sleeve), long black skirt or dress pants, black tights, black dress shoes.** Scarves will be added for singers in Wildcat Voices - color of singer's choice.
 - Sample [black dress shoes](#)
 - Sample [white blouse](#)
 - Sample [black dress pants](#)
 - Sample [long black skirt](#)
 - Sample [long black skirt](#)

OR

- **White, long-sleeved button-down shirt, black dress pants, necktie for 6th-8th Grade Chorus - bowtie for Wildcat Voices, black dress shoes and dark socks.**
 - Students having trouble securing any of the above items should see us as soon as possible for assistance.
 - T-shirts, polos, leggings, jeans, sneakers, and Uggs are not considered acceptable concert attire.
 - Concert dress requirements do not apply to the Masquerade Concert.
 - Remember: 50% of a choral performance is visual. You are **standing** in front of your audience and **not blocked** by instruments and music stands. You must look **professional and presentable!** Represent yourself, your family, our ensemble, and our school well. Proper concert dress is part of your concert grade.
 - Sample [necktie](#)
 - Sample [black dress pants](#)
 - Sample [white button down shirts](#)
 - Sample [black dress shoes](#)

Part Checks

- Electronic Part Checks will take place throughout the school year and will involve making audio (**NOT** video) recordings of the music in our repertoire at that time.
- The purpose of the Part Checks:
 - To confirm that each singer is performing their vocal part properly (rhythmically, pitch-wise, with proper technique, musically, etc.)
 - To confirm that I have taught the repertoire correctly
 - To provide me the opportunity to hear each voice individually to confirm there is no evidence of unhealthy singing/vocal damage, especially since the singers' voices are changing.
 - The Part Checks will be assigned *well in advance* of their due dates.

Private Voice Lessons

- It is highly recommended that students, especially those experiencing the side effects of the changing voice, strongly consider taking private voice lessons in addition to our in-school rehearsals. In lessons, students have the opportunity to work on our Chorus repertoire, audition music, and/or any style of vocal repertoire they want including Broadway, classical, jazz, pop, etc. Additionally, signers will build on their music theory and aural skills, and continue to grow as a healthy, strong vocalist.
- [Click here](#) to access the 2025-2026 Private Lesson Program Sign-Up Form. Singers can also get a list of recommended vocal coaches from Ms. Cote or Mr. Eldridge.

Music Department Field Trip

- On Thursday, June 11, 2026, musicians in the performing ensembles at Weston Middle School have the opportunity to perform for a panel of judges and then spend a day at Six Flags New England. This day marks a great bookend to the school year. As this is a privilege and not a right, members of the performing ensembles must be considered "in good standing" throughout the year in order to participate. An ensemble member in good standing:

- Is a focused, positive, active participant in all rehearsals
- Completes all Part Checks

Attends all required concerts and is a full, positive participant at those concerts

News and Notes Newsletter (WCV and 8th Grade Chorus Only)

- A weekly newsletter is sent out to students and parents involved with Wildcat Voices and 8th Grade Chorus on Sundays. The newsletter is filled with important information, updates, and all relevant information regarding all of Mr. Eldridge's vocal ensembles in the Middle and High Schools. It is imperative that singers and parents read through the News and Notes each week.

Extra Credit Opportunities

- An online form will be made available to singers on Google Classroom to fill out as an opportunity to receive extra credit. Within the form, they may review a non-school-related artistic performance (concert, theatrical production, art show, dance recital, for example). Singers may use the form to review as many events as they would like for extra credit.

Parental Support

- Parental involvement is an integral part of a successful music program. Parents should attend performances, encourage students to practice at home, and become active in the WHS Vocal Department.
- Parent volunteers are needed to assist with after-concert receptions, ticket sales, supervision, decorations, etc.
- Our Weston Friends of Music volunteers and Chorus Liaison will be contacting parents via email to elicit support. We encourage your involvement in whatever capacity you can. There is a section of the Parent Commitment Form to sign-up for different volunteer opportunities.
- Thank you to Anna Berger for leading the Weston Friends of Music!

Weston Friends of Music

- Weston Friends of Music is a parent volunteer group that supports the Middle and High School music programs. Weston has one of the best music programs in the country and a big reason is the parents. If you want to get involved behind the scenes, Weston Friends of Music is the group to join. Join us! We welcome new ideas and suggestions for ways to enrich our music program.

Additional Ensemble Opportunities

- **MMEA Jr. Districts (7th-9th Graders)**
 - The Massachusetts Music Educators Association (MMEA) will conduct their annual Eastern District Junior High School Honor Ensembles Festival on Friday and Saturday, March 6 and 7, 2026.
 - Here, musicians from school in the Eastern District of the Commonwealth audition for performance ensembles made up of the top 7th through 9th grade singers and instrumentalists. Accepted sopranos and altos will be placed in either the Treble Choir or Mixed Chorus. Accepted tenors and basses will be placed in the Mixed Chorus.
 - Auditions will take place at Bedford High School on Saturday, January 31, 2025.
 - Audition materials are available on Google Classroom and more information will be provided as auditions get closer.
 - [Click here](#) for the MMEA Eastern District website.

Commitment Forms

- After singers and parents/guardians have **carefully** read this Handbook and have had any questions answered by Mrs. Cote or Mr. Eldridge, singers will fill out and submit the Student Commitment Form and parents/guardians will fill out and submit the Parent Commitment Form. Use the links provided or find the forms on Google Classroom. Forms should be submitted by **Friday, September 19, 2025**.
 - [WMS Student Commitment Form](#)
 - [WMS Parent Commitment Form](#)

Looking forward to an amazing year of singing!

-Mrs. Cote, 6th-7th Grade Choruses (coteh@weston.org)

-Mr. Eldridge, 8th Grade Chorus, Wildcat Voices (eldridgej@weston.org)