



Choir Handbook

2023-2024

Emme Siburt, Principal
Dr. David Young, Superintendent of Schools
Jay Lester, Director of Fine Arts
Wendy Weeks, Director of Choirs
Remel Derrick, Associate Director of Choirs

Table of Contents

1. Performing Ensembles and Courses	3
2. General Information and Policies	4-5
• Materials	
• Student Fees	
• Eligibility	
• Spring Trip	
• Supplemental Lesson Program	
• Communication	
3. Choir Uniforms	6
4. Rehearsal and Concert Attendance	8-9
Absences	
Make-Up Work	
Monday Night Rehearsals	
5. Grading Policies	11
6. District Policy for Lettering in Choir	12
7. UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest	12
8. Social Media Use	13
10. Choral Department Expectations	13

PERFORMING ENSEMBLES

Eagle Chorale: Eagle Chorale is a non-varsity tenor-bass choir composed of singers in grades nine through twelve. Students in this ensemble have considerable choral experience and above-average sight reading skill. Daily classroom activities will focus on the development of musical independence and also increased individual musicianship. Eagle Chorale members are expected to maintain an exemplary academic record, as well. This class is scheduled for first period and is conducted by Mr. Derrick.

Treble Choir: Treble Choir is composed mostly of ninth graders, but is open to any student with beginning to intermediate vocal and sight reading ability. This class is scheduled for sixth period and is conducted by Mr. Derrick.

Bella Voce: This advanced treble choir is composed of students in grades ten through twelve, selected by competitive audition. Students in this ensemble have considerable choral experience, above-average sight reading skill, and an exemplary academic record. This class is scheduled for second period. Bella Voce is primarily conducted by Mrs. Weeks, assisted by Mr. Derrick.

Concert Choir: This **auditioned** varsity mixed choir is for singers with well-developed tonal production, advanced proficiency in sight reading, and an outstanding academic and citizenship record. Repertoire includes mixed choir literature as well as treble and tenor-bass choir selections. Membership in this ensemble requires attendance at rehearsals outside of class time, held weekly on Monday evenings. Concert Choir is an appropriate placement for singers with extensive choral experience and skill. Primarily for upperclassmen, sophomores may be placed in Concert Choir, as well. Scheduled for third period, it is primarily conducted by Mrs. Weeks, and assisted by Mr. Derrick.

Pure Gold: Pure Gold is selected by competitive audition and performs a variety of repertoire, including contemporary a cappella, vocal jazz, and pop tune arrangements. This select ensemble performs frequently throughout the community, and serves as ambassadors for Abilene High School. Pure Gold members must also be members of the parent ensemble, Concert Choir. This class is scheduled for fourth period.

Other Courses of Study

AP Music Theory: The curriculum for this course is on a college level, and culminates in an Advanced Placement exam in the spring semester. This course is highly recommended for students interested in pursuing a college degree in music. Mr. Derrick teaches AP Music Theory.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Materials

Students will be provided a ½" black choir binder and a pencil. All choir members are expected to have their assigned folder and materials in hand for every rehearsal. Failure to do so will be reflected in daily grades. In addition, routine pencil and folder grades will be taken throughout the school year. Students are also expected to return their assigned folder to their assigned slot at the end of each rehearsal. Students will not be allowed to store folders anywhere but in their assigned slot in the folder cabinet. Proper maintenance of choral materials is a crucial component to each student's success in choir and must be strictly observed.

Student Fees

Each choir member will pay an activity fee of \$60 (or \$30 per semester). This fee can be paid all at once, or can be separated into two installments of \$30 per semester.

This fee covers the cost of choir folders, pencils, highlighters, t-shirts, uniform maintenance and dry cleaning, pre-concert meals, and various social events throughout the school year. We accept cash, or you may make checks payable to Abilene High School Choirs. Fundraising profits may also be used to pay this fee.

The cost of the choir t-shirt is included in the annual choir fee. Although this t-shirt is a required part of the uniform, and also considered a traveling uniform, students may wear the shirt whenever they wish. Students will receive a choir t-shirt when their choir fee is paid. **Choir fees must be paid by Monday, September 18.**

Choir Fee Scholarships

A limited number of choir fee scholarships are available each year, and are awarded through an application process. Once applications are received, applicants will be notified within 10 business days regarding their approval status. If awarded, students will receive a \$30 scholarship for their choir fee. However, students are still responsible for paying the remaining \$30 by September 19.

The Choir Fee Scholarship application may be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/ChoirFeeSchApp>. The deadline for these applications is September 18.

Eligibility

Members of the Abilene High Choirs are expected to maintain academic eligibility throughout the entire school year. Students who pass their classes benefit from the many rewarding opportunities the choir presents. Those who do not pass their classes lose out on these experiences and also let down their fellow classmates. Please be proactive; if you are behind in a class, communicate with one of your directors. We want you to be successful in your academic pursuits and will help you in any way we can.

Choir activities that require academic eligibility include the TMEA All-State Choir audition process, UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest, and Eagle Revue. Concerts with free admission (Fall, Christmas, and Graduation) do not require eligibility, but directors expect students to maintain grades throughout the year.

If a student in any AHS Choir fails a class for a six weeks grading period, they must pass every class at the next three week progress report to be reinstated. Academic performance will be reviewed at the semester. A student could be placed in another ensemble for the next semester based on unsatisfactory academic performance.

Student Travel

2024 travel plans for AHS Choir will be announced in the fall semester.

Private Voice Lessons

Year-long private voice lessons are encouraged for all members of the Abilene High Choirs and are especially helpful in the All-State Choir process and UIL solo preparation. Voice lessons will help students develop their individual vocal abilities and contribute to the success of your ensemble. Students may study voice through the AISD Supplemental Lesson Program or through a university voice teacher.

The cost of lessons varies depending on the teacher's level of experience and expertise. Scholarships are available through an application process. Contact Mrs. Weeks if you are interested in private voice lessons.

Communication

Parents and students are welcome to call or email when questions or concerns arise. Directors will make the best effort to respond within 24 hours during the week. If there is ever a financial question or a need of an extension to a deadline, please do not hesitate to contact one of the directors in the form of a note or an email.

In an effort to keep students and parents apprised of upcoming events, we will publish a weekly AHS Choir Newsletter. If you would like to have this newsletter sent directly to you via email, please sign up at tinyurl.com/NewsletterReg. Links to this newsletter will also be sent via Remind, social media platforms, and also posted on our website at abilenehighchoir.com.

The Abilene High Choirs will also use social media to help students and parents stay connected and informed of upcoming events.

Facebook – Like our page - Abilene High School Choirs

Instagram – Follow us @abilenehighchoir

Remind - All AHS Choir students are added to our Remind through Frontline. Please join additional Remind groups if they apply to you.

CHOIR UNIFORMS

Students will be issued a clean, formal uniform and choir t-shirt after the choir fee has been received. All students are expected to keep their formal uniform and t-shirt in good condition throughout the school year. The choir fee for the year (\$60) is due on or before September 18. Credits earned on accounts from fundraisers may be used for this fee, as well. Students will turn in dirty uniforms in the spring semester.

Formal Concert Attire

Members of AHS Choirs are issued formal concert attire to be worn at the Christmas Concert, UIL Evaluation, and the Graduation Concert. This concert attire will also be worn for TMEA Region Concerts and other events as applicable. Singers are issued a black empire waist formal dress or a tuxedo (pants, jacket, shirt, bow tie and cummerbund) for choir performances.

Considerations for dresses:

Singers should wear black flats with choir dresses as performances are often times of long periods of walking or standing. ***Flip-flops, tennis shoes, and sandals will not be allowed on stage.***

The proper care of the dresses is dry-clean only. Never wash these dresses in the washing machine.

Please refrain from wearing necklaces and bracelets for a performance. You may wear small studs for earrings. Hair should be styled away from the face.

Considerations for tuxedos:

Tuxedos are expensive to replace and great care must be taken to keep them in good condition. The entire tuxedo must be professionally dry cleaned.

Tuxedos should be worn with a pair of black dress shoes with long, black socks. Shoes should be kept well-polished and ready to wear with the tuxedo. ***Tennis shoes will not be allowed on stage.*** It is recommended that singers wear plain white t-shirts under their tux shirts.

Important Note to All Singers: Please avoid wearing cologne or fragrances, and please *do* wear deodorant. The goal is to create a uniform look that does not distract or hamper the choirs as they perform. *Plan to arrive and leave each performance wearing your entire uniform.*

Replacement Costs and Hold List

In case of loss or damage, uniform replacement costs are as follows: tux shirt-\$25, bow tie/cummerbund-\$20, tux pants-\$35, tux jacket-\$75, formal dress-\$100.

Students who move or relocate MUST turn in their uniform prior to being cleared to leave through the Registrar's office. Unpaid choir fees will result in a student being placed on the AHS Hold List, and will remain on that list until the fee is paid.

REHEARSAL AND CONCERT ATTENDANCE

Participation in rehearsals and performances outside of class time is part of the choral program at Abilene High School. Every effort is made to schedule rehearsals and performances with the least amount of conflicts as possible. Unlike activities in an academic class, it is impossible to make up missed activities that occur in a choral rehearsal or concert. **Attendance and participation in all concerts is mandatory and is a significant part of each student's grade in choir.** A concert is an evaluation of many weeks of classroom instruction and preparation. In order to receive full credit for a concert, including stage deportment, stage performance, and concert etiquette, a student must be present for the entire concert, not just the portion they perform. Students are responsible to keep up with dates and times of all scheduled activities.

Excused Absences
Highest possible grade is 100

1. Personal illness

If personal illness prevents a student from attending a class or other scheduled event, an [absence form](#) should be completed as soon as possible. You may also call Mrs. Weeks at 677-1731, *8956 and leave a message, or you may email your director at remel.derrick@abileneisd.org or wendy.weeks@abileneisd.org.

2. School Related Activity

In the case of an unavoidable school conflict, an [absence form](#) must be submitted at least two weeks in advance. Directors must be notified of school conflicts prior to the event. **Failure to communicate will result in a lowered grade.**

3. Family Emergency

A [absence form](#) should be submitted in the case of a family emergency. Parent contact will also be required. Every effort should be made to contact your director by phone or email as soon as possible.

Unexcused Absences
Highest possible grade is 70

- 1. Jobs** Since advance notice is given for concerts and extra rehearsals, a job is not considered an excused absence. Concert Choir members should always plan to have a Monday night rehearsal, and not be scheduled to work.
- 2. Driver's Education** Driver's Education is not considered an excused absence for concert or rehearsal attendance. If you are taking this class, schedule your afternoon class from 4-6 PM to avoid attendance problems.
- 3. Family Events** A student's or family member's birthday is NOT an emergency; therefore, absence from a scheduled choir event is an unexcused absence. Please plan ahead and communicate school responsibilities to your family and inform your directors in advance.

An absence from a concert for an unscheduled, non-school activity will result in a grade of zero.

Alternate Assignments for Absences

Following an absence from an evening rehearsal or performance, the student is responsible for making an appointment with their director to complete an alternate assignment to receive a grade for the missed activity. These appointments will take place before or after school.

- In the case of an absence from a concert, students will sing concert repertoire from memory, and sing a sight reading exercise.
- In the case of an absence from a rehearsal, students will rehearse the pieces covered in the rehearsal.

Directors are not responsible for reminding students about their alternate assignments. If the appointment requirement is not fulfilled, the student will receive a grade of zero for the activity. A student has a total of one week to complete the alternate assignment.

Monday Night Rehearsals for Concert Choir

In order to meet the needs of the challenging performance requirements of a varsity ensemble, weekly rehearsals outside of class are required. These standing rehearsals are from 6:00-8:00 PM every Monday night throughout the school year. Please do not schedule any activities on Monday afternoons and evenings, including work or driver's education classes. Students will be notified in advance if a rehearsal is to be abbreviated or canceled due to activities on campus.

Extra Rehearsals for Other Choirs

Occasionally, extra evening rehearsals are needed for students to be adequately prepared for upcoming events. These rehearsals will be announced to choirs with sufficient time for schedules to be accommodated. Please arrange for your transportation when rehearsals are announced. Notify your director if transportation is an issue for you so that they can assist. Not having a ride is not an excuse for a missed rehearsal.

Final Rehearsals

The final rehearsal before a concert or contest is mandatory for participation. An absence from any final rehearsal will result in a grade deduction and also forfeiture of participation.

GRADING POLICIES

I. Classwork 60%

- A. A weekly *Choral Rehearsal Skills* grade will be assigned based on the following:
1. Level of participation during class including on-task behavior, correct choral posture, punctuality to rehearsal, evidence of engagement in learning, management of materials.
 2. Fulfillment of rehearsal expectations.
- B. Attendance at additional rehearsals outside of the school day are also an assessment of skill. Participation in rehearsals outside of class is a necessary part of choir. Extra rehearsals will be scheduled with plenty of advance notice. Please refer to the choir calendar and the attendance policy.
- C. Written worksheets to reinforce musical literacy and sight reading concepts.
- D. Audio and video recordings will be assigned to determine mastery of TEKS. **Google Classroom** will be used for turning in these assignments.

II. Assessments 40%

- A. Participation in choir concerts is the test of all material learned in class over a period of weeks. As previously stated in the handbook, attendance is mandatory. See "Alternate Assignments for Absences" for procedures following an absence from a concert. Students will receive three assessment grades for performances:
1. Stage deportment - stage presence, conduct while moving on/off stage, proper entrance and exit of the risers.
 2. Stage performance - the execution of the skills and techniques learned, applied to each piece performed
 3. Concert etiquette - general success as an audience member
- B. Clinics with Invited Clinician
- C. Sight Reading Assessments (Audio or video submission).

DISTRICT POLICY FOR LETTERING IN CHOIR

A letter jacket or blanket shall be presented to students who have:

1. Completed participation in choir for two full years of high school, or
2. Participated in Concert Choir for two consecutive semesters, or
3. Performed with the TMEA All-Region Choir, or
4. Competed at the TMEA Area level, or
5. Competed in the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest.

In addition, students must perform in all scheduled performances and UIL Concert and Sight Reading Contest.

TMEA Audition Process

The Texas Music Educators Association sponsors a series of auditions culminating in selection to the All-State Choir. The rigorous nature of these auditions require commitment to practice at home, and also the responsibility to come to rehearsals at school. Private voice lessons are highly encouraged for all participants, but they are not mandatory. Individual coaching sessions with directors and student teachers are held after school.

The deadline for entry in the TMEA audition process is Monday, August 21. Please submit your form and entry fee of \$15 at this time. Access the entry form at <https://tinyurl.com/TMEAEntryForm>.

Solo and Ensemble Contest

All AHS choir students are encouraged to participate in the UIL Solo and Ensemble Contest on January 27, 2023 at Williams Performing Arts Center at Abilene Christian University. This event provides a student an opportunity to perform a song for a judge. We encourage students to work with a private voice teacher to receive individual instruction prior to the contest. Students receiving a division one rating on a class one solo or ensemble may advance to the Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest in Austin, May 27, 2024. Students participating in a state competition must notify a director by March 15 if they know they cannot travel to Austin for this contest. The same type of criteria exists for UIL Solo & Ensemble as exists for the TMEA process. If a student decides to remove themselves from a competition other than for a health problem or another UIL-related conflict, that student risks being placed in a lower choir the following year.

The deadline for selecting and submitting your *UIL Solo Form* is October 27, 2023. The form may be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/UILSoloForm>.

Social Media Use

Respect in and out of the classroom is necessary to maintain good relationships within the choirs and choral directors. Zero tolerance will be applied to any form of bullying, whether it is in cyberspace or in the classroom. Choir students are often leaders throughout the school, and are expected to maintain standards of conduct above and beyond their peers. As a member of an organization that participates in public performances, your conduct must be exemplary. As a member of the Abilene High Choirs, your social media use also should reflect positively on your school and the programs you are privileged to represent.

Choral Department Expectations

Participation in the Abilene High School Choirs is a distinct privilege and should be considered carefully. Through diligent effort, dedication, and a strong work ethic, students strive daily toward the highest standards of musical achievement. With this philosophy in mind, the following guidelines of behavior will be expected of all students:

1. Directors treat students with absolute respect; therefore, respectful behavior is reciprocated by students at all times.
2. Demonstrate both a positive attitude and exemplary rehearsal habits with consistency.
3. Stay informed of all due dates, concerts, rehearsals and events related to choir.
4. Resolve conflicts before they arise. Inform choral directors and other program directors of expected absences as soon as they are discovered.
5. Practice punctuality. To be **early** is to be on time, to be **on time** is to be late, and to be **late** is to be in trouble.