

West Hills High School Honors Choir 2011-2012
Director: Rachel Samuelsz Phone: 619-956-0561 Email:
rsamuelsz@guhsd.net

Welcome to West Hills's Choral Music Department. As a member of a choral music ensemble, you will have the opportunity to perform many different styles of music and learn skills that will help you develop a lifelong appreciation of the musical arts. Please read through this syllabus carefully and make note of my expectations so that we can make a commitment to excellence together for this coming school year.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

I. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the school year, members of each performing ensemble will be exposed to a wide variety of choral music. Standard choral repertoire includes study of both sacred and secular classical literature, in addition to some pop and show tunes. Each student will also be expected to learn basic music fundamentals, such as notational skills, rhythmic skills, and ear training skills in order to encourage sight singing and the ability to learn music more quickly and thoroughly. Music from around the world, in many different languages, will be included in this course of study. Music theory and appreciation will be emphasized through the learning of this literature. Choir endeavors to foster and develop an aesthetic sensitivity to choral music as an art form; to gain an understanding of musicianship and musical styles; to further develop the voice; and to work as a cohesive unit, each individual contributing their talents. **Perhaps the most important component in any of the ensembles will be the ability to work as a team in both small and large groups.** The student who is able to embrace the concept of "ensemble" in its truest sense will excel. Performing is a major component of this class. The material covered and the literature studied are directly related to this end and attendance at all performances is mandatory.

II. TEXT AND MATERIALS

A sight singing book/packet will be assigned to each student. In addition, each student will be assigned a numbered folder with music. The student is responsible for each of these items. Any book, folder, or music that is damaged or lost must be replaced at the student's expense. Students will be required to have a pencil at rehearsal at all times.

III. PARTICIPATION/PERFORMANCES

Honors Choir is an advanced auditioned only group. It is a co-curricular class, meaning that instruction occurs during the school day with performances and limited rehearsals on

occasional nights. There are also regularly scheduled sectional rehearsals outside of class (lunch and after school), as well as occasional lunch rehearsal for combined choir rehearsals. All of these activities are mandatory. Only severe illness and school or religious conflicts will be considered for absence from a mandatory scheduled event. Any exception MUST be worked out, in writing, with Mrs. Samuelsz no less than 2 weeks prior to the event. If the student is unable to attend a performance due to illness, the parent should call or e-mail Mrs. Samuelsz in a timely manner. Included in this packet is a comprehensive performance calendar for the year. Students will be held accountable for these dates and any future dates that might be added in a timely manner. Failure to attend a scheduled performance will be reflected in the student's grade and may jeopardize the student's future participation in the choral program.

IV. EXPECTATIONS

Because of the intense nature of this course, students must have an extraordinarily high level of commitment and self-motivation. Students must also be well-disciplined and able to work in large, as well as small groups with or without the benefit of an adult instructor. All parents are encouraged to contribute by volunteering as chaperones, acting as drivers for field trips and performances, and assisting in the coordination of performances, benefits, events, and tours as necessary.

V. OVERVIEW OF GRADING

40 % Participation and Attitude -Determined by the student's attendance, actions, and attitude while in rehearsals, performances, sectional rehearsals, on field trips, and while working with other students. Point System: Attendance/Participation +10 points/day; Tardiness -5 points /day; Disruptive behavior -2 to -10 points/day.

20 % Class Work/Assignments/Special Projects -Includes music theory lessons, homework, or assignments such as uniforms, deadlines, permission slips, activities, and related responsibilities. At other times of the year, this category includes auditions, written critiques, and extra-curricular assignments.

20 % Concert Attendance and Responsibilities -Includes promptness and attendance at all performances (concerts, festivals, competitions, field trips, and tour concerts) and dress rehearsals as well as other responsibilities (set up, take down, clean up, etc.). All performances are mandatory.

20 % Tests, Quizzes, and Vocal Exams -Given one to two times per grading period. Graded areas include basic music theory skills (written tests), sight singing tests, note accuracy, tone quality, breathing, diction, memorization, etc. (solo/ensemble tests).

VI. STUDENT BEHAVIORS WHICH AFFECT EARNED GRADE

A. Concert Attendance – Only exception; MUST be worked out, in writing, with Mrs. Samuelsz no less than 2 weeks prior to the event. If a student fails to attend a scheduled performance, the earned grade could drop as much as a whole letter grade. Only severe illness and school or religious conflicts will be considered an excused absence from the concert.

B. Discipline Plan for Unacceptable Behavior -Includes gum chewing, eating or drinking during class, tardiness, talking, cell phone text messaging, rudeness, inattentiveness, etc. *1st offense* -warning, loss of points *2nd offense* -loss of points, contact parents, possible detention, 1st Referral, and “U” for conduct grade *Further offenses* -further loss of points, Referral written to VP (upon 3rd Referral, student is dropped from class)

C. Excessive Absence -Faithful attendance is vital to the success of any cooperative activity, especially choir. Irregular attendance has a negative effect on individual student growth, as well as the overall group sound. Planned absences must be discussed with the director in advance.

D. Excessive Tardiness -Students must be in their assigned seats with their folders by the last bell. Students not in their seats will be considered tardy. After the 2nd tardy participation points will be docked and any written work will count for half credit. Excessive tardiness may result in being dropped from the class.

E. Uniforms/Grooming Fundraising helps provide for uniforms, purchase of a choir shirt, accompanist’s pay, and administrative costs for the program. The boys’ uniform includes a black tuxedo. They also need black socks, and black dress shoes to wear with their tuxedo. The girls’ uniform includes a black formal dress. Girls need **black close toed shoes** with no higher than 2-inch heels to wear with their dress. Students are expected to be neatly groomed at all performances with uniforms neatly pressed. Girls’ hair long enough to touch the collar must be worn in a fashion that keeps it out of the eyes or pinned back. Shorter hair must be kept off the face. Make-up should be used tastefully. Necklaces, bracelets, watches, rings, facial jewelry, earrings and tongue studs (girls and boys) are not to be worn. Boys should be clean-shaven with hair combed neatly back off the face. If these stated grooming standards are not met, points will be deducted from the student’s performance points and the student may not be allowed to perform.

F. Fundraising-Fundraising is an important part of a healthy choral program. To support the choir, students will have the opportunity to fundraise for the program.

VII. PRE-REHEARSAL PROCEDURES:

1) Upon entering, all food, drinks (other than water bottles), and gum must be disposed of,

or placed away from the risers.

- 2) Find your folder and begin to organize your music in the rehearsal order that will be posted on the whiteboard. This process will take a little time, so please plan to arrive at least a few minutes before the beginning of class to ensure that you are prepared when the bell rings.
- 3) 3) When the bell rings, please be in your assigned position and ready to begin with your music organized.

VIII. REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES & PROCEDURES

A. An effective rehearsal requires total involvement—mentally and physically. As a member of Honors Choir, the student must accept any challenge set before them and give 100% for the group every day. Participation in rehearsal and performances is

expected to be:

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1) positive | 4) willing to please | 7) attentive |
| 2) enthusiastic | 5) polite | 8) supportive |
| 3) cheerful | 6) accepting of new ideas | 9) hard-working |

B. Students are expected to use good singing posture at all times and have a pencil at each rehearsal.

C. Absolutely **NO** gum, food, or sodas are allowed on the risers. Bottled water is permitted.

D. Cell phones are not permitted on the risers during rehearsal. Phones must be turned **OFF** and left in the student's backpack or in their choir folder slot. Text messaging during rehearsal will result in an immediate referral.

E. Warm-up time must not be taken lightly. This time is extremely important in developing pitch awareness, blend, range, vowel formation, and especially in focusing the rehearsal.

F. Students must be in their assigned seats by the final bell ready to begin rehearsal and should not leave their seat without permission. Students will sing their assigned parts unless the director grants permission otherwise.

G. Students are urged to ask any questions of a personal nature before or after rehearsal, **NOT** during announcements, discussion, or rehearsal time.

H. If, for any reason, a student cannot sing on a given day, he/she must let the director know **BEFORE** class. If this practice becomes excessive, the student will be given a written assignment to make up the lost rehearsal points.

I. All grooming should take place at home or in the restroom and **NOT** in class.

J. Treat **EVERYONE** in the classroom (students, teacher, accompanist, choreographer, substitute) with courtesy and respect. Likewise, treat our room, furnishings, and equipment with respect

IX. SCHOOL WEBSITES

- A. westhillschoir.com-Our choir website will keep you updated with videos and photos of our choirs, along with news and information about the program, and its events throughout the year. Students will use this site on a regular basis to access assigned materials, view our choir calendar, listen to recordings of our music and log practice times etc. Parents will use this site on a regular basis to access forms and handouts and regular real time updates about our upcoming events on the calendar. You need to check our website on a regular basis for calendar updates.
- B. www.engage.com- This is an online grade book that both students and parents can access at anytime anywhere. All the student needs to do is sign up. It is my goal to update grades at least every two weeks.

X. FACEBOOK

- A. West Hills High School Choir facebook page- I will be using this page to promote the choir program to the community to encourage involvement at concerts at community events.
- B. West Hills High School Choir 2011/2012 group- This is a private group only for current choir students. I will be using this to communicate rehearsal times, concerts, and other special events. This will be a vital tool in communication. If you are not already a member, contact your choir president, Madeline Coman to be added to the group.