

VICKERY CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORUS

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

2022 – 2023

As the director, let me tell you how excited I am to have you join my family. The chorus at VCMS has set a standard of excellence that is admired by many schools in the surrounding area, and not just Forsyth County. Few choral programs – especially at the middle school level – have achieved the level of performance as the chorus at VCMS. I am proud to have the opportunity to continue that tradition.

Many chorus students discover that being in a choral group is like having an extended family, as there is a special bond that is created among people who make music together. I hope that you will remain in chorus your entire middle school career. Also, parents are welcome to assist in chorus activities and events. I want to encourage each parent or guardian to be involved with the program in some way.

Students who are involved in the chorus program should be aware that being a member of chorus is different from being in any other class. We perform. That being the case, your work is evaluated on two levels - the *process* (rehearsal or class time) and the *product* (performance). As we grow together in our rehearsal *process* remember that having a safe and supportive learning environment is our goal as we prepare the *product*—a wonderful performance for an appreciative audience.

Thank you for your dedication. I consider it an honor to lead students to discover their talent and the enjoyment of singing. Most information will be on the Chorus website, so from time-to-time, please check and see if I have posted anything new. If you have any questions or concerns you may contact me via e-mail, preferably, or call. I am looking forward to a great year!

Melissa D. Grizzle

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PURPOSE

The purpose of middle school chorus is to teach students music through vocal performance by learning the basic fundamentals of singing and music literacy. Each student should gain a lifelong interest in singing and an appreciation of music as an art form. Singing in choir also helps improve mental discipline and enhance social interaction. Teamwork and pride is developed through chorus.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Each student's skill, enjoyment and understanding of vocal music will be enhanced through active involvement in a singing ensemble. Guided by the Georgia Performance Standards, each of the following elements is taught on a daily basis and skills are built through continued practice.

1. Correct Vocal Skills
 - A. Pitch
 - B. Breath Support
 - C. Posture
 - D. Diction
2. Interpretation of the printed musical score
 - A. Pitch
 - B. Rhythm
 - C. Expressive Qualities
 - D. Musical Symbols
3. Recognition and performance of various styles of music
 - A. Historical Periods
 - B. Jazz, Rock, Pop, and folk
 - C. Music from other cultures
4. Sight Singing Skills
 - A. Reading steps and skips
 - B. Reading notes and rests

PERFORMING ENSEMBLES

There are 4 performing groups at VCMS. All boys will be placed into the same class at their grade level so they can be better assisted through the voice change process.

6th grade Choir

6th grade Choir is composed of all 6th grade students. They perform unison and 2-part music.

Mixed Choir

Mixed Choir is composed of 7th & 8th grade girls & boys in the mixed classes (7-1 & 8-1). They perform 3-part music.

Treble Choir

Treble Choir is composed of 7th & 8th grade girls in the all girls class (7-2 & 8-2). They will perform 3-part music.

Men's Choir

We have enough boys across all grade levels this year to possibly combine them into a Men's Choir for a song or two at the Winter and Spring Concerts (and maybe their own separate group for LGPE in March). They would perform 2- and 3-part music. Stay tuned for more info on this!

CHORUS UNIFORM

In chorus, we work together as a team, and just like any other team we have to dress the same in order to be taken seriously and look professional. The uniform can be rented for \$40 per year.

- DRESS
 - ✓ Black floor-length dress (included in rental fee)
 - ✓ Short string of pearls (included in rental fee) – no other jewelry is worn
 - ✓ Plain, black, closed-toe shoes with either no heel or a small heel
 - ✓ Natural make-up (optional), hair pulled back (required)
- PANTS
 - ✓ Black banded-collar dress shirt (included in rental fee)
 - ✓ Black tuxedo pants (included in rental fee)
 - ✓ Black socks
 - ✓ Plain, black dress shoes

A uniform fitting is scheduled during the first weeks of school during the school day. Some uniforms may need alterations. These are to be handled independently; however alterations are included in the uniform rental and will be reimbursed. Plan to bring the uniform rental on the fitting day or send it in earlier, as no student will be allowed to take a uniform home until the uniform rental is received.

Please reach out to Mrs. Grizzle if you need assistance or other options.

TRANSPORTATION

Students participating in chorus will have performances and rehearsals that require them to have transportation arrangements outside of regular school hours. The parent or guardian is responsible for getting the student to and from these rehearsals and performances. The director is available to assist any student who does not have a ride to find a parent willing to help out. Those arrangements should be made prior to the day of the event since concerts are posted at the beginning of the year.

The schedule for rehearsals and concerts are posted in the chorus room, on the chorus website, in the Chorus Handbook, and the chorus syllabus; therefore lack of transportation is not excused. Please make your arrangements early.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

The expectations in my classroom can be summed up using a simple acronym:

C – choose to participate

I should not have to ask you to be doing what the rest of the class is doing.

H – have your materials every day

Come prepared to class with your pencil and a good attitude.

O – open your ears for directions

You can't listen for instructions or sing if you are talking.

R – respect Mrs. Grizzle & other students

Being rude or disrespectful will not be tolerated!

U – use good judgment

Think before you act – you'd be surprised how much trouble that will keep you out of!

S – sing correctly

Sit up straight, have long vowels, try your best, cheer for everybody, and NO GUM!!!

GRADING PROCEDURES

Formative = 20%

Classwork

Students will have weekly assessments on various aspects of music including theory, performance practices, and aural skills.

Individual Vocal Assessments

Students will be assessed individually on his or her vocal ability. However, a grade in chorus should not be completely based on how well a student sings. After all, middle school students have voices and bodies that are changing and there are times their voices will not work correctly. For that reason, the lowest possible grade on an IVA is a 76, if it is attempted.

Students may be asked perform the following IVAs for the director throughout the school year:

- ✓ Major Scale
- ✓ Minor Scale
- ✓ Chromatic Scale
- ✓ Sight Reading

Summative = 80%

Concert Rehearsals & Concerts

There is no choir without performances. To miss a performance is the same as to miss a final exam in any regular class. All students are required to attend all scheduled performances and rehearsals, unless there is a substantial reason for a student's absence. Please see the attached schedule. If you have prior knowledge of an event that conflicts with a concert, please send in an excuse note. Students will be assigned make-up work. If the concert absence is an emergency, the student must bring in the form from the parent or guardian within TWO days of his/her return to class.

It cannot be stressed enough the importance of your child attending each concert. Each member is a vital part of the team and if a student is missing, the whole group suffers. Your child has chosen to be part of a performing organization. It is sad for a child to work diligently for weeks or months to learn the music and then not be able to perform it at the concert. Please refer to the attached performance schedule before planning any appointments or trips.

REHEARSAL & CONCERT MAKE-UP WORK

Since chorus is a performance-based class, all students are required to attend all rehearsals and concerts. Other school activities or not having a ride will not be excused absences from a concert. Make up work will be assigned to students who miss a rehearsal or concert for an unexcused reason. There are four reasons a student may be excused from a rehearsal or concert:

- ✓ serious illness
 - doctor's note required
 - parent/guardian note does not excuse absences from a concert for illness
- ✓ absent from school or sent home sick from school
- ✓ death in the family
- ✓ unavoidable family emergency
 - parent/guardian note required
 - "I didn't have a ride" does not excuse absences from a concert

Students who miss a rehearsal or concert for an unexcused reason can choose one of the following ways to make up an excused absence:

Choose one of the following topics and write a 500-word report. Papers will be graded on organization, grammar, and spelling. At least 2 resources should be used, and students should provide necessary information on the sources at the end of the paper (e.g. web address, title & author of book, etc.).

- 1. Choose a classical composer and write about his or her life. Some questions to consider include: Where and when were they born? What period of music are they in? What instrument did they play? What are some of the important songs they wrote?*
- 2. How does music affect intelligence? Are people who regularly play music smarter? Does it make a difference or not? Choose a side and defend your answer with research on the Internet and books.*

OR

Record yourself singing your voice part with the “piano only” track for each song you would have sung at the concert. Email these recordings to vcmschorus@gmail.com

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

It is important for every student, parent, and guardian to understand that being involved in chorus is a privilege because students choose to be in it. Failure to follow classroom procedures and instructions on a multiple offense basis may result in removal from chorus. It is the right of every musician to learn, and the right of every director to teach.

All policies and procedures of Vickery Creek Middle School and Forsyth County Schools as published in the student agenda apply in chorus. These also apply to field trips, off-campus performances, and before or after school activities.

If a student fails to follow any of the school expectations, the VCMS Discipline procedures will be followed.

VCMS CHORUS CONCERT EXPECTATIONS FOR PARENTS

1. Be on time! This includes having your student performer at the right place at the right time and being seated when the concert begins.
2. Eat before! Please do not bring any food or drink into the concert hall.
3. No talking! Please be respectful of the performers, the director, and those around you by not talking, whispering, or singing along during the performance.
4. No distractions! We want everyone to have a positive concert experience. Certain behaviors can be very distracting to performers, the director, and other audience members. These include (but are not limited to): making phone calls, texting, taking flash photography, and waving to your child while they are performing.
5. Stay together! Please keep all young children with you during the concert – do not allow them to roam the concert hall. Also, should they become restless or noisy, please remove them from the concert hall.
6. Silence all electronics! While many phones have very symphonic ringtones, they don't always fit with the musical score. Also make sure any recording devices are set to silent mode.
7. Stay put! Wait for a break in the concert to leave the concert hall. Unless you are carrying a crying or noisy child, in which case you should leave quickly and quietly please!
8. Applaud! It is appropriate to applaud politely when the performers and director come on stage and at the end of each selection. Please refrain from cheering or whistling.
9. Wait for the end! Do not leave as soon as your child's portion of the concert is over. All students deserve a full audience for their performances.
10. Expect the best! You might just be surprised at how good your student sounds when the others join in!

VCMS CHORUS CONCERT EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Come prepared! This includes wearing your concert uniform, being the right place at the right time, and knowing your music.
2. Watch the director! Focusing on anything other than the director will cause you to miss important performance cues and will be distracting to the director and the audience.
3. No distractions! This includes (but is not limited to): gum, candy, books, papers, purses, iPods, and cell phones. Your director will let you know if any of these items are needed (but don't count on it).
4. Be supportive of other choirs! As you know, it takes a great deal of courage to perform in front of a group and as VCMS Chorus members, we should all support each other.
5. Act like young ladies and gentlemen! During the concert do not talk, shout, laugh, or cause distractions. Think of the kind of audience you would want during your performance. Remember, you are setting the example for the other audience members.
6. Stay put! Do not leave the concert hall for any reason. If you absolutely must, wait for a break in the concert to leave or enter the hall.
7. Applaud! It is appropriate to applaud politely when the performers and director come on stage and at the end of each selection. Cheering or whistling is not.
8. Stay until the end! Do not leave the concert early unless the director has given you prior approval. Remember, listening to all groups is part of your responsibility as a chorus member and also part of your grade.
9. Represent! Be a good representative of the VCMS Chorus Department, Mrs. Grizzle, VCMS, and yourself. Even when you are not on stage, you are still performing, so be on your best behavior.
10. Have a good attitude! Come to the concert expecting the best and watch how well your hard work pays off!

VCMS CHORUS CALENDAR

DATES IN BOLD ARE FOR ALL CHORUS STUDENTS

Friday, August 19th

Uniform Fitting

VCMS (during class)

Friday, August 22nd

Uniform Fitting

VCMS (during class)

Monday, October 10th

Treble Choir Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Tuesday, October 11th

Mixed Choir Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Wednesday, October 12th

6th grade Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Thursday, October 13th

Fall Concert, 7:00pm

Cumming First United Methodist Church

Monday, December 5th

Treble Choir Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Tuesday, December 6th

Mixed Choir Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Wednesday, December 7th

6th grade Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Thursday, December 8th

Winter Concert, 7:00pm

Cumming First United Methodist Church

Thursday, March 2nd

LGPE Summative Rehearsal, times on website

VCMS (students missing this rehearsal will not attend LGPE)

Week of March 6th

LGPE, during school day

CFUMC

Monday, May 8th

Treble Choir Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Tuesday, May 9th

Mixed Choir Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Wednesday, May 10th

6th grade Summative Rehearsal

VCMS until 5:15pm

Thursday, May 11th

Spring Concert, 7:00pm

Cumming First United Methodist Church

EXTRACURRICULAR EVENTS

ALL STATE CHORUS – OPEN TO ANY 7TH & 8TH GRADE STUDENT

All State Chorus is an elite state-wide event for skilled singers in grades 7 through 12. Students must pass a regional audition in November consisting of a solo, scales, and sight reading. The cost of the first audition is \$20. Those receiving high enough scores must pass a second audition of selected music in January. Students are responsible for hotel fees and food during the 3-day event in February in Athens. Participating students will miss 2 excused days of school in February.

DISTRICT 9 HONOR CHORUS – OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS

Honor Chorus is an elite regional event for skilled singers in grades 6 through 12. Students who participated in All State Chorus the previous year have first preference of participating with remaining spots filled by invitation from the director. There is a \$55 fee for participation in the event, in addition to food during the 2-day event in Dawsonville, GA. Participating students will miss one and a half excused days of school in November.

FORSYTH COUNTY HONOR CHORUS – OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS

Forsyth County Honor Chorus is a local event for skilled singers in grades 6 through 8. VCMS representatives are selected by the director in January. There is a \$40 fee for participation in the event, which includes transportation and food during the one-day event in Cumming, GA. Participating students will miss one excused day of school in March. [This event was paused before COVID and may not be retarding yet.]