

# Bloomington High School Choir Program Handbook

(Last revised 2013)

Welcome to a new year in the Bloomington High School choirs. Your involvement in this choir program can be one of the most positive, exciting and rewarding activities you do this year. Involvement in choir is about friendship, responsibility, creativity and most importantly: music. Your choir experience can be whatever you make of it; if you give it everything you can, you will get even more back from it.

This handbook contains most of the important information you will need for choir this year. **It is crucial that you and your parents/guardians read this entire handbook.** It is your contract with the choir program. After you have read it, please sign the choir agreement and **return it to the director.** No one may participate in choir without this form. Thank you. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ryan Duckworth  
Choral Director  
Bloomington High School  
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## To the parents and guardians –

Welcome to the BHS choir experience. I'm looking forward to working with your young adults as we learn about music and grow as a choir. If your student is to be successful in such a positive and creative endeavor, they will need your full support. I have provided this handbook so you may review it with your student and understand what the program is all about. After you have read through the entire handbook, please sign and date the "Choir Handbook Agreement" so that your student can return it to me. Keep the rest of the handbook at home as a reference for later. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call me at (909) 580-5004 x3173, e-mail me-[Ryan\\_Duckworth@cjustd.net](mailto:Ryan_Duckworth@cjustd.net) or visit the choir room (511) after school. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you at our upcoming concerts. Remember, even if they never say it, **you are your child's most important audience.**

Sincerely,

Ryan Duckworth  
Choral Music Educator

## The Program—

### ⇒Goals—

The Bloomington High School Choirs are standards based, educational ensembles. While performance is an important goal for every choir, Bloomington High School choristers will also:

- Learn appropriate and healthy vocal technique
- Learn a variety of quality literature
- Learn and apply performance skills
- Work daily as an ensemble
- Understand musical notation and terminology
- Be familiar with the historical and cultural context of the music they perform.

### ⇒Descriptions—

**Chorus** is an introductory choir for any Bloomington High School student. This choir will perform on campus several times a year and may participate in various music festivals. No previous musical experience is necessary. Most students will begin in chorus before advancing into other ensembles.

**Chamber Choir** is an auditioned choir. The audition will consist of vocalization, aural recall (listening exercises), sight-reading, and a prepared piece. Students must re-audition each year that they wish to participate. This choir will perform on and off campus several times a year and will participate in various music festivals. Chamber Choir meets the University of California "F" requirement (Visual or Performing Arts) for admission to a UC school.

There are two sections of Chamber. One is for male and female voices (called **Mixed Chamber**) and the second (known as **Voices**) is for treble voices only (soprano and alto).

**Concert Choir** is an additional performance opportunity for students already in the choral program or for select students whose schedules preclude them from participation in one of the other ensembles. This class meets during 7<sup>th</sup> period and focuses on improving performance skills. Second semester this class provides the ensemble for the musical. Students in this class are encouraged to audition for a lead as well. Select ensembles such as Men's Ensembles and A Capella Choirs may be formed out of this class.

### ⇒**Music Consideration**—

Choir is a performance class. The Bloomington High School choirs perform a wide variety of appropriate and educational music. We will sing music from around the world in languages other than English, including Spanish, Latin, German, Italian, French, and more. Over the last several hundred years a great deal of quality music has been written and much of it comes out of church music. We will perform some songs that have religious texts. These songs have vast educational value and are by master composers like Bach or Beethoven or meet other educational criteria. If you are opposed to certain songs based on personal or religious conviction, alternate experiences can be arranged. If this is a consideration for you or your family, please speak with me as soon as possible so that I can prepare opportunities for you.

### **Financial Responsibility**—

As there are some on-going and recurring expenses for maintaining our uniforms and equipment as well as providing certain special opportunities for our students (honor choirs, guest clinicians, etc.), the choir will need to come together as a group to provide the necessary funds.

### ⇒**Fund Raising**—

There will be several fund-raising opportunities each year. All students in the choral program will be expected to help out in any fund raising effort. This should be considered as a part of the class. It is unfair for anyone to benefit from the services fundraising provides without doing their part to help raise funds. Thus, each member of the choir will be expected to help fundraise a minimum amount based on which choir(s) they participate.

Members of advanced choirs should also be prepared to raise funds for special festival trips. The cost of these trips varies greatly by destination. A trip within Southern California may cost approximately \$100 a day.

### ⇒**Fines**—

The student is responsible for any music or supplies provided for this class. If music is lost or damaged while checked out to you, you will be held responsible for the cost of replacement. The business office handles any replacement fines. All music and supplies must be returned in the same condition it was given out. Mark your music only with pencil and keep your music in a folder to protect it. Music varies greatly in price from \$2 to \$20.

Students will have uniforms checked out to them. It is their responsibility to have these uniforms altered for the best fit, but they are not allowed to cut the fabric of any uniform. Should these uniforms or any part of these uniforms be lost or damaged, the student will be charged for the replacement cost (\$50-100+).

## ⇒Concert Attire—

Each choir will have two performance costumes. The appropriate outfit will be announced well before the concert or event. Choir students are expected to abide by the school dress code both at school and at evening choir events. If you are uncertain that a piece of clothing may be against dress code, do not wear it. Students wearing inappropriate attire at a choir event may not be allowed to perform until they have changed into appropriate clothing. Further, earrings and other jewelry should not be worn on stage. If you must wear a piercing, it needs to be no larger than the tip of a pencil and you may be asked to cover it with make-up or a band-aid. Tongue piercings must be either clear or pink.

**Uniform** – This concert attire is provided by the choir program and may be checked out for each concert when necessary for a performance. This attire may include choir robes, formal dresses and tuxedos for the men.

**Informal** - Some performances do not require a uniform and students may wear appropriate school clothes. These must meet dress code guidelines and may not have any pictures, writing, or logos. Solid colors are preferred but patterns are also acceptable. Shoes should be closed toe, and heels any taller than 1 inch will make you very uncomfortable up on stage.

## ⇒Supplies—

Each choir member must have at *every* rehearsal

- A Pencil (no pens)
  - A Calendar Planner (The BHS Discover Agenda is fine)
  - A folder to hold any music that will be handed out
    - A folder rack is available for all students to leave their music in the choir room.
- However, students are ultimately responsible for their own music.

## Conduct & Discipline—

As a member of the Bloomington High School Choirs, you are a highly visible part of the high school community. As such, you are expected to conduct yourself in an appropriate manner both in class and out. Your actions reflect directly on this program and bring it either honor or shame. Any choir member failing to abide by school “discipline guidelines (Education Code 48900)” may be removed from the program. Your cooperation in this will determine how well the program can function.

Even though choir is different from most other classes on our campus, we are still a class. Like any other class, there are some guidelines to follow so that we can have the most positive and successful experience.

- Be present with both body and mind. Attendance is very important, but you need to be attentive too.
- Be on time in your chair with your supplies ready when the bell rings.
- Warm-ups are an important part of the class. They are vocal stretches. They help you develop as a singer and help protect you from vocal harm.

- Be quiet while other sections are rehearsing. They will return the favor. If you do not understand a section of music, circle it with a pencil. Then you can ask for clarification at an appropriate time
- Keep a positive attitude. A good attitude improves your ability to learn as well as makes the group look and sound better. You may not like every song we sing or every assignment we do, but if you keep a positive attitude it will make the entire experience better for everyone.
- Be respectful. Choir is a lot like a new family. We will perform better if we all get along and help each other. We must first respect ourselves before anyone else will respect what we do.

## ⇒Attitude—

Choir at BHS is an elective – meaning that you elect to be in the class. It is a choice, not a requirement. It is expected that every student act in an appropriate manner given the circumstances. Further, being in choir takes a certain amount of risk. It can be scary to sing in front of or even around people. As a choir we must provide the most supportive environment possible. Negative comments or inappropriate remarks must be kept in check. As the saying goes “if you don’t have anything nice to say, then don’t say anything at all.” This is especially true between choir members. Similarly, opinions about the class itself, the chosen music and other singers need to be handled in an appropriate and professional manner. As a teacher I value your opinions, as long as you share them at appropriate times. See me after class, before class or at lunch – tell me what is going well, and of course, what is frustrating you. I may not change what I do every time, but I promise to hear you out and give your ideas consideration. However, if you try to give your opinion at inappropriate times, I will not be able to take it into consideration. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

## ⇒Attendance—

Since choir is primarily a group activity, there is no way to “make-up” a missed choir class. Therefore, it is essential that you attend regularly and consistently. Consistent absenteeism or tardiness will not be tolerated. Further, **attendance and participation in every concert is required** including extra performances like graduation, festivals, or recruiting tours.

In the event that you must miss a required rehearsal or performance, you must communicate with me in writing **before** the absence. The decision to excuse an absence is entirely the decision of the director. Valid excuses may include extreme personal illness, hospitalization, or the death of a close family member. **Work is not a valid excuse.**

Any student unexcused from a concert will receive a considerable reduction in their grade. This reduction could be as much as three full letter grades (20%). Concerts should be considered as the mid-term and final for each class.

There may occasionally be an after school rehearsal for a concert. These will be announced well in advance. Attendance at these rehearsals is a requirement for participation in the concert. Since all rehearsals and performances are scheduled well in advance, there is ample time for you to adjust your work schedule. Likewise, if you have a planned family vacation that conflicts with a choir commitment, I must be notified within a week of the announcement of the scheduled rehearsal or performance. I am aware that things may come up at the last minute, but I expect you to keep an open line of communication with me. Please contact me if anything comes up! (909) 580-5004 x3173

Advanced choirs may be invited to perform off campus. These performances are an important part of the advanced choir experience. Off campus performances will be announced in class as far in advance as is possible. Any scheduling conflicts must be presented to me, in writing, within 3 days of the announcement of the performance. Valid conflicts can include work, family commitments, club activities, athletic competitions, or other scheduled events of importance to you or our family. However club meetings and sports practices may not be considered valid conflicts unless good cause is given. If a conflict is reported in writing within the 3 day window, you will be excused from that off-campus performance. If a conflict is not reported in advance, you will be expected to arrive at the event on time and be picked up in a timely manner. You must arrange for rides to and from events beforehand to ensure your ability to fulfill your commitments to these choirs.

### **⇒Academics—**

Students in the choir program are expected to make every effort to succeed in their other classes. Performance in your core classes is especially important. Certain activities that the choir will undertake are considered extra-curricular. These activities may include field trips, off campus tours and competitions amongst others. CIF regulations (the rules that govern extra-curricular activities in California) require a 2.0 GPA to participate in these activities. For this reason your GPA may be used to determine eligibility for participation in certain choirs or certain activities. I encourage you to take advantage of our school's tutoring program if you believe that your current GPA may be below the 2.0 mark (a "C" average.) See me if you would like help in connecting with these helpful resources.

### **The Calendar—**

A calendar of events will be available on our class website or in the choir room. It is your responsibility to know about any upcoming performances or special rehearsals.

### **Student Leadership—**

Each choir may have Section Leaders appointed by Mr. Duckworth to assist with the daily work of the choir.

There may also be leaders for the entire choir program including: President, Librarian and Choir Representatives. There will also be occasional "leadership" team meetings. These are open to any choir student who desires to actively participate in planning choral activities.

### **Choir Awards—**

Various awards will be given at the end of each semester. These awards include Bloomington High School certificates, BHS letters, choir program awards and national awards. These awards will be granted on the various criteria for each award and by the judgment of the directors.

### **⇒Lettering in Choir—**

Receiving a letter in choir is an important honor and requires commitment to the vocal program at Bloomington High School. Choir Letters can and will be given to students who fulfill all requirements of this award. You may only letter once, but letters can be awarded at the end of any year.

To receive a letter in Choir, you must receive 55 points. Points can be earned in a variety of ways. See the Varsity Letter Application in the choir room for a current listing of possible points. Once you have earned enough points, you must apply for a letter with me. Once your points have been approved, you will receive your letter at an appropriate time.

## **Grading—**

Grades are given as follows.

### **Daily Participation 40%**

This part of your grade includes attendance in class, having your supplies and active participation in daily activities including warm-ups, sight-reading and rehearsal.

- A Regularly in class, on time and attentive.  
Has pencil, planner and music at every rehearsal.  
Follows class rules and meets daily expectations  
Knows music that has been covered in class and can perform it solo
- B Regularly in class with only occasional lapses in attention.  
Usually has pencil, planner and music  
Follows school rules and almost always meets daily expectations  
Is familiar with music covered in class and can perform it with help
- C Frequent lapses in attendance or attention.  
Sometimes has pencil, planner and music  
Is not familiar with music and cannot perform it, even with help  
Has broken rules repeatedly or faced disciplinary action.
- 0 Frequent tardies and absences  
Usually does not have pencil, planner and music  
Does not know that we have music

### **Performance Attendance 20%**

- A Is on time and stays through all after school rehearsals and performances
- C Is late or leaves early from an after school rehearsal or performance without a written excuse.
- 0 Misses an after school rehearsal or performance

### **Musicianship & Performance Readiness 20%**

Each student must demonstrate growth in the area of musicianship. This includes identifying musical terms, correctly calculating rhythms and accurately sight-singing level-appropriate exercises.

- A Accurately sings all assigned exercises
- B Makes mistakes but can identify where they were made

- C Makes mistakes but still finishes the exercise
- D Cannot finish the exercise
- F Cannot finish the exercise even with help.

Every choir member will participate in a performance readiness test several weeks before a performance. These will involve singing alone or in small groups to demonstrate knowledge of the music and the ability to perform. Any student receiving a 0 on this test must retake the test and receive an A or B before the performance.

- A Sings accurately and with confidence all of the music selected for the test  
Can identify and define all the terms from the music
- B Sings accurately and with confidence most of the music selected for the test with a little help from another chorister or the teacher.  
Can identify and define many of the terms from the music
- 0 Lacks confidence or does not know the musical selection.

### Department Essay 10%

BHS requires every student to take a common departmental quarterly exam. Given the vast subject matter of the Visual and Performing Arts Department (VAPA), we have decided to have students evaluate their own work. In choir we will watch a video of our own performances and write an evaluation (3-5 paragraphs). The essays will be graded on the following rubric:

Criteria	4 Exemplary	3 Competent	2 Developing	1 Non-Performing
<b>Focus</b>	Recognizes and addresses several relevant criteria	Recognizes and addresses some relevant criteria	Recognizes and addresses few relevant criteria.	Recognizes and addresses no relevant criteria.
<b>Art / Music Vocabulary</b>	Exhibits rich VAPA vocabulary including language that is appropriate for the purpose of the essay.	Contains VAPA vocabulary that relates to the purpose of the statement.	Lacks consistent use of VAPA vocabulary that relates to the purpose of the statement.	Displays limited or no use of VAPA vocabulary that relates to the purpose of the essay.
<b>Supporting Ideas</b>	Contains specific examples that strongly support the analysis.	Supports analysis with details and examples.	Contains supporting details with little elaboration or detail.	Lacks support for ideas.
<b>Spelling, Usage, Mechanics</b>	Exhibits well formed sentences and no errors in usage, mechanics or spelling.	Have complete sentences with few errors in usage, mechanics or spelling.	Contains several errors in usage, mechanics and spelling, which cause distraction and confusion.	Contains numerous errors in usage, mechanics and spelling, which cause distraction and confusion.

### Other 10%

The final ten percent of your grade in choir involves various other activities. These may include written tests, worksheets, outside concert attendance, listening reports, fundraising and outside projects.

Any person receiving an F in choir may not be allowed to return for another semester.



## How to Succeed in Choir—

In life, communication is the key to success. I am not a mind reader, nor a psychologist. You must let me know when things come up. Let me know when things are going well and also when things don't work out. The best way to ensure your success in my class is to come to me with things before they become emergencies. Be pro-active, try to foresee problems and fix them before they become an issue. Know your schedule and make sure you are organized, then we can come to mutual agreements rather than having arguments. As long as we can communicate, we can work through anything.

## For The Students—

I am very excited about our choirs this year and I really look forward to seeing how far we can go. The possibilities are endless and we have the potential to achieve so much. I believe that together we can accomplish our goals and continue to grow, not just this year, but in the years to come. I want you to be proud of this program. Ten years from now you can look back on your time spent in choir with happy memories and the pride of knowing that you were a part of something great. My promise to you is that I will give you everything I can to help you succeed. All I ask in return is the same thing. Together we can achieve new heights!

Thank you for reading the entire Choir Handbook. This handbook acts as a contract between yourself and the choir program. Please sign and date the “Choir Handbook Agreement Form” and return it to the director.