



Newport Mill Middle School Choral Handbook

2019 - 2020



Robert Bowden - Director

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Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome back to school for the 2019-2020 academic year! I am happy to be returning to Newport Mill Middle School and am eagerly looking forward to the musical possibilities that lie ahead of us. I will continue to uphold the standard of excellence developed by Mr. Gonzales and Mr. Thomas, and I'm very pleased that you have chosen to be a part of the NMMS choral program!

It is the purpose of the choral ensembles at Newport Mill to provide an avenue of performing experience through which our students can begin to understand and appreciate music as an art, a science, a discipline, a mode of expression, and a source of enjoyment. While learning to develop specific musical skills, students will explore the relationship music has to math, history, science, cultural geography, and literature.

This handbook has been prepared to help you in understanding the expectations and goals of the vocal music program here at Newport Mill. It contains a description of specific choral music objectives, a list of essential materials for class, and rehearsal & concert procedures. It also details the tentative concert schedule, the grading policy, and details about fundraising and the spring trip. Each student is responsible for a thorough understanding of the contents of this handbook and should refer to it as needed throughout the rest of the year. If you misplace this booklet, you should be able to find the information online via myMCPS and our website (NMMS-Chorus.weebly.com), or can obtain an additional copy in class.

One of the greatest contributions that parents can make to their students' success, and to the success of the music program, is to become actively involved. This involvement can consist of encouraging rehearsal attendance, attending concerts, helping with fundraising or various other tasks. Please consider lending a hand this year, if able.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the choral music program, please feel free to call me at (301) 929-2244, or I can be contacted by email at Robert_Bowden@mcpsmd.org.

Finally, please read this handbook carefully, sign and date the last page, and return it to me by Friday, September 13th.

I'm looking forward to an exciting and musically rewarding year together!

Sincerely,

Robert Bowden
Choral Director

Choral Music Department Goals

The goals of the NMMS Choral Music Program are:

- To provide a setting in which students can learn about music through performance.
- To develop self-discipline, character, and cooperation.
- To help students discover the motivation to continue with music after leaving NMMS.

During the year, we will address and incorporate the State and National Standards for Music while covering course content including proper vocal production, sight-singing, and the study and performance of a wide variety of choral music styles.

Newport Mill Middle School offers four choruses:

- **Beginning Chorus:** An ensemble for most new chorus students, male and female.
- **Young Men's Chorus:** An Ensemble for males, grades 7 – 8.
- **Intermediate Treble Chorus:** An ensemble for females, grade 7 – 8 who are still developing singing technique and musicianship skills.
- **Advanced Treble Chorus:** An ensemble for females, grade 7 – 8 who exhibit proper singing technique and musicianship skills.

Performance Skills

The skills below are those needed to be a successful choral musician. These skills align with the Maryland State Department's Essential Learner Outcomes for Middle School Music.

The successful music student actively does the following:

- Watches the conductor
- Uses good posture, diction and breath support
- Matches pitch as given from the piano or conductor
- Sight-reads rhythmic passages with at least 95% accuracy
- Learns melodies assigned to his/her voice part
- Memorizes concert material by practicing at school and home
- Understands and identifies fundamental musical signs & symbols
- Participates in all required rehearsals and performances
- Demonstrates continued improvement throughout the school year in the following areas of musicianship (tone quality, dynamics, phrasing, intonation, pitch discrimination, diction, breath support, and blend with the ensemble)



Class Materials

Supplies: (The following supplies are needed for each class period.)

- A sharpened pencil with eraser
- A two-pocket folder with prongs

Class Materials (Continued)

Music: The school provides printed music from which the students will rehearse. Each student will be held responsible for the condition of music issued to him/her when it is returned.

Students are responsible for the cost of replacing any lost or damaged music or folders.

In order to practice at home, students will be allowed to take chorus folders home; however, it is vital that every student returns his/her music to the appropriate cabinet daily. If a student does not bring the folder and music to rehearsal, he/she will forfeit the musicianship points given that day.

Concert attire is worn at all performances unless otherwise instructed. These clothing requirements are the responsibility of the student and parents/guardians.

Uniforms: Beginning Chorus

<i>Young men will be required to wear:</i>	<i>Young women will be required to wear:</i>
Long sleeve collared button up white shirt	White dress shirt or blouse
Black dress slacks (no jeans please)	Black dress skirt (ankle or floor length)
Black socks	OR black pants (no jeans please)
Black dress shoes (no tennis shoes)	Black dress shoes (no tennis shoes)
Bow tie (provided by NMMS)	

Uniforms: Men's Chorus**Intermediate AND Advanced Treble Chorus**

<i>Young men will be required to wear:</i>	<i>Young women will be required to wear:</i>
Long sleeve collared button up black shirt	Black dress shirt or blouse
Black dress slacks (no jeans please)	Black dress skirt (ankle or floor length)
Black socks	OR black pants (no jeans please)
Black dress shoes (no tennis shoes)	Black dress shoes (no tennis shoes)
Bow tie (provided by NMMS)	

If these guidelines cannot be met, contact me ASAP and we can make some arrangements as needed. Thanks!

Fundraising

The NMMS Choral Music program will be participating in several fundraising activities throughout the year. There are many costs that go into operating a music department and the school system gives us only a portion of the money needed to cover those costs. Money raised via fundraising will go toward the following expenses:

- Choral accompanists
- Field trip expenses (defraying cost of transportation/etc.)
- Spring trip support (students can defray the cost of their trip)
- Choral music and supplies

Note: Finances should never affect a student's participation in choral activities. In the event that finances become a concern, please contact the director, as arrangements can often be made in these situations.

Rehearsal Procedures

To reach our potential as a performing ensemble, we must rehearse efficiently and effectively. Following these guidelines will help students achieve that goal:

1. **Be ready to perform before the late bell rings.** Put your books and items on or below the side tables and get your music folder out of the cabinet. Have your music and a pencil ready so we do not waste time getting those items during rehearsal. Sharpen pencils before the bell, please.
2. **There will be no food or drink in the choral room.** This includes gum, candy, and sodas.
3. **No talking during rehearsal.** Except when singing, or asking a question, you should be listening quietly at all times during the rehearsal. This is especially true when a section other than your own is singing. Much of what is rehearsed will also apply to your part, so listen and learn.
4. **Participate to the best of your ability.** Your job is to sing. My job is to teach you how to sing better. The more you practice and participate, the stronger you'll become as a singer. Analyze and evaluate your performance and that of the group. Help your neighbor, problem solve, or do anything that helps our chorus become better – **YOU** are important!
5. **Watch and listen to the conductor.** All chorus members should be ready to sing as soon as the conductor starts rehearsal. Hold your music up and in front of you so that you can see the conductor. Respond to what he asks you to do musically. When you stop rehearsing a passage of music, listen to the comments of the conductor. This feedback will specifically tell you what was good and not-so-good about the rehearsed piece. Listen quietly and learn.
6. **Respect yourself and each other.** Each member of the chorus is important. Some members of our group are blessed with wonderful musical talent, some with a keen intellect, and some with a strong work ethic. Everyone has something to contribute. Do not belittle anyone for his or her efforts. Help one another to become stronger singers, and thereby help us become a stronger group!
7. **Handle the music with care.** You are responsible for the condition of the music and folders assigned to you. Please help us in saving this music for the next group of singers to use. If music is lost or is damaged, the student is responsible for the cost of replacing the music.
8. **Notify the teacher if sick.** Let the director know of any personal illness that may make proper singing difficult, imprudent or impossible.
9. **Ask questions when needed.** Please ask me if you need any additional clarification about anything during class, or if you think additional help is warranted.
10. **Have fun.** This isn't an academic class where you sit by yourself waiting for the next big test. Our concert is our "test" and you've got a classroom full of friends to help you pass it! Enjoy the class and have fun singing! It's one of the biggest benefits of music.



Concert Procedures

“Concerts are not only a source of personal and aesthetic satisfaction, but also an important part of the learning cycle. They are critical to the assessment process in that they demonstrate how well the student has achieved the objectives of the course. For these reasons, choral students are required to participate in a number of evening and/or weekend performances.

. . . Performances are covered by the same attendance requirements as class sessions. “

-MCPS Program of Studies – General/Choral Music

- Concerts are the culmination of your learning experience in chorus class. Because of this, **attendance at all chorus performances and rehearsals is mandatory**. Students will be evaluated and given a grade for each performance. If a student is ill or where extenuating circumstances apply, the child will be considered excused from the activity upon notification from the parent or guardian. (**I would ask that you notify me directly before the performance, but no later than twenty-four hours after the performance**). If the student has been excused from a concert, the points may be earned by completing an alternative assignment. It will be the responsibility of the student to get the assignment from me as soon as possible. Should the student fail to complete the assignment, or if an absence is unexcused, the points will be forfeited.
- **Please note that doctor appointments, sports events, lack of transportation, etc. may not be considered legitimate reasons for missing performances.** Concert and rehearsal schedules are made available months ahead of time, to allow for families and individuals to plan accordingly. Arrangements can be made if a ride is not available. Please review the schedule and mark your calendars or make arrangements to attend these dates. Contact me as soon as possible so that I may assist you in finding a solution to any conflicts. Thanks for your understanding in this matter.
- Students who have mastered the music by practicing and taking part in rehearsals will be allowed to participate in the performances. Students who have not mastered the music through daily participation in class will not be allowed to perform, but will be assigned an alternative assignment such as an essay. Each member of this group is important so be responsible. Contribute to the group; don't detract from it. **Due to the nature of this ensemble, failure to comply with the rehearsal procedures and concert responsibilities may result in removal from Chorus.**
- Concert behavior is extremely important, regardless of whether a performance is at the school or another location. At these times, the chorus represents Newport Mill Middle School and the community. Be appropriately attired, be on time for warm-ups, and demonstrate a high degree of professionalism. Students are expected to display a sense of pride for the hard work they have put forth and respect the efforts of others. Your conduct should enhance the performance, not distract the audience. Disruptive behavior will result in a lowered concert grade, and suspension of concert performance opportunities for that individual.



Practice Sheet Policy

It is important that every effort be made to practice daily, especially on the days when, for any reason, there is no chorus rehearsal in school. It is strongly suggested that at least 45 minutes of practice fall on the weekend. Improvement will be greater if the student continues practice and review over the weekend. A practice routine that conveniently suits the family schedule is always best. Students improve steadily when practice occurs on a regular basis at a set time of day. Also, students will benefit more from practicing for a reasonably comfortable length of time rather than cramming practice into two or three very long sessions.

To assist with establishing a practice routine, all students are required to turn in a completed practice sheet and to pick up a new sheet on the first day of every week. Each week will begin on Monday and end on Sunday. It is the responsibility of the student to fill out the sheet and turn it in at the appropriate time.

The sheet will include a musical practice goal for the week, a question or activity regarding choral musicianship, and a chart to log the week's practice minutes. Students are responsible for answering the question(s) included on each week's practice sheet. These questions are designed to review important information about musicianship and the choral music program, and will allow students another opportunity to practice their writing and thinking skills.

Likewise, students are responsible for directing their practice time toward completing the musical goal each week. The student will have opportunities to practice individually during school hours or after school in the practice room. The days and minutes practiced should be marked on the sheet, and then the student should add his or her signature. When the practice sheet has been completed with both practice information, and the appropriate signature, it is ready to be turned in. **Practice sheets should be turned in on the next school day (usually Monday).** The director will hand back the practice sheet after it has been graded and recorded.

It is extremely important that students take time to practice each week, as they will be demonstrating their mastery of the performance goal during biweekly in-class assessments.

The student signature must appear on the practice sheet when it is turned in. Without the signature, no points will be awarded for the week.

Practice sheets must be turned in on time. They will only be accepted one day late and will receive one letter grade lower.



Grading and Policy and Procedures

Overall:

Chorus grades will reflect individual achievement of the MCPS performance indicators for each marking period. There will be two grading categories in Music:

Homework	Assessments
Could include – Practice sheets, rehearsal skills, general musicianship, worksheets or other assignments used to practice & develop musicianship.	Could include – Written assignments, practice sheets, skill demonstrations, quizzes, in-school or after-school rehearsals, concert performances and critiques.
Graded as 10% of the marking period grade.	Graded as 90% of the marking period grade.

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

$$\text{Final Grade} = 10\% \text{ Completion} + 90\% \text{ Formative Assessments}$$

- Students are assigned a letter grade based on the following scale:
A = 89.5-100%, B = 79.5-89.4%, C = 69.5%-79.4%, D = 59.5%-69.4%, and E = 0-59.4%.
- Some assignments will be scored for completion only. These assignments collectively will represent 10% of the final marking period grade.
- Formative assessments reflect mastery of the MCPS indicators. Formative assessments have varying point values, based on the expectations of, difficulty of, and time spent on each assignment. Formative grades include any assignment/assessment graded for accuracy.
- Students may not be assigned a grade lower than 50% on an assessment attempted.
- Students will be provided the opportunity to retake or resubmit a minimum of two formative assessments per marking period. The formative assessments available for retake/resubmission will be decided on the discretion of the teacher. The teacher may require the student to participate in re-teaching activities prior to retake/resubmission. The grade earned on retake/resubmission will *replace* the original grade.
- There are **NO** extra credit or bonus assignments.

Learning Skills:

Learning skills in music will be divided up into the following two categories:

- Participation/Rehearsals: This will include participation in class and rehearsal activities, being engaged in learning, relaying information, behaving in a mature, responsible fashion, giving ideas, and using feedback.
- Assignment completion: Whether a student is completing assigned tasks such as practice sheets, classwork, homework, and other exercises.

Accommodations:

I will continue to provide students with documented accommodations for instruction, assessment and learning skills as required by law.

If you have any questions about the Chorus grading policy, as detailed above, please contact me by phone or email and I'll be happy to discuss the situation with you, answer any questions, and resolve any differences. Thanks!

Spring Trip

The Newport Mill Middle School Music Department coordinates a spring trip at the end of May/beginning of June. The ensembles will be traveling to Hershey Park and performing in musical competitions. Further information regarding times, & costs will be sent home at a later date.

All students will have the opportunity to raise money to help cover the cost of their trips.

All students must be academically eligible to participate in the trip. Also, only students with no disciplinary referrals will be allowed to attend the trip. Please give your best effort in all of your classes so that you can join us for this exciting experience!

If all available spots on the trip are filled, a waiting list will be started. Students will be added to the waiting list in the order in when they turn in paperwork. Likewise, students from the list will be added to the trip, if spots open up, in that same order.

Important note: If a student fails a class or is removed because of behavior problems after paying the trip cost, no refunds will be issued because monies will have already been sent to the travel company to pay for trip expenses.

Communication

I believe that good communication between parents, singers and the school is very important. Therefore, I'll be using several methods of providing information to everyone:

- MyMCPS and our website (NMMS-Chorus.weebly.com) will be used to provide most needed information including grades, assignments and updates and reminders.
- Keep with Chorus happenings through Twitter (@NMMS_Chorus) and Instagram (NMMS_Chorus)!
- Several newsletters will be sent home and available online.

And as always, I'll be available for questions or concerns at (301) 929-2244 and via email at Robert_Bowden@mcpsmd.org.

Note to Parents

Parent/Guardian volunteers are a crucial element of our continued success, and there are many ways that you can lend a hand! Here are some opportunities to help our program:

- Attend as many Newport Mill performances as possible.
- Contact the Director to express your concerns/opinions.
- Encourage at-home practice, or arrange for private instruction.
- Plan around the Choral Performance schedule when possible.
- Return the volunteer form at the end of the handbook!



I sincerely thank you in advance for your help this year. Your efforts are invaluable!

Chorus Handbook Form

Please sign and return to Mr. Bowden by Friday, September 13, 2019.

We have read the Chorus Handbook and understand the policies and procedures of the Newport Mill Middle School Choral Program. The Grading Policy, Practice Sheet Policy and Performance Calendar have also been reviewed and all participant expectations are understood.

(Print Student's Name)

(Grade)

(Student's Signature)

(Print Parent's Name)

(Date)

(Parent's Signature)

(Parent Email Address – Please Print)

(Phone Number)



Parent volunteers play a vital role in the success of the choral music program. If you are interested in becoming a choral music volunteer, please indicate the way in which you would like to assist us. Your help will be greatly appreciated!

_____ I am interested in being a choral music volunteer.

I would like to help in the following ways:

_____ Piano Accompanist

_____ Chaperone (field trips, festival, etc.)

_____ Volunteer Coordinator (Help keep parents informed/involved)

_____ Fundraising Assistance (organizing, distributing, etc.)

_____ Refreshments/decorating for concerts

_____ Other? (Do you have a unique talent? Play an instrument? Know sign language? Specialize in dance? Or other ideas? Your partnership with us is welcome).

Please specify: _____

