

Kernodle Middle School



Chorus Handbook

2023-2024 School Year

Mr. Nicholas Shoaf - Director of Choirs

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the choir program at Kernodle Middle School for the 2023-2024 academic year. I believe your membership in the chorus will increase your love for singing, learning music, and contributing to a positive future! Let's focus on having fun and building our music knowledge and skills.

This handbook has been constructed for the KMS chorus members and their parents with the goal of communicating standards, policies, and expectations of the music department. We are committed to improving the high quality of the chorus program as well as increasing the membership and excitement surrounding the KMS choirs. Take pride in this program! It will be your hard work that will make this another excellent memorable year!

COURSE STANDARDS

1. Singing alone and with others a varied repertoire of music.
2. Reading and notating music (rhythms, solfege, note names, vocabulary, musical terms etc.)
3. Listening to, describing, analyzing, and evaluating music and music performances throughout the year.
4. Understanding the relationships between music and the other arts (band, orchestra, art), its history, its science, its math, its various languages and culture.
5. Nurturing a positive and equitable attitude of excellence, growth and reflection.
6. Creating, Performing, and Responding to Choral and Vocal Music.

*If you would like to see NC essential standards addressed, reach out to Mr. Shoaf. Essential standards will also be included with each assignment on canvas. National Standards for Music will also be used in classroom instructional goals.

COURSE FOCUS

The primary focus of each chorus is to challenge students to become outstanding vocal musicians year after year! Concerts are viewed as the culmination of hard work rehearsing as well as the application of all the concepts you will learn in class! Students in **6th grade** are required to participate in **only two performances**, the **Winter and Spring** concert, and will receive a test grade for participation! Students in **7th and 8th grade** are required to participate in **four performances**, the **Fall, Winter, MPA Preview, and Spring** concerts, and will receive a test grade for participation! All other events/performances are optional. The musical literature selected and studied throughout the course of the year serves as the major tool through which most of the music concepts will be taught. Music selected will represent a wide variety of musical styles and historical time periods. This literature combined with a sequence curriculum of music knowledge, music theory, vocal development, and critical thinking skills will comprise the bulk of classroom activities during each chorus class. We will build knowledge and skills through the musical literature chosen.

There will also be other opportunities outside of the daily chorus class to participate in vocal music experiences. Be on the lookout from Mr. Shoaf for info about vocal ensembles outside of regular school hours.

Welcome to the KMS Cougar Chorus. Here are the expectations parents and students will need for the 2023-24 school year. You will receive progress reports for your own student, but announcements about chorus news etc. will be on canvas and through email. If at any time you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me via email also with a contact number and I will get back with you within 24 hours.

Mr. Shoaf's contact information: shoafn@gcsnc.com

Your Contribution

Chorus members: a 1/2 to 1 inch black binder for **all chorus members**. Each chorus member is required to order a Chorus T-shirt. More information will be sent out later in the semester. Chorus members are allowed to wear the heather gray Chorus T-Shirt from the previous years in chorus.

NOTE: Donations of Kleenex, Hand Sanitizer and Clorox Wipes, Paper Towels, Band-Aids are appreciated. Being a member of the KMS chorus implies certain responsibilities, duties, and privileges. Everything from your personality, family, morals, neighborhood, and friends in your life shape who you are! Therefore, doing your best each day and recognizing the contributions of others is extremely important, not only for the high morale of the group, but also for high quality rehearsals and performances. We function as a team! There is a saying that says, "A choir is as good as its weakest member!"

Grading Policy (Subject to change for 2023/2024 year)

Chorus students will earn grades based on the following criteria:

1. Performance Assessments 20%

- a. Engagement in singing each day- failure to sing will result in a ZERO for the day.
- b. Listening and following directions the first time they are given. I will not talk over student's chatter, sounds, whispers, etc. Others cannot hear if students are doing this.
- c. Focus and concentrate on the lesson, looking at music, vocal exercises, etc. during class/rehearsal.
- d. Demonstration of teamwork, good work habits, respect of teacher and fellow students during class/rehearsal and performances.
- e. Evidence of progress and growth on a daily and weekly basis in vocal technique, music reading, work ethic etc.
- f. Being on time for class/rehearsal (we only have 40 minutes)
- g. Demonstrating proper vocal technique while rehearsing (i.e. good posture, open vowel placement, expressiveness, good tone, breathing, crisp consonants, dynamics, etc.)
- h. Warmups- Ready position with good posture and listening for vocal exercise instruction.

- i. Warmups- Eyes and ears on director when vocalizing, use open vowels, good proper tone, proper phrasing, proper dynamics, breath control, supported tone, balanced 2 & 3 part harmony etc.
2. **Test Grades 20%**
 - a. Singing short passages or entire selection of music (individually, as a section or full choir).
 - b. Written quizzes/assessments will be given.
3. **Performance/Concert Grades 50%**
 - a. Participation in all concerts is required.
 - b. **Not attending these concerts** will result in the student having to submit themselves singing their voice part for EACH PIECE OF MUSIC we performed at the concert. First an email or note from a parent must be sent to Mr. Shoaf ASAP explaining your reason.
4. **Homework/Classwork/Quizzes 10%**
 - a. If absent make up assignments, quizzes, homework are due upon return either during class, within 2 school days.

Being on Time for Class (we only have 40 min.)

It is very important for all students to be in their sections and ready to **warm up as soon as the door is closed, and the first vocal warm up note is played for class to begin!** Students who are late **without a written note or signed planner** will receive a tardy. **If the student becomes argumentative etc., they will have to serve detention** before or after school or have **silent lunch** with the teacher. Parents will be notified via email on when the student will have to come in early or stay afterschool to make up the time.

We only get 40 minutes of music class per day, so let us not waste time **by not getting** to class on time, **not having materials ready** or, **talking** when the class is ready to start, for the day's lesson. When we waste 5 minutes at the start and end of class, we are only getting 30 minutes of real teaching/learning done. If you multiply 10 minutes per day wasted, it equals to 50 minutes wasted a week. We have chorus for the entire year which breaks down to 4 quarters, 9 weeks each for a total of 36 weeks. 50 minutes x 36 weeks would be 1,800 minutes, or 45 chorus class rehearsals wasted over the span of the year!! Our time is valuable, let's put it to good use!!

Basic Chorus Rules

1. **Absolutely no talking when the teacher is working at any level.**
 - a. **This includes Mr. Shoaf, a guest conductor/director, any teacher/staff and substitute teachers.**
 - b. The teacher will sit behind the piano and play a note, a chord etc. which means all students must stand, stop talking, get into formation (good posture) and be ready to begin class.
2. **Rehearsal time: when the director cuts off/stops the choir what should happen?**
 - a. When the choir has a cut off/is stopped by a hand cue, vocal stop, piano stops, music stops etc. the chorus must stop singing immediately. That means you do not start to talk, sing, tap, whistle, hum, or make any other sound. The cut off means the director/teacher has something to tell the chorus as a section or as an entire group about how they sound (make corrections, demonstrate a concept or voicing, offer a critique about making the choir sound better.) Everything that is said to one section always pertains to the entire chorus, so all students must listen and make the necessary improvements. This helps with our time (40 min.) being used wisely!!
3. **Students should never chew gum, eat or drink anything in class. Water is allowed in a water bottle/ closeable bottle.**
 - a. There will be no food, breath mints, or other consumables during the rehearsal process.
 - b. Jolly ranchers, mints, life savers are always welcome as a treat from parents and Mr. Shoaf will give these out as positive incentives for participation, learning, getting 100% on attendance for the week, tests, positive attitude, etc.
4. **Everyone should participate in chorus at all times.**
 - a. Chorus class is a performance-based class, and therefore all students will need to be performing/participating during class to get the most out of it and improve their musical skills.
 - b. Even if a student is struggling with a concept; if he/she is actively participating they will still receive a 100% for their participation grade. The student's performance assessment is most of their final grade and EVERYONE should have a 100% for that portion. All I ask is that everyone really focus, vocally respond to techniques being taught and show me you are trying your 100% best.

Rehearsal Behavior and Procedures/Cougar Core Values

Over 200 students use the chorus room every day. In order to keep the chorus room running smoothly and to offer everyone a positive learning environment, KMS chorus students are expected to follow these daily procedures.

Getting Ready for Class:

- Enter the choir room quietly. Since there is only one door be mindful to **not congregate** with the previous class leaving (at the doorway or in the hall by the water fountain).
- **Do not** run, push or shove when entering and exiting the choir room.
- Use of bathroom and hydration should be done quickly before class starts. In **certain circumstances** like not feeling well, coughing, stomach aches etc. a student may use the bathroom/get water during class.

- Quietly and neatly put all binders, notebooks, PE clothes, books, laptops etc. completely underneath your chair and get necessary materials ready.

Once you are seated:

- Check the board for the agenda. **All students must have pencil and paper handy if needed!!**
- **Sing only when directed to do so by the director**, no warming up before class starts unless the teacher specifically says you may do so on your own.
- **Listen for the following:** piano note(s) cue, rhythmic vocal or clapping cue, a vocal exercise, a chord progression etc. **to immediately stand and listen** for instruction from your director. **No more talking should be heard at this time!**

During Choir Class:

- Once your director has stepped onto the podium, give them your complete attention.
- Members of the ensemble **should not have any food or drinks during chorus class.**
- All school rules are always in effect during class and during any school functions.
- If students have a question concerning any of the material that we cover in class, students are to raise their hand and wait to be called on.
- No student should leave the room for any reason without permission from the director. The one exception is if the student is immediately ill and thinks that they will be sick. Students will need to get water, use the restroom before they enter the chorus room. **Use your travel time wisely as you only have 3 minutes between classes.**
- Only use your instrument (your singing voice) in chorus class when you are directed to do so, this includes before class, while the director is working with another section and after class. Singing, humming, whispering etc. out of turn on a consistent basis will result in a lowered performance assessment grade. **Each student is expected to participate every day.** If you are not feeling well (sore throat, laryngitis, cold, sinus problems etc.) let your director know before class starts!! You will still need to participate in following the music while the chorus is rehearsing, writing assignments, answering questions, knowing your material etc. but not vocalizing or singing.
- **Use good manners**, sitting quietly while Mr. Shoaf or another acknowledged person is talking. There shouldn't be non-essential talking or other disruptions while instructions are being given or when a question from a student is being asked.
- Good choirs have good posture when they are singing. Always sit (position 2) or stand (position 1) with proper posture when singing. If you are listening to instruction/announcements, watching the director demonstrate, doing a writing assignment etc., students may sit in (position 3) a semi-relaxed position.

After Chorus Class:

- Clean up the area around your chair, picking up any items off the floor (trash, paper, pencils etc.).
- Push the desk top back against the chair. **Do not under any circumstance put the desktop behind the chair!!** You may end up hurting the student behind you with the desktop! **Also, double check to see that the chairs are neatly in rows for the next class coming in.**
- Wait in the choir room (not the doorway) for dismissal. Do not leave the chorus room for dismissal until instructed to leave by Mr. Shoaf.
- When using materials in class (music books, octavo music, props, desks etc.) the first class of each grade level will pass out materials while the last class of each grade level will put away those materials. Do not throw materials to another student while passing it out! **Always put things away neatly and properly as to not cause any damage to any of the music or other materials being used in chorus class!**

Parent Contact

Parents will be contacted via email or by phone in general. If you ever have any concerns about anything throughout the year, please contact me via email (shoafn@gcsnc.com) with a contact number and I will call you within 24 hours. **Major announcements, concert dates, this contract and things of this nature will be on my website and Canvas.**

Performances/Concerts

6th grade chorus will have **only two required concerts per school year**, one in November/December and one in May/June. **7th and 8th** grade chorus will have **four required concerts per school year**, one in October, December, March, and May. Parents will need to check my website for concert dates and reminders about concert attire in plenty of time to attend. Chorus is a performance-based class. **Therefore, ALL performances of the chorus are MANDATORY/REQUIRED for its members.** The success of any musical group depends on the responsible actions of its members. Even if only one person is absent from a performance, it completely changes the dynamics of the ensemble. Each chorus member has an important role to play in the performance. **Students who do not fulfill their performance** responsibilities to the group will receive a failing grade as their performance grade for that quarter (50% of grade). **To not result in a failing grade**, first, an e-mail (preferably) or phone call from the parent must be received (as documentation) as soon as possible with the reason for the absence. Then, the student must follow procedure 3 in **The Grading Policy section.** (each situation will be handled on an individual basis)

In the rare event that something unforeseen was to occur that would cause a missed performance, (i.e. death of a family member, serious illness of a chorus member, family emergency, etc.), then the student's **performance grade** will be the **average weekly participation/effort grade they worked on to prepare for that missed concert.** *Not having a ride to the concert, or parent(s) working, can't find a babysitter, not supporting their child's concert attendance etc. are not acceptable reasons for not attending a concert.*

Contact me at any time so I can be of assistance in getting your student to the required concerts!! Other parents are always willing to help in getting students to a performance!!

Concert Dress

The expected dress for chorus students for all performances is outlined below.

All Performances: Chorus Shirt, pants without holes, closed toe shoes.

*Please contact Mr. Shoaf if you have any questions or concerns about the attire!

Recommendations for Your Continued Success

Singing daily will prevent any student from falling behind on their singing musical growth. If students sing outside of class as well, they will show progress. Parents who encourage singing and music reading will see progress in their student. Here is a link to help your student work on their own to improve singing skills: [Professional warmups to help students use their voice more confidently, freely, etc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5hS7eukUbQ)

More information on singing, learning concepts, notation, rhythms etc. are found on the practice page on CANVAS.

Feel free to e-mail me and let me know if your child already takes private lessons with someone else, so we may put their teacher's information on my website.

****Mandatory-*Optional Chorus Events/Competitions**

Students will have the option of participating and auditioning for other events, groups, performances, and contests throughout the year! Audition dates, procedures and information will be on my website/calendar.

Chorus Handbook Contract

(COMPLETE and RETURN by Friday, September 8th, 2023)

The purpose of this contract is to guarantee that the members of the choir (students, parents, and directors) understand and accept the basic plan that will allow us to be highly successful. As members of a team, we each must commit time, patience, and dedication to all that we do. I ask students to read and sign the following statement:

As a member of the Kernodle Middle School Chorus, I understand that there are certain guidelines for my behavior and learning that I must follow. I have read this handbook and understand the way I am expected to learn and succeed. I also understand that I will be held accountable if I choose not to be a dedicated member of this group. I also understand the performance requirements and make the commitment to be at ALL performances of the chorus. I have read and understand the guidelines found in the Chorus Handbook and will do my best to follow them.

Chorus members: a 1 inch black binder for **all students**. **Chorus T-shirt** is required for all students in chorus.

NOTE: Donations of Kleenex, Hand Sanitizer, Clorox Wipes, Paper Towels, Band-Aids, Printer Paper are appreciated.

Student Name (PRINT)	Student Signature	Date
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I ask parents or guardians to read and sign the following statement:

By signing this contract, I state that I have read and understand the rules, procedures, and grading policy outlined in the Kernodle Middle School Chorus Handbook and expect my child to achieve and succeed at the highest level in chorus class.

Parent/Guardian Name (PRINT)	Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
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Parent email	Parent contact number
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Parent email	Parent contact number
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As the director, I pledge to uphold the rules and procedures outlined in the Kernodle Middle School Chorus Handbook and to do my absolute best to assist every student in attaining the highest level of musicianship possible.

Director Signature	Date
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