

Elementary School District 159



2013-2014

CHOIR HANDBOOK

Barbara Suggs-Mason, *Superintendent of Schools*

School District 159 School Board

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Dear Parent/Guardian and Student:

Welcome to all new choir members and parents. We are glad to have you as part of the School District 159 music family and we hope that you will find your musical experience both educational and fun. To returning members and parents, we know you are very proud of how much you have accomplished and how much you have learned so far. Just imagine what the future holds.

With the new school year come new opportunities for the continued growth of our choir program at School District 159. In order to take advantage of these opportunities, it is imperative that everyone be made aware of the goals, expectations, and procedures for our choir members. This handbook has been prepared to apprise all families of the various components of our program, and to assist you in planning your calendar for the year. Please note carefully the enclosed Performance Calendar dates! Notify us immediately if there are any potential conflicts for your son or daughter. It is vital that every member of the ensemble is present for all performances; you are all important to our success. Music instruction provides training for students that benefits them in everything they do socially, educationally, and psychologically. We currently have so much research about the positive effects of music; here are a few items that might interest you:

- *“Music is more potent instrument than any other for education, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul.”* –Plato
- *“The arts are an essential element of education, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic...music, dance, painting, and theater are keys that unlock profound human understanding and accomplishment.”* –former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett.
- More facts are available online from www.nafme.org

We are looking forward to your child participating in the District 159 Choir Program. I am excited about the growth, progress, and maturity your child will experience. Of course, this cannot be possible without your parental support and involvement. I appreciate you taking the time to read this handbook. I hope it will be of help to you this school year. If we work hard together at being good musicians and citizens, we will be an outstanding group this year. After reading the handbook, please sign the acknowledgement form found at the end of this handbook, and have your child return it to the choir director, by Friday, August 30th, 2013. Please do not hesitate to telephone or email me at any time during the school year, if you have any questions or concerns.

With warm regards and wishes for a great year,

Ms. Lois Siegel, Choir Director
(708) 720-9489
lsiegel@dist159.com

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The Mission of the School District 159 Choral Program

Our mission is to provide a quality vocal education for the students. The choir program is dedicated to fostering aesthetic growth as an essential part of the student’s total education. The goal of this program is to develop their highest possible levels of music achievement through a comprehensive curriculum and in keeping with the student’s interest, needs, and abilities.

Nouveau Choir

The Nouveau Choir is our beginning choir for 6th grade students. Part assignment is based off of listening tests and the vocal range of your student. Students who are in our beginning choir program will learn how to care for their voice, understand basic music theory concepts, and begin training in basic sight signing,

Concert Choir

The Concert Choir is the premier choir of School District 159. Entrance into Concert Choir is determined by audition and teacher approval. All members of this choir must maintain at least a “B” while in choir. If a student does not maintain their grade, they will be put on a probationary period where they will be allowed to continue in choir as they bring their grade back up.

Repertoire from standard writings for the choral ensemble to contemporary works will be studied. Concerts are performed throughout the year. The ensemble also participates in area festivals, large group contests, and takes a trip to participate in festivals. Concert Choir members are highly encouraged to audition for the I.M.E.A. Fall Choral Festival and the I.G.S.M.A. Solo and Ensemble Contest.

Organization Membership Requirements

Concert Choir

To be a member of Concert Choir, the student must be enrolled in the proper ensemble and newly admitted students to the choir program must purchase their uniform at the current cost of \$80.00. Students previously enrolled in choir will be able to purchase replacement uniforms parts as needed. Each student must comply with all rules and regulations within this handbook. The student agrees to attend all before/after school rehearsals (including sectional rehearsals) and all performances. All uniform fees must be paid by September 13th, 2013. If your Choir Uniform Fee is not paid by September 13th, 2013 (or arrangements made with the Choir Director), then your child may not be allowed to participate in the Winter Concert.

Nouveau Choir

The Nouveau Choir is open to all 6th grade students. Each student will be responsible to purchase a beginning Choir Uniform at the cost of \$46.00. Each student must comply with all rules and regulations within this handbook. The student agrees to attend all before/after school and in-school rehearsals and performances.

NOTE:

Any student who drops out of any of these organizations during the school year will not be allowed to rejoin at any time and must drop that specific class immediately or as soon as the administration deems possible. Any student who drops out at the end of the year will not be allowed to rejoin unless approved by the director. The director/administration must approve any exceptions to the above requirements.

Rehearsals

Nouveau Choir

This choir meets daily during the school day as scheduled. Additional rehearsals may be schedule after school as concert performances approach. Students will be able to take an activity bus home.

Concert Choir

Concert Choir meets during the school day as scheduled and sectional rehearsals will be scheduled as needed from 2:30-3:45 p.m. at Colin Powell Middle School.

NOTE:

We cannot allow chronic tardiness. Students who are not in their seat, with their music, pencil, assignments, and ready to perform by the start of their rehearsal will be marked late. **Two tardies in a quarter will be treated as one unexcused absence. Three unexcused absences in a quarter will result in dismissal from the choir program.**

Rehearsal Procedures

The director is responsible for molding a group of individual musicians into an ensemble. Our rehearsal time is too short and valuable, so we must take advantage of every minute available for rehearsal purposes. Below are some guidelines that, if followed closely, will help you be the best musician you can be for yourself, your school, and your community.

Teacher Expectations (What we expect from you)

BE NEAT – This begins with having your music marked correctly in pencil, keeping the choir room, and storage areas clean, keeping your portfolio in the proper place, and looking nice. No food, drinks, or gum is allowed in the rehearsal room or performances. There is no running or “horseplay” allowed in the choir room, or performance site. Do not touch other people’s equipment/possessions at any time.

BE ON TIME – Be in your seat by the start of rehearsal, with a pencil, music, assignments and supplies, ready to begin rehearsal. Be early to rehearsals and performances.

BE ORGANIZED – Check your schedule for your in school class, sectionals, and additional full rehearsals day and time. Be prepared to perform – not just sing the notes!

BE WILLING TO WORK – If you want to have the great concert or successful performance, everyone must give that extra effort. **When the director steps on the podium or behind the piano, all talking must stop immediately.** Rehearsal begins at this point and your full attention is expected. Demonstrate a positive attitude and behavior at all times.

USE YOUR TIME WISELY – While the director is rehearsing another section of the choir, use that time to check lyrics, notes, a rhythm, or just listen. Don’t waste time! If everyone follows these simple, but important guidelines, we will create a safe and caring environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Student Expectations (What you can expect from the choir staff)

- We will provide clear and detailed instruction, examples and other aids to learning.
- We will respect individual abilities; help each person succeed and will consistently and fairly apply school and classroom rules.
- We will be available by special arrangement to help you work on your music.

Classroom Needs

All students should have the following in class every day:

- 1) Music Binder with sheet protectors
- 2) Sight Singing Book
- 3) Theory Book
- 4) Sharpened Pencils
- 5) Good Attitude

Ensemble Music

Each student will be issued a folder for their assigned choral literature. Music folders should be kept in the folio rack slot number assigned to that student. The music issued is each student's responsibility and should be kept in the assigned location after rehearsal is over. Music is expensive and replacement is even more so. Each musician is to take care of the music issued to him/her. Marking on music should be done in pencil only. Students should have a pencil in their folder at all times. Any lost, damaged, or stolen music must be replaced at the student's expense.

Assignments

Students will be given performance quizzes and test as well as written work. All assignments are due during class time. Failure to complete assignments may disqualify a student from performing with the ensemble at the concert or contest, and will affect your child's grade. Students are graded on execution and on effort. Only students who have demonstrated satisfactory work will be allowed to perform with the ensemble. Notices and calendars will be posted on the bulletin board in the choir room. It will be the student's responsibility to check the bulletin board regularly and also make calendar changes as noted there.

Choir Office

The Choir Directors' Office will be locked when not in use. Students are not allowed in the office without permission of the director. Any student caught in the office without permission will be sent to the office for disciplinary action.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all rehearsals, classes, and performances is required. The success of any organization depends on the commitment of each of its members and the absence of any member adversely affects the entire group. Therefore, excellent attendance is mandatory for all members. Two tardies in a quarter will be treated as one unexcused absence. Three unexcused absences in one quarter will result in dismissal from the choir program. Students should be in their seat and ready to sing by the designated start time of any rehearsal. Practice time is limited and therefore is at a premium.

If a child misses a class, or after school rehearsal, it is the music member's (parents) responsibility to write the director a note, or leave a message in the director's office. The absence will be counted as unexcused if the director does not receive notification prior to the music member's absence. The director will allow the child to make up all missed class assignments that are the result of excused absences. The child should see the director to arrange a time for the make-up, or to get any missed assignments. Missing one performance or event will be cause for removal from the program. **The director must approve all absences from a performance IN ADVANCE.**

Excused absences from rehearsal, class, or sectional include the following:

- Illness
- Family Emergency
- School District 159 athletic event participation is excused only if event time directly conflicts with the practice. Please note that our rehearsal times are arranged so that conflicts are minimal.
- **Non-school related activities will not be considered excused absences!**

*****Excused absences from performances or music events includes
Illness or family emergency only!*****

Any unexcused absence from any performance or music event will result in strict action being taken against the child, whether that action is dismissal from the program or declaring the child ineligible for any extra events (Trip, Great America, Choir Banquet, etc.). Performances are the backbone of the music program and are the only chance the ensembles have to show the fruits of its labor. Therefore, the directors will proceed with any discipline action deemed necessary, including dismissal from the music program, if the director feels that such action is in the best interest of the ensemble as a whole. Choir Members and parents alike must remember that participation in choir is a privilege. Many individual student hours are spent in preparation for events, and the inappropriate actions of one will not be allowed to spoil the efforts of the group. It is for this reason that repeated discipline or attendance problems cannot and will not be tolerated. Failure to adhere to attendance requirements discussed in this handbook will result in disciplinary steps taken, as outlined in the section entitled "Disciplinary Action."

Discipline Policy

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. The music staff will follow School District 159's "Rules for Student Behavior and School Discipline" policy.

Repeated behavior problems cannot, and will not, be tolerated. When appropriate, the music staff will first work with the student to help solve problems. If everything has been done to help a student be a positive member of the ensemble and he or she is still unwilling to follow the expectations outlined, the student will be removed from the music program temporarily or permanently.

Grading Policy

Choir is a unique course at School District 159. It has curricular requirements, just as any other academic discipline, but it also has **out-of-class** time requirements. The strength of the music program is the consolidation of these requirements into one performance based, academic course. The level of commitment from each individual student is the driving force behind the organization and is reflected in the level of achievement reached by the individual and the program.

Music is a learning activity. Rehearsals, whether during, before, or after school, are the means by which students learn, and by their very nature cannot be reproduced or made-up. Therefore, it is imperative that students be present unless the absence is absolutely unavoidable. Rehearsal absences and tardies will undoubtedly affect a student's performance and grade. Although we frequently function as conductors, we are primarily teachers responsible for the musical and aesthetic education of each student in the music program. This is the reason we are absolutely insistent upon each student's daily participation. Rehearsals are not optional, and are reflected in the student's grade.

Performances are viewed as major tests. A performance is a learning experience that cannot be duplicated in a rehearsal or practice room; the level of concentration required in a public performance assists each student to develop an insight into their own level of performance. A performance is an important evaluation tool, allowing comparison of a student's performance in relation to classroom objectives presented.

Choir Members are evaluated on attendance at all rehearsals, performances, and music events. Choir Members are also evaluated on the ability to complete all assignments satisfactorily, vocal tests and written work. Students will receive a progress report each quarter. Students may receive extra credit for participating in private lessons, solo and ensemble contest, auditioning for the IMEA Fall Festival and writing a report from a classical performance seen outside of the school day.

Finally, we take our job as choir directors very seriously. The choir department as an organization provides a medium through which student's progress academically, musically, and socially.

Musicianship, attitude, attendance, punctuality, conduct, and a desire for excellence are absolutely expected from each member of the School District 159 Choir Program. Therefore, individual practice and preparation are essential. No other discipline in education requires the high level of achievement from all participants as a musical performance. Through the level of commitment required we hope to better prepare our students for the responsibilities encountered throughout their lives.

Contests and Festivals

Contests, festivals, and other adjudicated activities are important features of the District 159 choir program. It is through these activities that we obtain valuable feedback about our progress as individuals and as a program. Although we never “live or die” by any one judge’s or any panel’s opinion of our performance, it is important that we learn the value of giving maximum effort and standing by the results as our best possible effort that day. Competitive performances are packed with emotion. Because of the amount of time, work, and discipline required to produce award-winning performances, we develop great camaraderie within the organization. We share hardship, discomfort, fatigue, oppressive heat, chilling cold, long bus rides, disappointment, tears, success and joy. Along with these emotions goes a high level of tension, which often causes students to react immaturely. We learn to avoid these normal pitfalls and to channel our energy and attention toward the goal of performance excellence and the ultimate success that will follow.

The District 159 Choir stands quietly with dignity as scores are announced and graciously accepts the results regardless of outcome. We show our appreciation and respect for those who have earned the right to score ahead of us and gracefully accept our own successes. Many of our competitors will not understand that we are able to congratulate those who are ahead of us and appreciate their performance. Those are the people that will not ever know the true reason for participating in competition, but will mistakenly equate winning with coming in first. We will come in first when we deserve to based on our performance. Until then, we know “winning” is the state of every individual having endured the hardships, taken the chance of competing, and done their personal best in the pursuit of excellence. The choir’s image is based on each individual. Our public reputation is based upon our appearance, our actions, and our projection of pride and organization. It is the responsibility of each member to insure that we present the best possible image at all times.

Choral Education Day

Every year Concert Choir participates in a Choral Education Day that is held at Colin Powell Middle School from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00p.m.on a Saturday. The music staff hires professional Choral Clinicians to work with our students in preparation for the contest season. All members of the Concert Choir are required to attend this music event all day. Choral Education Day is very instructional, because the clinicians work with the students in a small group sections as well as with the full ensemble.

Performance Guidelines and Standards

By participating in choir, every student has made a commitment to always do his or her BEST for the good of the team. Each ensemble is a TEAM! The entire ensemble relies on ALL its members to accomplish its goals. It is through performance and preparation for performance that a great deal of learning occurs. As such, several concerts, clinics and contests are scheduled throughout the year that will be required and will serve as a major test grade. The choir staff will post these dates (memos, newsletter, and calendar in back of this handbook) way in advance to allow for scheduling.

Attendance is required for all performances and rehearsals, including any evening or Saturday performances.

School District 159 Choir Department has a reputation of excellent performances. To maintain and raise the standard even higher, it is imperative that every student masters his or her assigned part. The directors will assign and grade sections of the music each week at the student's class. If a student does not satisfactorily complete the assigned sections three weeks prior to the performance, the director will take steps to correct the problem for the good of the organization. These steps may include eliminating the student from singing a given part or song, or may result in the child being prohibited from participating in the performance.

The following are performance guidelines to help ensure a successful performance:

1. Your instrument is your voice. Be sure your instrument is in good working condition. Take care of your voice. No screaming or shouting, drink plenty of fluids.
2. Make sure your music is memorized and your are in complete uniform
3. Always arrive by the designated time. This will allow sufficient time to load busses, take attendance, warm-up etc.

Every student is required to ride the bus to a performance, please note that the departure time is the departure time. Arrive as little as one minute late will result in the student missing the bus. If the student does miss the bus and the performance, it will be counted as an unexcused absence! All students are also required to return on the bus unless they have written approval from the parent two days prior to the event. Students must be in complete uniform in order to perform with the group. Absolutely no exceptions will be made. Failure to perform due to improper uniform will be counted as an unexcused absence.

Uniforms

- Choir Members are responsible for attaining the following:

Nouveau Choir Members (Cost \$46.00)

- White, winged collar Long Sleeve Tuxedo Shirt
- Long Black Skirt(girls)/ Black Tuxedo Pants (boys)
- Purple Tie
- Black Socks (not included)
- Black Dress Shoes (not included, no gym shoes)

Concert Choir Members (Cost \$80.00)

- Black socks (not included)
- Black dress shoes (not included, no gym shoes!)
- White, wing collar, long sleeve, tuxedo shirt
- Black Tuxedo Pants(boys) / Long Black Skirt (girls)
- Purple Vest
- Purple Tie

If you just need to add the vest to your uniform the cost will be \$46.00

These uniforms will be worn for all concert events. The full uniform should be worn from drop off at the school until the director tells the group it is o.k. to change clothes. If a student loses any part of the uniform, the student will be responsible for purchasing a replacement.

Also, please note that all necklaces should be worn under the clothing, earrings may be studs only, (no large hoops, dangles etc.), and hair should be pulled back off of the face and is limited to a black headband, ponytail holder, “scrunchy,” etc. We need everyone to dress the same (i.e. uniform). The choir member should not wear any accessory that attracts undue attention to himself/herself. Any student not adhering to these uniform guidelines will not be allowed to perform with the ensemble; this will be counted as an unexcused absence, and could result in dismissal from the music program.

Private Lessons

All students are encouraged to take private lessons. Private instructions (“lessons”) are not a part of the required music program, but are strongly recommend by the director.

While the music teacher is concerned with the overall sound of the group, the private instructor is concerned only with progress of one student, your child. In a one-on-one setting, an instructor can afford to spend as much time on any one area of weakness as is necessary to correct the problem, without worrying about performance deadlines or the progress of other students present. Likewise, while a choir director teaches music based on the ability level of the group, the private lesson instructor has the luxury of teaching to your child’s level of competency alone.

Choir Recognition Night

During the course of every school year, certain students perform at a level which exceeds all standards. Because of the fine example set by these students, the directors feel it is only appropriate that they be recognized for their efforts. All awards will be presented at the Choir Recognition Night and will be held at Colin Powell Middle School. **Students must be present at the Choir Recognition in order to receive any certificates or awards.** Information will be distributed in the spring.

Awards

- Most Improved: One student from Beginning Choir and Concert Choir will receive a trophy for the most improved student from their respective ensemble.
- Outstanding Musician: This award is given to one Beginning Choir and Concert Choir student(s) deserving special recognition based on excellent musicianship, attendance, and behavior.
- Director's Award: This award is given to the Concert Choir Member who has developed the highest level of consistently superior work throughout their years of choir membership. It is based on musicianship, attitude, attendance, behavior, and leadership ability.
- Various other recognitions will take place as director deems appropriate.

Individual Opportunities

Throughout the year choir members will have the opportunity to participate in several special events. These will include the following:

I.M.E.A. Fall Choral Festival

Concert Choir members have the opportunity to audition for placement within the Illinois Music Educators Concert Choir. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the audition and performance locations. Commitment Forms will be distributed in Early Sept.

I.G.S.M.A. Solo and Ensemble Contest

School District 159 is a member of the Illinois Grade School Music Association (IGSMA), and attends several of the association's contests. Solo contest participation is encouraged, but it is also voluntary. The private instructor will help prepare the student for contest. Also solos must have the required piano accompaniment. The music department will help as many students as possible in selecting an accompanist. Choir Members are responsible to pay for all entrance fees to this event. A limited number of spots will be available for students who wish to have the directors' help provide the accompanist. A \$25.00 accompaniment fee will be assessed to each interested student per musical selection. Any student who would like to find his or her own piano accompanist is welcome to do so.

Solo and Ensemble Contest is held in February, but registration is due in December. The student will need an original copy of their music and piano accompaniment in order to register. Students who wish to work with other choir students in an ensemble (duet, trio, quartet, etc.) are welcome to do so. Ensembles may or may not need to have a piano player, but must have one if there is music for one. The directors can work with ensembles on a limited basis. It is suggested that students check with their private instructor or director before selecting music for the contest. Deadlines for ensembles are also in December. Additional information will be given to all interested students in October.

Extra Choir Camp Opportunities

During the months of June, July, and August, Universities and private organizations throughout the state and country hold band and choir camps from lasting anywhere from one week to two months. This is an excellent opportunity to spend a period of time concentrating on your instrument and playing with a different group of people. It is also a time to meet friends from many different places who share the same interests as you. Information about these camps will be available in the spring.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do the directors determine an absence to be excused or unexcused?

The directors abide by what School District 159 would have determined (excused/unexcused) if the absence were to have occurred during the school day. If they are in any doubt, the written note from the parent is taken directly to the principal for a ruling. It is very important that all notes detail the reasons for the absence (or anticipated absence). The directors may contact the parents and request further information if the note does not provide the needed information.

What are some examples of inappropriate behavior (this list is not all inclusive)?

- Arriving late to a music event or activity.
- Missing a required music event without prior permission from a director (unless it is an emergency – still must contact the director ASAP).
- Talking unnecessarily or at inappropriate times.
- Touching, moving, using, or damaging any property that does not belong to you.
- Arguing with a director or chaperone.
- Using any school-owned equipment without permission of a director or staff member.
- Eating food or drinks in the choir room, or performance site.

What happens if I don't live up to the expectation set forth in this handbook?

Some expectations weigh more than others. You may be counseled by a director to try to solve a troubling situation. Parent-Teacher conferences may be scheduled in order to avoid future problems or determine consequences for a specific action. Violation of District 159 rules must result in referral to administration. It is in your best interest as a member of the District 159 Music Program, to attempt to fulfill the expectations to avoid the need for consequences.

Elementary School District #159 Choir

2013-2014 Performance Schedule

Date Event Time Location

Sept. 3rd	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM (ALL PARENTS REQUIRED TO ATTEND)
Oct. 1st ^d	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
Nov. 5 th	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
Dec. 3rd	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
Dec. 4 th	Field Trip Performance – Community
Dec. 6th	Winter Dance – CPMS Gym (sponsored by Choir Boosters) 6-8:30pm
Dec. 11 th	Field Trip Concerts: Armstrong 9:00am - Seiden Prarie 10:45am
Dec. 13 th	Winter Concert 7:00pm, CPMS Cafetorium
Jan. 7th	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
Feb. 4 th	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
Feb. 21 st	4 th Annual All School Talent Showcase (sponsored by Boosters)
March 1 st	Choral Education Day 9am-12noon CPMS
March 4 th	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
March 8 th	I.G.S.M.A. Concert Choir Organizational Contest
April 1 st	Booster Meeting at CPMS 6:30PM
April 26 th	I.G.S.M.A. State Contest
April 29 th	SSJHSA Festival
April 30 th	Field Trip Concerts: Woodgate 9:00am - Yates 10:45am
May 2 nd	Spring Music Concert 7:00 p.m. CPMS Cafetorium
May 9 th -11 th	Concert Choir Out of State Competition Trip
May 13 th	Choir Recognition and Awards Banquet

You will be notified of additional dates for performance field trips during the school day as soon as they become available.

SCHOOL DISTRICT 159

CHOIR DEPARTMENT

Handbook Agreement Form

Choir members are responsible for reviewing the handbook on a regular basis. Please make sure that your child(ren) fully understands the District 159 Choir Handbook. Please note that we will follow all district rules as stated in the "Rules for Student Behavior and School Discipline Handbook." After your review of the handbook, please sign and return this last page to your child's choir director by Friday, September 13th, 2013 at Colin Powell.

I hereby acknowledge my receipt and review of the District 159 Choir Handbook with my child(ren) and understand the rules and regulations that were set forth for this program. I understand the rules and regulations for participating in the trip.

Date _____

Parent Guardian Signature _____

School Student Name (print) _____

Student Signature _____

IMPORTANT!
Please return this form to your child's choir director before Friday, Sept. 13th, 2013