

# Sauk Prairie Middle School

CHORUS HANDBOOK

*2008-2009*

<http://spmsmusic.musical-journey.com>

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In order to be continuously improving the quality of our ensembles, it is necessary that every member of that chorus be familiar with this handbook by carefully reading the rules, regulations and achievements of our organization. This will help prepare you for the responsibilities that are yours as a member of the Sauk Prairie Middle School Chorus Program. When a question comes to mind, consult this handbook first; if you do not find the answer herein, ask the director. This document is to be considered the guidelines for all activities in chorus.

## SECTION I: PHILOSOPHY

Chorus is an elective course lasting one full year and is designed to fill four main objectives:

- 1) Provide an outlet for choral music education.
- 2) Provide music for the school and community when possible.
- 3) Provide an enjoyable forum for varied and interesting activities within the school curriculum; and
- 4) Provide students the opportunity to express themselves through music, develop cooperation, critical-thinking and self-confidence while becoming lifelong participants and consumers of the musical arts.

## SECTION I-A: GRADES

Grades are determined in the following manner:

- 1) ***Performances and Rehearsals.*** Any performance or scheduled rehearsal should be assumed REQUIRED unless otherwise stated by the director. If you don't know—ask. Missing required rehearsals and performances will hurt the groups progress and your grade enormously. Prompt and active attendance at all required rehearsals, performances, and functions, including those voluntary commitments, which you take on, is always expected. Plan ahead and know the schedule of events.
- 2) ***Lessons.*** Students will have scheduled lessons throughout each quarter that will be preferably during a study hall. Lessons are required for all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade choral members. Adequate mastery of all music, whether prepared or sight-reading is a goal for everyone each year. Lesson content will include, but is not limited to: rhythmic counting and singing exercises, vocal technique and music check-off. Attendance at each lesson is 100 points.
- 3) ***Assignments, Quizzes and Tests.*** These uncommon occurrences may be given at any time but with ample notice. Periodic tests and assignments could be on movement, singing technique, musical terms and symbols, music history, music theory, etc.

- 4) ***Class Participation.*** Since our ensemble rehearsals require 100% participation, you will receive daily points for full participation during class and staying on task. You will only lose points if issues arise during class. If you are absent and it is **UNexcused**, you will receive a zero for the day.

## SECTION II: ATTENDANCE:

Every member of the chorus is expected to attend every rehearsal, and every required public appearance of this organization. **Illness will, of course, be accepted as a legitimate excuse if the director is notified in advance.** When a student is to be excused, the parent must notify the director. Student contacts are unacceptable, even if you are of age. *A doctor's written excuse will also be acceptable.* For planned absences, please obtain an Absence Request Form from the website or Mr. Powers, which is due no later than two weeks prior to the event to be missed.

### SECTION II-A: PERFORMANCE

Performing in the public eye is the name of the game for most performing groups. Along with this handbook, you have been given a calendar for the year. (It is recommended that the schedule be posted on a central location in the house – such as a refrigerator) While every effort is made to remind you of upcoming commitments, you, and you alone are responsible for meeting this requirement. **Missed performances that are unexcused will lower your grade.** Our calendar is available online at <http://spmsmusic.musical-journey.com/calendar.htm>

When you appear at a public performance (usually in uniform) you represent yourself, your family, and your school to the general public. Conduct yourself in such a way that you will reflect positively upon yourself and the ensemble you are a part of. One individual can discredit an entire community, school or group.

## SECTION III: STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

During the year, you will act as ambassadors for Sauk Prairie Middle School in the school, community, on tours and in competitions. It is imperative that students conduct themselves in a proper manner at all times. Students who are unable to comply with this request will face appropriate consequences. This includes following school rules at all times, maintaining academic eligibility, following time schedules, curfews, being on-time to classes and being musically prepared.

### SECTION III-A: CLASSROOM GUIDELINES - YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHOOSE!

As a STUDENT, I expect you to be the best student and musician that you can be. Some of the ways you can do that are by following our choir room guidelines which are....

1. Choose a thinking attitude. Fill your mind with thoughts and questions that are related to class.
2. Choose learning behaviors that show the best possible effort. Choose to say, "I can try my best."
3. Choose to be respectful to yourself and others in the group.
  - a. Be sure to listen to what the teacher or another student is saying
  - b. Take turns answering questions or volunteering ideas by raising your hand and waiting to be called upon before you speak. Please don't just blurt out.
4. Choose to be in this class in a manner which:
  - a. Shows dignity and respect to yourself and others.
  - b. Is free of distractions that interfere with teaching and/or learning.
5. Choose comments and actions which are positive, kind and constructive.

*Each year I look forward to being the best teacher I can be. However, some things that get in the way of that would be...*

1. Extra talking or behaviors that are not appropriate for class. (This includes talking when you should be singing!)
2. Having food, gum, candy, seeds or beverages other than water in class.
3. Having hats, cell phones, ipods and other electronic devices that are not allowed in school.
4. Tardiness. If you are late to class, you are expected to sing the warm ups on your way to your seat.
5. Playing on the pianos or other electronic equipment without permission from the director.

### SECTION III-B: CONSEQUENCES

The natural consequences which occur when teaching or learning is interrupted are that both the students and teacher are unable to do their jobs to the best of their ability. We will use a program called Check Your Behavior (CYB) to help keep class moving in the event a disruption should occur. I would hope you would avoid these by putting forth your best effort in class.

1. A Warning CYB is issued to the student.
2. A second Warning CYB is issued to the student.
3. A third CYB is issued to the student and the student is relocated to a practice room to "cool off." They can rejoin class when they feel they are ready to respectfully participate again.
4. If three CYB's are issued in one class, a student-teacher conference after class, phone call home and after school detention with Mr. Powers to make up missed class time will occur.

\*2 After-school detentions with Mr. Powers in one quarter will result in a discipline referral each time three CYBs are issued in a class there after.

*\*Severe Disruption: Sent to office immediately, phone call home, formal written discipline referral.*

## SECTION IV: MUSIC

Music is costly, and should never be treated as a cheap piece of paper. **Music is school owned property for your temporary use, just like a textbook.** Many titles of songs are not in print anymore and can become difficult or impossible to replace. The cost to replace one piece of music can be from \$ 1.75-10.00 or more. This may not seem like a lot, but considering that there are numerous pieces of music in a folder, a lost folder can easily cost YOU \$50 to replace. Therefore, carelessness in the maintenance of music proves to be costly.

### Music & Folder Guidelines

1. Music will be **marked in pencil only!** Students may be asked to make notations in their music frequently. Except for these instructions or other musical notes, students are not to write on the music or deface the folders in anyway.
2. The concert folios, even the cardboard type, cost money and must be handled with care. Do not bend it, and always return it to the appropriately numbered slot in the music storage rack.
3. Each student is expected to have his/her complete folder throughout each and every class period. Folders are not to be traded, combined or shared with others who are not assigned to that folder.
4. Absence and your folder: Often, two people may be assigned to one folder. If this is your case, and you are absent from school, and have your folder with you, **it is your duty to see that the folder is returned to school for use by your folder partner!**
5. It is expected that you will return all music in the same or better condition as it was given to you. Erase all pencil marks and tape all frays and bindings that may be coming loose. You and your folder partner are responsible for it and the contents inside. Fees to replace folders and music are: Folder: \$15; original choral octavo: current price; photocopies: 10 cents per copied page.

## SECTION V: UNIFORMS

The SPMS Choral Program will provide a red music department polo shirt for concerts and performances. All students are required to provide black pants, black shoes, and black socks. No dresses, capris, shorts, or lounge pants, etc. please. **ALL Shirts MUST be tucked in!** Middle Level Motion uniforms are separate from this section.

### UNIFORM REGULATIONS:

1. ALL of the designated uniform must be worn all of the time, inside or outside the building.
2. Pant legs should not be dragging on the floor or frayed.
3. Clean black shoes will be worn to every public appearance in uniform.

4. The wearing of beauty devices, scarves, colored streamers, sunglasses, or pins will not be allowed at any time while in uniform unless otherwise stated. If jewelry is deemed distracting for performance, you may be asked to remove some or all of it. A performance is about the group's success!
5. Uniforms will be the responsibility of the student when not being worn. It is expected that they will be carefully washed and hung-up after performances.
6. Students wearing the Sauk Prairie Choral uniform will be expected to represent our school with their very best behavior. Any conduct that might be considered unbecoming of a member will be dealt with based on school policies. You are not just a member of any chorus; your membership is in the Sauk Prairie Middle School Chorus.
7. The uniform custodian or director must check out all uniforms, or parts of uniforms. Uniforms or uniform parts that need to be exchanged must be clean before new parts will be issued. This applies to school owned uniforms.
8. Each member is totally responsible for his/her personal or school-owned uniform, in every way, until they are returned and checked in at the end of the school year.

#### SECTION VI: CHORAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Admission: Most choral students start early in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and move up through the high school. A student can enter the music program at any year, but it is usually more difficult to enter later than 8<sup>th</sup> grade. However, with appropriate lessons and a positive, hardworking attitude, one may be successful.
2. Section Leaders: One individual from each section of each chorus will be designated a section leader. Section leaders are model choir students in that they are on-time and prepared for rehearsals and performances, always have a respectful and positive attitude, are trustworthy, follow all procedures for rehearsals, and sing with good posture and breath support. Section leaders will be the "go to person" for the students of their section. They may be responsible for passing out/collecting music, collecting assignments, and taking daily section attendance.
3. Show Choir: 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade choral students are eligible for membership to Middle Level Motion. Students can participate as a Singer/Dancer, crew or a Band Member. Admission to the group is by application and acceptance only.

#### SECTION VII: SCHOOL MUSICAL

1. Participation in the school musical is open to all students on a voluntary basis. Students must be academically eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities.
2. On-Stage roles (acting and singing) will be determined by audition and are usually open to students in grades 6-8.

3. Stage Crew and various other participation opportunities are open to students who wish to be involved but do not wish to be on stage. No audition is required; however space is limited and varies with the needs of each year's show.
4. Once a student has made the commitment to participate in the musical, s/he is expected to thoroughly execute all the responsibilities of her/his part or position. This includes being present and involved at all applicable rehearsals as well as taking the extra personal time required to learn and memorize one's script, songs or job assignments. Failure to do so may result in a reassignment of role or dismissal from the production.
5. Students should NOT expect to rehearse for the musical during class. The musical is an extra-curricular program that meets and rehearses outside of the school day. The added time demands and responsibilities of the musical are also not to be used as an excuse for unfinished homework or general grumpiness in any class.
6. Participation in a sports activity does not mean that you are unable to participate in the musical. Depending on the time limits you have, your role that you could play may be very limited. However, students are encouraged to explore arts and athletics.

#### SECTION VIII: CHORAL AWARDS

1. Director's Award – awarded at the final concert of the year to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student who goes above and beyond the daily tasks and requirements in the choral program.
2. Most Outstanding class members – awarded to one boy and one girl from each choral group. Selection is by secret peer ballot in the spring.
3. Most Improved class members - awarded to one boy and one girl from each choral group. Selection is by secret peer ballot in the spring.
4. Medals for Solo and Ensemble – awarded to those who participate in the Solo and Ensemble Festival. Medals will be awarded according to the official score card results.

#### SECTION IX: MUSIC PARENT'S ASSOCIATION

There currently is not a group of parents at the middle school level that is formally recognized as a "Music Boosters Club." From time to time, parent meetings may be called to facilitate special needs of the middle school music department ranging from chaperoning trips to fundraisers. The high school Music Parent's Association may be a collaborator in regard to special events. Please be sure to provide your email address on the Student Info Sheet so that we may be able to contact you quickly.

## SECTION X: USE OF THE CHORUS ROOM

The Chorus Room is for the use of organized Choral rehearsals only along with other related rehearsals such as solos, ensembles, show choir, etc. Other groups may request use the Chorus room from the choral director in order to avoid conflicts with other scheduled events. Students who may have a study period and are assigned to the chorus room instead of study hall: it is expected that half of the period will be spend in a chorus related activity: practice, music distribution, collection, filing, etc. Choral members will improve with practice and the department can often use extra hands.

## SECTION XI: SUMMER LESSONS

Summer Voice Lessons are available to students completing grades 3-7. This is a great way to keep singing over the summer and keep your voice in shape for the school year. If you are moving on to the high school, Ms. Luher offers lessons at the high school as well. The middle school lessons are four weeks long – meeting one time per week for 30-minutes. There is typically a fee of \$13 per student for the summer. In the next two summers ('09, '10), voice lessons will tentatively take place in August. Look for more details and information on how to sign up to be advertised in late April or early May.

## SECTION XII: CHORUS MEMBER TRANSPORTATION

At festivals, or on concert trips, chorus members will use only our own transportation. All students will ride to and from the destination on such transportation. The only exception is if the director is given written approval for a student to ride in a private vehicle by his/her parent or guardian on the return trip. This must be done IN ADVANCE of the activity or event. **All Students Will Ride The Provided Transportation To The Event.** District policies regarding transportation will be followed.

A few reminders for a great chorus trip:

1. Students are to remain seated while the vehicle/bus is in motion.
2. Remember if you do create garbage to dispose of it properly!
3. The chaperone is in complete charge of a vehicle/bus they are riding on, and his/her word is final.
4. All trips will move on schedule and choral students will be on time.

## SECTION XIII: PRIVATE VOICE INSTRUCTION

You are highly encouraged to take private voice lessons with a teacher outside the school day as a part of your vocal experience at SPMS. Students who take private lessons will be expected to participate at Solo/Ensemble Festival as well as any other recital that your voice teacher is holding. Names of recommended private teachers will be available from Mr. Powers upon request.

#### SECTION XIV: SPMS CHORAL MUSIC PROGRAM

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Chorus  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade Mixed Chorus  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade Mixed Chorus  
Middle Level Motion (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Show Choir)  
Middle School Musical Theatre

#### ***\*\*Membership in Both Band & Chorus\*\****

If you are in band and chorus, good for you!!!! You are very fortunate to be in a school where you can take part in both. Mr. Powers has taught both band and chorus in the past – so if you have an instrument question and Mr. Williams is unavailable, Mr. Powers may be able to help you.

#### SECTION XV: SOLO AND ENSEMBLE FESTIVAL/HONORS CHOIR

Each chorus student is encouraged to prepare a solo and/or ensemble to perform at the WSMA Solo and Ensemble Festival. 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade students are eligible for ratings and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade for Comments Only. Students wishing to participate in solo/ensemble should have their music selected before Winter Break. Students are required to memorize their vocal pieces and attend lessons to properly prepare for the festival. Students who wish to audition for the Wisconsin State Honors Middle School chorus must participate in solo and ensemble at the class B solo level.

#### SECTION XVII: CLOSING

If all of the above sounds like a lot to take in and be responsible for, you are probably right. Be confident in your abilities; come to class with an open mind and sing as if you were a chorus of soloists! The Sauk Prairie Middle School Choral Program will be considered top rate, and be respected by the community and school district. For those of you who are willing to approach this class with a good, constructive, positive attitude, you will find chorus the class you remember best in the years to come.

BE PROUD TO BE A SAUK PRAIRIE MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORUS MEMBER!!!

Musically Yours,

Mr. Christopher P. Powers, Director  
Sauk Prairie Middle School Choral Program