

The Southside High School Choirs Singer's Handbook

Donald Thames, Director

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SHS Choirs 2022-2023:
“Many hearts, one voice.”

Fall 2022

Dear Students and Parents,

What an incredible gift it is to have a choir program as large and strong as Southside's. If you are in the choirs at Southside, it is because you have *chosen* to be, despite the challenges of the pandemic over the past few years. You already have my gratitude.

My deepest respect and gratitude goes out to Mrs. Gaye Mings and Mr. Keith Reeves who have played such integral roles in the lives of the singers I have the privilege of working with today. Over the course of the next few years, this program and I will shape each other into our next chapters of success. Please be flexible and patient during this period of transition, and never hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or ideas.

Much like the incredible SHS directors that have gone before me, my commitment is to the development of the heart, body, and mind of every singer. Together, we will learn to sing with our fullest vocal potential, find a sense of self-expression, read music with fluency and understanding, and build a community and culture that truly has the capacity to change lives.

As we move back to in-person auditions, live concerts, and the next Madrigal Feast, we have a grand opportunity for a wonderful year. If our students will lead and our parents will support them, we can continue the SHS Choirs' tradition of excellence for years to come. Thank you for your support.

Best wishes,

Donald Thames
Choral Director
Southside High School

IMPORTANT DATES

- Wednesday, September 28th – City Choral Festival (Fort Smith, AR)
- Saturday, October 8th – Jr. High All-Region Auditions (Clarksville, AR)
- Saturday, October 15th – Sr. High All-Region Auditions (Morrilton, AR)
- Saturday, November 5th – Region 4 All-Region Clinic (Russellville, AR)
- Thursday, December 1st – SHS Christmas Concert (Fort Smith, AR)
- Friday, December 9th – The Madrigal Feast, #1 (SHS Commons)
- Saturday, December 10th – The Madrigal Feast, #2 (SHS Commons)
- Friday, February 3rd – AR All-State Choir Auditions (UCA, Conway, AR)
- Wed. Feb. 15th - Sat. Feb. 18th - AR All-State Clinic (Hot Springs, AR)
- Tuesday, February 28th - FSPS Pre-Assessment Clinic (Fort Smith, AR)
- Thurs. Mar. 9th - Sat. Mar. 11th, TBA – Region 4 CPA (Greenwood, AR)
- Thurs. Apr. 13th - Fri. Apr. 14th, TBA – AR State Choral Festival (UCA, Conway, AR)
- Saturday, April 15th – State Solo & Ensemble (UCA, Conway, AR)
- Monday, May 8th – SHS Spring Concert (Fort Smith, AR)

CLASS SCHEDULE – ENSEMBLES

- 1st Period: - (Planning)
- 2nd Period: - **9th Grade Treble Choir**
- 3rd Period: - (Advisory)
- 4th Period: - **Varsity Singers**
- 5th Period: - **Mixed Chorus**
- 6B Class: - **Chamber Choir**
- 6B Lunch: - (Lunch)
- 7th Period: - **9th Grade Tenor/Bass Choir**
- 8th Period: - (Travel to Ramsey/Chaffin)

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide students with:
 - a. A safe and responsive social environment
 - b. A rigorous and rewarding musical experience
 - c. Memories for a lifetime and a life-long love of learning
2. For students to obtain:
 - a. A thorough understanding of the singing instrument - the voice
 - b. Highly-effective and independent music literacy
 - c. Confident and expressive vocal independence
3. To create a culture among the choir that benefits the student, their choir, the choir program, and the school community
4. To work alongside instructors in all areas to support student success

CLASSROOM RULES

1. Be in your assigned spot with your folder and pencil when the bell rings!
2. Bring all of your needed materials, you will need your Chromebook on days when the director specifies.
3. Cell phones and other devices should only be used in case of emergency, or with specific instructions from the director.
4. No food, gum, candy, or any drinks except water are allowed in the Choir Room.
5. Keep your hands, feet and objects to yourself.
6. Be kind to yourself and others.
7. Swearing, harassing, and bullying behaviors are not tolerated.
8. Follow all directions and give your best effort!

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Absences during the school day will follow official school attendance policies. Please see page 12 of the 2022–2023 Student Handbook for detailed information about student absences.

- **Unexcused Absences from Class:**
 - Due to the nature of choral rehearsals, activities, assignments, and assessments that occurred during an unexcused absence cannot be made up.
 - Unexcused absences will often have a negative impact on a student's grade.
- **Excused Absences from Class:**
 - If a student has an excused absence, an alternate assignment may be given.
 - Assignments missed due to excused absences will not hurt the student's grade.
 - However, it is in a student's best interest to complete all assignments to strengthen their grade.

Absences from performances, dress rehearsals, sectionals, and other required commitments will follow as closely to the student handbook as possible. Final approval is at the discretion of the director. Please make every effort to communicate and provide documentation when appropriate.

- **Concert Attendance:**
 - Choir members are expected to check in and be in place at the given time.
 - Choir members are expected to stay for the duration of the entire concert.
 - Tardiness or unexcused absences will lower a student's grade.
 - Excused absences require prior notification, or fall to the director's discretion in case of emergencies.
- **Excused absences from performances, etc. require documentation and communication with the director. They may include:**
 - Death in a student's immediate family
 - Student illness
 - Other important, required school activities or official school business that cannot be rescheduled
- **Unexcused absences include:**
 - Any absence without documentation and communication from parents/guardians that passes director approval
- **Excessive, approved absences will result in a director–student conference and communication with parents/guardians regarding commitment to the choir program.**
- **An unexcused absence from a performance will result in the student's grade being lowered significantly for the grading period. A second unexcused absence from a performance during the semester may result in dismissal of the student from the choir. No credit will be given if the student is dismissed.**

ATTENDANCE, continued

- **What to do for School-Sponsored Conflicts:**
 - When a student has an **unavoidable conflict** with another school-sponsored event or activity, it is the student's responsibility to communicate with the director, as well as the sponsor for the conflicting activity.
 - Check the calendar for both activities and communicate the conflict as early as possible so that the conflict may be resolved if possible.
 - This flexibility does not apply to outside clubs or activities not associated with the school.

- **What to do about College-Prep Testing:**
 - ACT and SAT testing offers a wide range of dates on the calendar. Check the choir calendar before scheduling your exams.
 - Please make every effort to avoid these types of conflicts, as it is possible to do so.

- **What to do about student jobs and outside activities:**
 - Being able to have a job during school can be very important. Be the best employee you can, so that you are in good standing.
 - It is good practice that within the first 2 weeks of each semester, students should make a list of choir dates on the calendar and provide that list to their employer, coaches, and outside activity sponsors.
 - Likewise, any time dates are added after the beginning of the semester, students should pass those on to their other commitments at the earliest convenience.
 - Please communicate regularly with the director if you need any help balancing work and school.

- **What to do about Sectionals, Dress Rehearsals, Tech Rehearsals, and other events:**
 - Any required Choir event, activity or rehearsal outside of class time will be posted in advance on a calendar in the choir room, on the choir website, and communicated to choir families via email and the Remind app.
 - As much notice as possible will be given since these are required and crucial to the success of the program.
 - Time outside of class is not scheduled lightly. Every effort will be made to minimize the time needed outside of class.
 - Unexcused absences from these required activities will be treated in the same manner as an unexcused absence from class.

All Rehearsals, during class and after school, held during the week prior to any performance are vital, and it is imperative that everyone be in attendance. If possible, PLEASE do not schedule outside appointments during this time.

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE

Students in the Southside High School Choir are expected to give the time and effort necessary for top quality performance. Sectionals or night rehearsals will be scheduled only if the choir needs the time to achieve or protect the high level of excellence expected by the director, administration, parents, community, and students.

TRAVELING WITH THE CHOIR

- **Conduct:**
 - Choir students should be known for their good behavior. No matter where we go, outstanding behavior is expected of all choir members at all times.
 - Choir members are not to smoke, vape, drink, or commit any other violations of the student handbook at any time they are associated with the choir.
 - Possession and/or use of alcoholic beverages, weapons, or controlled substances when associated with the choir will be handled in accordance with district administrative guidelines.
 - *Students are expected to use transportation arranged by the director on choir trips to and from the destination.* Students may not get in a vehicle with anyone other than their parents for any reason while on a choir trip. Students may ride home with their **parents/guardians only**, if they have provided a **written request prior** to the event, and if they physically sign out the student with the appropriate chaperone.

- **Non-Required Travel:**
 - During a normal year we typically take a performance and/or competition trip in addition to the required performances listed on the school calendar.
 - The cost for these extra trips is paid for by the students who choose to attend. Therefore, they are not required.
 - However, students are encouraged to attend, as we are most successful when all of our students participate.
 - Students are encouraged to work outside of Choir to earn the money they need for fees associated with Choir. While we want to keep the cost to students and their families to a minimum, it is inevitable that we will have participation fees. **PLEASE NOTE: Monies turned in/earned for trips are spent on trip housing, transportation, and other costs as quickly as they are collected. Therefore, they are non-refundable.**

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

The single most important factor in the overall success of any choir is the work it accomplishes during its rehearsals.

- **“Good Class”:**
 - When the director, teachers and administrators, visitors, or other students are speaking to the group, the following behaviors are expected:
 - Eye contact
 - No cross-talk
 - Active listening
 - Appropriate questions
 - Showing “Good Class” helps the speaker feel heard, valued, and engaged.
 - Showing “Good Class” helps the listener retain more information.

- **Positive Attitude:**
 - The most important factor for success is **desire**. A student must want to learn in order to learn. They must want to work in order to create success.
 - Director and Choir should strive to show each other grace for mistakes as well as encourage each other to do the best they possibly can.

- **Posture and Focus:**
 - Unless directed otherwise, the choirs will be expected to stand when singing.
 - Proper posture for singing will be reviewed in class, and students will be expected to maintain proper posture and breath management throughout each class period.
 - Showing the Director “Good Class” as described above helps maintain an efficient rehearsal. Eye contact and engagement show students are listening and ready to move forward at all times.
 - Cell phones and other devices should not be used during rehearsal, except at the Director’s instruction. [Please see the Student Handbook for policies regarding the restrictions and confiscation of personal devices.](#)

- **Materials and Preparation:**
 - Each day students are expected to be in their place when class begins with the following materials:
 - Pencil & note-taking materials (notepad or paper)
 - Choir folder & Music
 - Water Bottle Only (optional)
 - After review in class, students will be expected to prepare their music with the following information:
 - Measure numbers
 - Solfege
 - Other musical elements as instructed
 - Grades may be taken from time-to-time over these elements of preparation.

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE, continued

- **Illness During Rehearsal**
 - Please notify the Director of any illness at the beginning of rehearsal.
 - If you are well enough to stay at school, please expect to remain engaged in rehearsal.
 - If vocal rest is needed, please discuss with the Director at the beginning of rehearsal. Speaking is more harsh than singing - please speak as little as possible when vocal rest is needed.
 - If respiratory symptoms (coughing, sneezing, runny nose, etc.) are being exhibited by a student, they will be requested to apply a mask and socially distance.
 - It is very likely that respiratory illnesses have always found it easy to spread in large groups that have high respiratory functions such as Choir, Band, and Athletic activities. We should use this knowledge to better serve the health of our community.

CONCERT ETIQUETTE

In order to best support our choirmates and colleagues, the following etiquette is expected during performances:

- Please refrain from talking.
- Remain seated. If you must move or leave the room do so between songs or during transitions.
- When returning to your seat, wait until the current ensemble has finished.
- Please wait for the director to lower their hands to applaud.
- Silence or turn off cell phones and other devices.
- Please exit with small children who become restless or noisy.
- Students are required to stay for the entire concert.
 - This helps to provide a supportive audience for every ensemble.
 - Students and parents have an opportunity to see what progression through the Choir program looks like. This information can be insightful and motivational for younger students as they think about their future in the Choir program here at Southside.

GRADING PROCEDURES

Grades will be determined by the following:

- **50% - Daily Engagement (“Participation” in Schoology)**
 - Examples of daily engagement include, but are not limited to:
 - In place, prepared with materials when class begins
 - Remains focused and engaged; follows instructions
 - Demonstrates intentional effort in activities and content
 - Attempts to build upon feedback given during rehearsal
 - Observably applies concepts learned, strives for improvements in the following areas:
 - Vocal Development
 - Posture, Breath, Phonation, Articulation, Resonance
 - Music Literacy
 - Sight-Singing, Ear-Training, Dictation Exercises
 - Vocal Independence
 - Can apply learned skills in progressively complex music
- **20% - Written/Digital Assignments (“Classwork” in Schoology)**
 - Grade checks on notes
 - Grade checks on sheet music preparation assignments (measure numbers, solfege, etc.)
 - Any written exercise, diagram, or project with a written or digital submission
- **30% - Performances and Required Events (“Tests” in Schoology)**
 - Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - All-Region Auditions
 - Southside Choir Concerts
 - The Madrigal Feast
 - Choral Performance Assessment (CPA)
 - Alternate assignments may be offered in the case of school-business or parent permission conflicts
 - ***Note: Unexcused absences from required performances and events will not only lower a student’s grade, but may have a serious impact on the student’s progression within the Choir Program.

USE OF FINE ARTS FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

The Choir Room

If you see items or materials that are not where they should be, it is wrong. Please return items such as pencils, water bottles, etc. to their owners, put binders back in the cabinets, and pick up trash and any other debris. If you do not know where something goes, please ask! Keeping our space clean is a team effort.

As stated above, no food, gum, candy, or any drinks but water are allowed in the Choir Room.

USE OF FINE ARTS FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT, continued

Auxiliary Rooms

There are four practice rooms, a music library, an office, and a choir ensemble room within our choir facilities. Please do not enter any of these rooms without permission.

Stage/Auditorium

Students are not permitted on the stage or in the auditorium unless they are accompanied by the director or another school employee.

Sound Equipment

Sound equipment can only be used with permission from the director, and may only be used for rehearsal purposes. Inquire with the director for use of equipment during sectionals or other rehearsals.

Pianos

Students may not play the piano without permission from the director.

We have a very expensive grand piano in the choir room and another on the stage. In addition, we have pianos in each practice room and one in the Choir Ensemble Room. Never set your personal belongings on these instruments.

Choir Office

If the office door is closed, please knock. If I am available, I will answer. If the door is open you are welcome to enter.

Phone

The number for the Southside High School Choir room is 479-646-6808. When dialing, you must press "9" to get an outside line before keying in your number. Students may only use the Choir Office phone with permission from the director.

Bulletin Boards/Marker Boards

These boards are used to share information about upcoming events and educational information. Do not write or make marks on any materials posted on these boards.

SECTION LEADERS

(Chosen by the director; one per section in each choir)

1. Responsible for keeping up with and reporting to the director all absences in class as well as absences from extra rehearsals, concerts, etc.
2. Assists in leading rehearsals in the event the director is absent.
3. Is prepared to lead their section on any piece of music.

The director may reassign section leaders at any time.

CHOIR OFFICERS

Choir officer positions will be instituted beginning with the 2023-2024 school year. These positions will have position-specific responsibilities and requirements, and will be selected through an application and interview process.

Officer positions and responsibilities will include but are not limited to:

- President & Vice President
- Ensemble Representatives
- Librarians
- Ensemble Assistants
- Archivists & Historians
- Student Directors
- Section Leaders

CHOIR FEES

All choir students are expected to raise/pay a fee of \$100.00. This includes the following items:

- Choir T-Shirt
- Choir Folder
- Sheet Music
- Choir Uniform Rental (2 Cleanings and Maintenance)
- Other needed equipment and supplies

***Please bring fees securely enclosed in an envelope. On the envelope, please write the student's name, which Choir they are in, and "Choir Fees."

Please contact the Director if you have any questions or concerns about the Choir Fees.

UNIFORMS

ALL CHOIR STUDENTS must purchase a Choir t-shirt. The t-shirt fee is included in the students' choir fees. These shirts will be worn on special occasions and activities. They will also be worn for the Spring Concert in May.

All formal Uniforms will be rented from the choir for the school year but must be returned at the end of the year. The rental fee is included in the students' \$100 choir fee.

At the beginning of the school year, parent helpers, professional tailors, and/or the director will take the students' measurements and order uniforms. Uniforms will be issued during the fall semester and must be returned at the end of the year.

*****Because of a rule that requires All-Region Choir members to wear their school performing uniforms at the All-Region Concert, uniforms **MUST** be ordered right away. Please make sure to pay your choir fees as soon as possible.**

UNIFORMS, continued

Formal Uniforms:

Mixed Chorus, Varsity Singers, 9th Grade Treble, and Chamber Choir:

Members of these groups will wear Tuxes or Dresses.

Dresses must be properly hemmed if needed. Please **do not cut off** the extra dress length. Dresses are rented and will be used by someone else in the future. (Dresses should be hemmed 1" from the floor, while wearing black flats)

Tuxedos will include a tux jacket, tux shirt, tux pants, bowtie, cummerbund, and required buttons.

Students wearing tuxedos will be responsible for purchasing BLACK DRESS SHOES, BLACK SOCKS, and a PLAIN WHITE under shirt.

9th Grade Tenor/Bass Choir:

Rainwater Clothing will provide our uniforms which will consist of a long sleeved black button up dress shirt, black dress pants, and a tie. Students must wear the school rented uniform to ensure that all singers are wearing the exact shade and style of shirts, ties, and pants. Students will be responsible for purchasing BLACK DRESS SHOES and BLACK SOCKS.

PLEASE NOTE!

Rented uniforms **MUST** be returned to the choir at the end of the school year. This year, a bulk rate has been established through a local cleaner and the cost of two launderings is included in the Choir Fees. Instructions about cleanings will follow.

As soon as our last "formal" performance is complete, uniforms should be returned to Uniform Storage. Students who do not return their uniforms will be added to the school's delinquent list and will be charged accordingly. FSPS policy prevents students from receiving report cards until unpaid fees have been taken care of. Uniform maintenance and replacement costs the choir a great deal of money if not returned.

JEWELRY AND ACCESSORIES:

The idea of a uniform is that we appear as a unified group to those who see us. Therefore, additions such as *large or flashy jewelry will not be allowed*. Students may wear small studs in their ears, but no dangling earrings, necklaces, or bracelets. When we are at a performance, students are expected to be in full uniform from the time they arrive until the time they have completed their performance. We take pride in our organization, and in our appearance.

UNIFORM CARE:

Students receive uniforms in new, or very good, condition. All are expected to keep their uniforms in good condition. If properly cared for, the tuxes will likely not have to be dry cleaned until the end of the year. *However, the tux shirts should be washed and ironed after each performance!*

FUNDRAISING

Students are expected to participate in the fundraising efforts we undertake throughout the year. In order to keep fundraising to a minimum, we must have maximum involvement in each one.

Scheduled Choir Fundraisers:

- Concert Program Advertisements
 - Advertisement space in the concert program will be sold to individuals or businesses.
 - These supporters will be recognized in our programs and briefly from the stage in our concerts.
- Sharum's Garden Center - Selling Mums
 - Students will sell numbered coupons to be redeemed for mums at Sharum's.
 - Supporters will redeem their coupon for potted mums in the specified time during the month of October.
- Ticket Sales for the Madrigal Feast
 - Once ticket sales open, students and families will sell tickets for the Christmas production.

***Please bring fundraising monies securely enclosed in an envelope. Please write the student's name, the name of the choir they are in, and a clear description of what the monies are for.

SUMMER CHOIR CAMP

The Arkansas Choral Connection (ACC) Choir Camp is held each summer during July. We highly recommend that our students attend this camp. The camp offers excellent instruction by top choral directors in the state. Summer camp information and applications are provided to interested students each spring. For more information on this camp, go to www.accchoircamp.org OR Arkansas Choral Connection on Facebook/Instagram. There will also be information on the SHS Choir webpage. (A payment plan for camp is available.)

PRIVATE VOICE INSTRUCTION

The Choral Department of Southside High School will again offer individual, private lessons to those students desiring supplemental help/training during the school year. These lessons will be scheduled once a week during choir class, lunch periods, study halls, and before/after school. Lessons will be taught by approved vocal instructors. This provides students a great opportunity for musical growth without another appointment outside of the school day. We highly recommend any opportunity for private voice lessons and certainly encourage students to study with quality teachers. Further information will be provided to interested students during the beginning days of school.