

Zeeland High Choirs 2020-21 Choir Handbook



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Choir Contact Information

Staff

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“Remind” text updates

- Chorus - text “@choruszhc” to 81010
- Advanced Treble Ensemble - text “@atechoir” to 81010
- Varsity Voices - text “@varsityvoi” to 81010

Online

Website: zeelandhighchoirs.weebly.com
Facebook: Zeeland High Choirs
Twitter: @zeelandchoirs
Instagram: @zeelandhighchoirs

Staying in Contact

In the position that I am in, and with the classes that I teach, I am not always able to answer the phone or immediately respond to emails (see contact info above). If you can not get a hold of me right away, please leave a voicemail message or an email, and I will do my best to respond within twenty-four hours.

Students and parents/guardians should check their email regularly for Infinite Campus messages, homework assignments, or other emails. Students should not use a personal email address in order to contact a teacher, but instead should use the email account linked to the iPad issued by ZPS.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Zeeland High Choirs to help students develop their confidence, creativity and character through collaborative musical experiences.

Welcome

I am thrilled that you have chosen to join us for the 2020-21 school year! Our program has a rich history full of outstanding concerts, participation at festivals, and excellent scores at local contests. We have some incredible talent in our ensembles, and I am very excited about what this year has to offer!

It's important to recognize that this school year will look very different this year. We are putting a pause on live performances, implementing important safety measures for classes, and adding more individual activities/assessments for students.

This handbook is meant to inform you about procedures, as well as prepare you for our events this year in choir. Please read the handbook carefully, as it will help you understand the responsibilities and expectations of our choir members. If you have any questions throughout the year, please consult the handbook first. If you are not able to find the answer you are looking for, do not hesitate to contact me. Looking forward to another terrific year in choir!

--- Mr. Van Eck

Philosophy: Why choir?

Students in choir are challenged to grow musically, physically, emotionally, and socially through the material that we work on and through time spent with their ensemble. This starts with the training of the musical ear and the teaching of music reading, music theory, and music history. From there, students will learn about vocal pedagogy and choral technique which includes the four parts of speech: respiration (breathing), phonation (making sound), resonance (focusing and amplifying the sound), and articulation (shaping sound into language).

One of the best things about participating in a choir is that it is necessary for students to work on all of this cooperatively with others in their ensemble. Students are also required to respect their director, their peers, and the music they perform. We will learn and study terrific choral music, both sacred and secular, from all major musical periods and across many genres.

Goals and Objectives: Students will...

- ...become musically literate by developing listening and sight singing skills daily.
- ...understand the basics of music theory.
- ...learn how to read and perform beginning music on the piano.
- ...learn to sing with a free, rich, resonant, beautiful tone.
- ...learn audition etiquette and skills required for advanced choir placement and/or college auditions.
- ...have meaningful musical experiences.
- ...have an outlet for self-expression.
- ...have fun and build lasting friendships.
- ...cultivate life skills including leadership, compassion, social awareness, professionalism, introspection, and respect for all people.
- ...learn about music history.
- ...learn to appreciate music in a deeper, more profound manner.
- ...become lifelong performers and consumers of quality music.

Course Descriptions (2020-21)

Tenor/Bass Chorus (combined this year with “Soprano/Alto Chorus”)

This choir is open to all students in ninth through twelfth grade whose voices lie in the tenor or bass voice range. Auditions are not required, and this class pairs well with a strong academic schedule due to the small amount of traditional homework. Students will learn proper vocal technique, develop their music reading abilities, and be introduced to reading and playing music on the piano. The performance requirements for this class are two evening concerts per semester and choral festival in the spring. Music selections will include a wide variety of genres including pop songs, musical theater songs, folk songs, classical music, world music, and more!

Soprano/Alto Chorus (combined this year with “Tenor/Bass Chorus”)

This choir is open to all students in ninth through twelfth grade whose voices lie in the soprano or alto voice range. Auditions are not required, and this class pairs well with a strong academic schedule due to the small amount of traditional homework. Students will learn proper vocal technique, develop their music reading abilities, and be introduced to reading and playing music on the piano. The performance requirements for this class are two evening concerts per semester and choral festival in the spring. Music selections will include a wide variety of genres including pop songs, musical theater songs, folk songs, classical music, world music, and more!

Advanced Treble Ensemble

Prerequisite: Admittance granted by audition, previous choral experience is preferred

This class is an advanced vocal ensemble made up entirely of treble voices. Admittance requires a successful audition with the vocal music staff as well as a commitment of two semesters in the class. It is a class with a moderate level of performances and events outside of the normal school day. In addition to preparing for a heavier performance schedule, students spend time during class building their music reading and comprehension skills to a proficient or even advanced level. They also work to reinforce piano playing, aural, and arranging skills in a choral music setting. The repertoire performed includes music encompassing a wide variety of ethnic styles, historical periods, and composers.

Varsity Voices

Prerequisite: Admittance granted by audition, previous choral experience is preferred

This class is a select ensemble of highly skilled vocalists. Admittance requires a successful audition with the vocal music staff, as well as a commitment of two semesters in the class. It is a performance-oriented class that demands a high level of commitment to performances and events outside of the normal school day. In addition to preparing advanced music for a very busy performance schedule, students spend time during class building their music reading and comprehension skills to a proficient or even advanced level. They also work to reinforce aural, improvisation, piano playing, and arranging/composing skills in a choral music setting. The repertoire performed includes music encompassing a wide variety of ethnic styles, historical periods, and composers.

Behavior and Attendance Expectations

All choir students are held to the behavior expectations outlined in the Zeeland Public Schools Student Code of Conduct Handbook (accessible with this [LINK](#)). Additionally, a supportive, positive, and productive attitude is expected from all ensemble students. Put-downs, rumors, harassment, simply not being nice, and/or destructive behavior will not be tolerated. The language used in the choir room, hallways, backstage at performances, and at all choir program events must always be delivered with respect and kindness to others. Attitude and behavior certainly play a role in membership and casting decisions.

Students are expected to complete all assigned academic work and regularly attend classes (**whether in person or remote**). Absences, whether excused or unexcused, do not justify a student not knowing what was missed during rehearsal. Missed rehearsals can affect a performance both at the individual and collective level, and it is important to have all ensemble members regularly attending and contributing in classes. Communication is expected early and often when a student misses a class or an outside of school rehearsal.

If a student misses their choir rehearsal or 50% or more of the school day on the day of the concert, they can expect to not sing in the performance. The “Performing Arts Attendance Policy” applies to all curricular Zeeland Performing Arts programs, and is copied below.

- Students with (2) unexcused absences prior to a public performance or when another student's performance may be impacted will be excluded from performing.
- Students with more than (10) excused absences (per semester) prior to a public performance or when another student's performance may be impacted, may be excluded from performing pending the following action:
 - A meeting with an administrator, director, and parent at least 24hrs prior to the performance. Meetings can be initiated by the administrator, director or parent.
- Students with more than (3) excused absences in the 2 weeks prior to a public performance or when another student's performance may be impacted may be excluded from performing pending the following action:
 - A meeting with an administrator, director, and parent at least 24hrs prior to the performance. Meetings can be initiated by the administrator, director or parent.

If a choir student is absent from a graded performance, alternative assignments will be accepted in order for students to make up their grade. Please read the “Performance Attendance and Participation” section later in the handbook for more details.

Grading System Overview

Grades in choir will be determined with points accumulated over the course of each semester. Running grades will be calculated with the categories detailed on the following pages. Progress Reports and Marking Periods hold no weight or lasting impact, but they will provide glimpses of each student's grade at different points during the semester.

1. Rehearsal Participation (20%)
2. Assignments and Assessments (40%)
3. Performance Attendance and Participation (40%)

Grading Rehearsal Participation

It is expected that students consistently come to class with all necessary materials, participate and have a positive attitude through all choir activities, and are respectful of others at all times during rehearsals. Students will receive a rehearsal participation grade each semester. 100 points will be entered in the gradebook, and points will be deducted from that total if students do not come to class prepared or participate appropriately in rehearsal.

Students with a sore throat or students who experience any physical pain in the throat while singing *should not sing*. If a student is at school and feels too ill to participate as they usually would, they will be required to complete the "Choir Rehearsal Sick Sheet". Students should be prepared to give feedback on what they see and hear during rehearsal. If a student fills out more than five of these sheets in a semester, additional work will be assigned.

***** Phone/Tablet Policy: Electronic devices available to us can be tremendous tools in regard to the material covered in choir. Students will complete homework assignments, can find ways to rehearse their repertoire, and even learn and practice the piano with the devices provided by the district. Students will occasionally use their devices during class, but should plan on keeping their tablets and phones stored away during class unless instructed otherwise. Should there be any issues, daily points and/or privileges will be removed.

***** Sheet Music Policy: Students may be provided hard copies of music for rehearsal purposes. Students may transport their music between home and school, but if the music is lost or damaged, students are responsible for reimbursing the choir program in order to replace it.

Grading Assignments and Assessments **UPDATED**

In an effort to shift from large group rehearsals, the majority of our curriculum and assignments this year will come from a schedule of weekly assignments that students will work on and complete independently. There will often be a choice for students each week, and they will be encouraged to work, learn, and develop through the projects they select.

Students will have their own account for The Practice Room (thepracticeroom.net), and will complete assigned courses and assessments. We will not be using individual accounts to Sight Reading Factory this year. Additionally, there will be no "Semester Concert Report" assigned to students this year.

Assignments through The Practice Room will be due on Wednesday each week. Other Google Classroom assignments will be due on Sundays. One point will be deducted for each day that an assignment is late (as low as 50%). Students may turn in assignments for up to 50% until the last day of classes each semester (not on exam days).

The Practice Room will help us focus on the basics of music theory during our first semester. Students will develop their sight reading skills, and will also spend time writing and reflecting on a variety of topics. We will then shift our focus during the second semester to learning the basics of piano playing. Piano assignment packets will be distributed to students based on how many years they have spent in the choir program. Students will complete video assignments, and piano playing tests will be administered at the end of the school year.

Grading Performance Attendance and Participation

Students in choir will have many opportunities to perform both as a part of their ensemble and as individuals. While some of these opportunities are optional, others are required. Each and every choir member is important because everyone is an active and contributor during performances! All choir students, therefore, must participate in the scheduled performances throughout the year as a part of their obligations to the ensemble.

If a performance is not attended by a student, no matter the reason, the grade will be initially entered into the gradebook as a zero. There are two options available to students for redeeming points on a missed performance. Both options below must be completed within one month of the missed performance.

1. The student may sing the repertoire that was performed at the missed concert for Mr. Van Eck. The student may choose to sing alone or along with others, but a time outside of class must be arranged to complete this option. The student may make-up up to 100% of the concert grade based on their performance.
2. The student may request a "Missed Concert Report Assignment" document from Mr. Van Eck, attend an approved music performance, and write a concert report on their experience. The student may make-up up to 80% of the concert grade with this assignment. This is a different assignment, and would be in addition to the required "Semester Concert Report".

Performance participation includes not only singing during, and being at the entire concert, but appropriate behavior, demeanor, and attire. Please see the guidelines below for more details and expectations regarding performances. Noncompliance with these expectations will result in affected grades.

- *Attendance* - Students must not be late for call time and be present for the entire performance.
- *Warm-up* - Students must be in their assigned place at the designated time. Students must not use warm-up time as a social event or to finish up prior activities.
- *Uniform* - Students must wear the determined performance attire for each event. Appearance is an important part of a student's performance grade. Choirs that appear sloppy or look inappropriate make a negative impression upon audiences and reflect poorly on the school, the choir, and the individual. Students must keep hair, jewelry, and the rest of their appearance neat and tidy.
- *Performance* - Students must act professionally at all times. In addition to giving the best musical performance they are capable of, students must also employ proper singing posture, maintain eye contact with the director, and use facial expression and physical involvement appropriate to each piece.
- *Support* - Students must act professionally during the entire performance, and must be positive towards their peers who are also performing. It is extremely important that we support all members of our choir family.

There may be times when two school events are scheduled at the same time. It is the responsibility of the student to notify all involved about the conflict in a timely fashion. The staff and, if needed, the administration will then decide how to best resolve the conflict.

If a student is gone from one of their other classes because of a choir event (i.e. additional rehearsal, performance during the school day), they are to work ahead and get any materials turned in on time or earlier than the scheduled date. Performing in a choir is not an excuse to not do other school work.

Formal Performance Uniforms

Chorus

Chorus members are required to provide their own formal performance uniforms to be worn at choir concerts. Students have three options for uniform items, but as a general rule, the uniform should be black dress clothes from wrists to toes.

Additional information, examples, and links are available on the [Chorus Uniforms Document](#),

- Option 1: dress
 - All black, floor length, ¾ length or long sleeved dress
- Option 2: skirt and top
 - Black, long sleeved t-shirt, blouse, or button down dress shirt
 - Black, floor length skirt
- Option 3: pants and top
 - Black, long sleeved, button down dress shirt
 - Black dress pants (preferably with belt)

Advanced Treble Ensemble

1. Black dress (provided by choir program)
2. Pearl necklace (purchased by students)

Varsity Voices

Men of Varsity Voices

1. Tuxedo jacket, pants, and tuxedo shirt (provided by choir program)
2. Matching accessories, ex. vest and bow tie (purchased by students)

Women of Varsity Voices

1. Custom dress (purchased by students)

Additional Uniform Notes

- In addition to purchasing the items listed above, students must provide their own black, closed-toed dress shoes and black dress socks or tights to wear at performances.
- Students having difficulty paying for alterations or any required items should contact Mr. Van Eck. We want everyone to be able to fully participate in our program, and we are open to coming up with alternative means of raising money and covering the cost of uniforms and other items.

2020-21 Event Calendar

Optional MSVMA Events:

- Musical Theatre Intensive (October 24, virtual event)
- Musical Theater Solo & Ensemble (winter, December 15 registration deadline)
- District Solo & Ensemble (winter, December 15 registration deadline)
- District Festival (early spring)

Zeeland Events*

- Fall Concert (November 10)
- Holiday Combined Orchestra/Choir Concert (December 13)
- "Synergy" Vocal Showcase (January 8 and/or 9)
- Spring Choir Concert (May 17)

*These events are subject to cancellation or changes based on district regulations and regional health conditions.

Fundraising

Our Patron Donation Form will be made available for students, and it is also accessible online. We would very much appreciate it if individuals, families, and businesses would consider donating and becoming patrons!

Additionally, our "Synergy" vocal music event will be in January, and it promises to be a terrific evening of music! Some of our choral ensembles will be featured at the event, and we will also be looking for students, family members, and others from the community to participate! Proceeds from the event will help to fund choir performances and other opportunities.

Choir Auditions

Auditions for placement in either Advanced Treble Ensemble or Varsity Voices for the 2020-21 academic year will be in the spring of 2019, and will be open to all students entering grades 10-12. Students will be well prepared for their audition by participating in class all year long. Students interested in auditioning will be required to sign up for an after school audition time.

Choir Awards

Students that participate in the Zeeland High Choir program for an extended period of time will receive varsity letters and other items to recognize their dedication and contributions. Students will receive the items listed below based on the number of semesters they are enrolled in choir.

4 semesters in choir -- Varsity Letter (East or West)

6 semesters in choir -- Choir Pin

8 semesters in choir -- Pink Graduation Cord (recognizes excellence in the fine arts)

Additionally, students may receive one of our two annual department awards. The National School Choral Award and the Fred Waring Director's Award for Chorus will be awarded to students that have made outstanding contributions to the choir program during their high school careers.