

Westfield High School Choral Program

Choir Handbook 2011-2012



The Westfield High School Choral Program
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Welcome to the Westfield Choral Department

Welcome!

I hope you are as excited as I to be a part of the Westfield Choir tradition. I am excited to work with the many talented students in this choral program. My number one goal is to develop and encourage students' success. A successful choral program is built upon each student becoming successful and collectively merging these successes.

This year promises to be an exciting adventure filled with performances and events. As a choral program built on excellence, we will continue turning heads this year with our superiority. Students will be challenged to rise to the highest levels of competency and artistry in each ensemble. Students will participate in unique performing opportunities. And students will connect with each other, through the music, to effectively convey the expression of the music.

This packet is designed to provide you with all of the necessary information to be an active and successful member of the Westfield High School Choral Program. I hope you will enjoy your time singing and learning with us. My door is always open to discuss anything on your mind whether it be about choir or just life in general. You may also contact me via e-mail dreimschuss@fcps.edu.

Our Mission

To instill in all people an awareness of music's important role in the enrichment of the human spirit!

Table of Contents

Course Information.....	1
Course Description.....	1
Learning Goals.....	1
Rehearsal Technique.....	1
Vocal Health and Duress.....	1
Procedures, Prohibited Behaviors, and Tips for Success.....	2
Grading Procedures.....	2
Make-up Policies.....	3
Westfield High School Honor Code.....	4
Course Descriptions.....	4
2011-12 Choral Program Event Schedule.....	5
Course Material Fees and Mandatory Forms.....	6
Uniform Information.....	7
Westfield High School Choral Boosters Organization.....	8
Tag Day and Other Fundraisers.....	9
Annual Spring Choral Trip.....	10
District and State Events.....	10
Choir Student Information Sheet.....	11
Course Material Fee Form.....	12
Letter from the Director.....	13

Instructor: David Reimschuessel Room #: N 106 Year: 2011-2012

Course Name and Code: Choir (922604, 929615, 926015, 928916, 928915)

Textbooks Used: Experiencing Choral Music

Supplementary Texts or Special Materials: Various Choral Octavos, black three ring binder, two sharpened pencils at every class.

Course Description

Through a study of varied choral styles the students will advance in individual technique, musicianship, and understanding of musical theory. The students will understand how music relates to history and culture. This course also seeks to build group cooperation, foster growth and inspire school spirit.

Learning Goals

Students of the Westfield High School Choral Program will...

- ♪ Become skillful and acute listeners.
- ♪ Become kind, caring and positive ensemble members.
- ♪ Become competent users of musical notation.
- ♪ Become sensitive and spirited performers.
- ♪ Experience the feeling of being a part of great music.

Rehearsal Technique

Students are taught proper rehearsal technique as part of chorus class. Therefore, each student is evaluated every day on his or her demonstration of rehearsal technique. This evaluation is accumulated weekly and graded in two parts: Classroom Performance Evaluation (rehearsal procedures) and Vocal Production Assessment (vocal and musical techniques)

Vocal Health and Duress

Choir classes require students to sing and participate each day in rehearsal. You are expected to keep your voice healthy so you are able to participate in class. Drink plenty of water. Get rest. Do not yell or excessively strain your voice. If a student is unable to sing due to vocal duress, he or she is still expected to participate in class to the fullest extent possible, including staying focused on the music being studied, making all markings, etc. Communicate any issues with the director prior to class.

Procedures, Prohibited Behaviors, and Tips for Success

Procedures

1. Arrive punctually. (In YOUR seat when bell rings with music)
2. Observe instructions listed on the board.
3. Pick up daily theory handout and begin work.
4. Go to assigned seat and be ready to work.
5. Pay attention to important class announcements.
6. Perform to the very best of your ability during every class.
7. Follow directions the first time they are given.
8. Request after class time for personal matters, suggestions, and discussions.
9. Clean up after yourself.

Prohibited Behavior

1. Interrupting the flow of rehearsal
2. Touching items around the room
3. Excessive and non-musical talking
4. Lethargic, half-hearted, non-caring work
5. Wandering around the room
6. Eating gum, candy, food, soda, etc. (except water)
7. Quitting before rehearsal
8. Neglecting to clean up after yourself (trash)

Tips for Success

1. Attend class
2. Work your vocal technique
3. Work together. This is about US, not about ME.
4. Bring Water
5. Perform with maximum effort
6. Observe correct performance and classroom decorum

Grading Procedures

Grading System (incl. Assessment for Learning)

Grades for each marking period will be based on the following: weekly vocal production evaluations, classroom performance evaluations, performances in class, concerts, and written assessments.

Concerts and performances are summative grades, the pinnacle of classroom work; therefore, these grades will be worth 40% of the Course Final Average grade.

All grades are out of 100 points and will be averaged together with a letter grade established according to Fairfax County Public schools policy.

Concerts and Performances – 40%
 Weekly Classroom Performance Evaluations – 20%
 Weekly Vocal Production Assessments – 20%
 Quizzes/ Music Assignments – 10%
 Final Exam – 10%

FCPS GRADING SCALE

LETTER GRADE	PERCENTAGE	QUALITY POINTS
A	93-100	4.0
A-	90-92	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	64-66	1.0
F	Below 64	0.0

Make-up Policies

Regulations for attendance at ensemble rehearsals and performances are different from regulations for other classes. This is because there is no way to make up the experience gained from interaction with the group, and because the quality of the experience for those in attendance is adversely affected by other's absenteeism. Concerts/ performances are the culmination of classroom rehearsals. All performances are mandatory and it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements to attend each performance. If an extreme family emergency arises which prevents the student's participation in a performance, an alternate assignment will be provided after consulting with the parent, student, counselor, and or principal.

Situations which are likely to be excused:

- Extreme family emergency (i.e. severe illness documented by doctor's note, accident, and/ or death in family)

Situations not likely to be excused:

- Work conflicts
- Sports conflicts
- Family vacations

Make-up Work and Late Assignments Other than Performances

All students are expected to complete all missed work when absent. If the student has an absence on a day when work is due, he or she is expected to turn the work in the following class. In the event of more than one class absence, the student should see the teacher to determine when work will be due. When the absence is unexcused, students will receive 50% of the score earned on all assignment and assessment. Late assignments will be accepted in the following manner:

- One day late – deduction of 10% from earned score
- Two days late – deduction of 20% from earned score
- Three days late – deduction of 30% from earned score
- Four days late – deduction of 40% from earned score
- Five or more days late – deduction of 50% from earned score

Lack of Transportation

Transportation problems are not acceptable excuses for missing concerts. High school students must learn how to manage their own schedules and to think ahead. Students and parents are given concert dates at the beginning of the school year. As a concert date approaches, make appropriate arrangements for transportation to and from the concert.

Westfield High School Honor Code

Honor Code & P.R.I.D.E. Statement

Copying homework, cheating on quizzes or tests, and plagiarism are serious offenses. Be sure to understand the expectations for each assigned task, and be sure to complete each one honorably. Never be afraid to ask if you are not sure about what is expected and acceptable. Members of the Westfield High School community are committed to demonstrating Personal Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Excellence (PRIDE) in all activities and programs. All teachers are committed to supporting honest, individual student achievement; therefore, the policies and procedures outlined in the Westfield Honor Code will be upheld and enforced. Students and parents/guardians are expected to be familiar with the code and to adhere to its guidelines at all times. Please take a moment to review the Westfield Honor Code at:

http://www.fcps.edu/WestfieldHS/about_whs/honorcode.pdf

Course Descriptions

Chamber Singers is an Artist-level mixed choir. The ensemble studies and performs challenging music in all styles and languages. Membership in the group is by audition only. Students must have advanced singing and music-reading skills in order to be in Chamber Singers. The group performs frequently with instrumental ensembles. Students are required to be present at extra-curricular performances and concerts.

Bel Canto is an Advanced-level women's choir. The ensemble studies and performs challenging music in all styles and languages. Membership in the group is by audition only. Students must have advanced singing and music-reading skills in order to be in Bel Canto. Students are required to be present at extra-curricular performances and concerts.

Concert Choir is an Intermediate-level mixed choral ensemble in which students continue to improve their singing and musicianship skills. This class is divided into two sections (one male and one female). This is a non-auditioned group. Students are required to be present at extra-curricular performances and concerts.

2011-12 Choral Program Event Schedule

The following is a list of performance dates and program dates for this school year. Students are held accountable for being present at all required performances per the schedule. Please see the section in this booklet on attendance policies. Attendance at required performances is an integral part of each student's quarterly grade. Chorus is a performance class, and the importance of participating in performances cannot be overstated. Please add these dates to your family's calendar as soon as possible. Rarely, dates may change and additional performances may be added. If that is the case, students and parents will be given as much advance notice as possible.

September 2011

- 9 Honor Choir forms and payment due
- 16 Deadline for turning in the FORMS PACKET/STUDENT FEES.
- 20 Tag Day Driver Meeting
- 21 "CHOIR NIGHT" – Meeting for All Chorus Parents 7 p.m., Westfield Auditorium
Uniform Fittings for Female Students, 7-9 p.m. in the Chorus Room
- 24 **TAG DAY 100% participation!!!!**

October 2011

- 1 Honor Choir Auditions @ Longwood Univ. (Selected Seniors)
- 19 Fall Choir Concert 7:30pm WHS Auditorium (All Choirs – graded performance)

November 2011

- 11 Veteran's Day Performance (Chamber Singers)
- 12 District Chorus Auditions at Centreville High School
- 17-19 Honors Choir Event - Norfolk, VA (Selected Seniors)
- 28 Rent a Carol begins

December 2011

- 14-15 Candlelight Carols rehearsals TBD
- 16 *Candlelight Carols Concert*, 7:30 p.m. – WHS Auditorium (All Choirs – graded performance)

January 2012

21 Dinner Theater performance

February 2012

16 All State Chorus Auditions after school, Fairfax High School

16-18 District Chorus, Fairfax High School

March 2012

21 Spring Sing – 7:30pm WHS Auditorium (All Choirs – graded performance)

23-24 VMEA District 11 Choral Festival, Woodson HS (All Choirs – graded performance)

29-31 Spring Choral Competition - TBD

April 2012

1-2 Spring Choral Competition - TBD

26-28 All-VA Chorus (Selected Juniors and Seniors) Lynchburg

May 2012

29-30 Pops concert rehearsal TBD

31 Spring Pops Concert 7:30 pm WHS Auditorium (All Choirs – graded performance)

June 2012

13 Choral Awards Dinner Banquet, Dinner from 6:30-7:30, Awards at 7:30,
All Chorus Students/Parents Invited

Course Material Fees and Mandatory Forms

Due By September 16, 2011

Choir registration fees, in addition to all required paperwork, are due by September 16, 2011. The fee for all chorus students is \$100 per student. This fee cover costs related to each student's participation in the chorus program. Examples of expenses covered by the fee include uniform rental, dry-cleaning, travel to and from local performance venues, sheet music, clinicians, accompanists, choreographers, equipment, and other expenses. The chorus program is also subsidized by music booster and chorus booster fundraising.

Required Course Materials

All choir students must provide a black, three-ring binder in which they will maintain all course materials, handouts, assignments, and sheet music. Students must also bring two sharpened pencils to each rehearsal/ class. Sheet music is assigned to students for study and is collected periodically after performance. Students are responsible for the care of the sheet music and for returning sheet music loaned to them. Lost music will result in a replacement fee of \$3 per item lost, or the actual cost of the item if it is more than \$3.

Students are graded every day on preparation for class. It is very difficult for a student to participate if he or she does not bring the music binder, so students need to get into the habit of bringing it to

class, along with a pencil for marking music, each time. Being prepared for class is an integral part of the chorus grade.

Uniform Information

For Female Students

CHOIR NIGHT is September 21 at 7:00 p.m. in the WHS auditorium. This is a mandatory meeting in which important information regarding the chorus program is relayed to parents and students. During CHOIR NIGHT, all female students are fitted for uniforms from 7-9 p.m. Female students who do not attend will not be issued a gown until they meet with the Uniform Coordinator.

All girls provide their own dress shoes for performance. Below is a description of the type of shoe that is acceptable.

- ♪ Plain, black dress shoes, preferably with a short heel (less than 2 inches).
- ♪ Shoes should be dressy enough to wear with an elegant looking concert gown. No boots, loafers, mules, platforms with chunky heels, etc. Keep the fashion on the conservative side.
- ♪ No “interesting” materials. Choose leather or other synthetic leather-like fabrics. (No faux fur, etc.)

For Male Students

Male students are fitted for uniforms in class. The uniform is outlined below. Male students must provide their own black dress shoes. These shoes may be purchased through the choir for \$25. Plain, black dress shoes, preferably with a short heel (less than 2 inches).

- ♪ Shoes should be dressy enough to wear with a tuxedo. No boots, loafers, sketchers, or sandals. Keep the fashion on the conservative side.

Uniform Specifications/Concert Appearance

Ladies: Black concert gown
 Black hosiery
 Black dress shoes (see detailed explanation below)
 No jewelry, except for small earrings.

Men: Tuxedo/Tux Shirt/Accessories
 Black socks
 Black dress shoes

How to Care for Your Uniform

None of the uniforms are machine-washable. Your uniform will be given to you having been freshly dry-cleaned. If you wish to have your gown or tuxedo professionally dry-cleaned throughout the school year, you may do so at your own expense. Please hang your uniform up between performances so that it does not become excessively wrinkled. Please keep your uniform in the garment bag provided to you. If you find that your uniform is wrinkled, please iron it on a low heat. Your uniforms are tasteful and elegant; please take pride in your own appearance.

Return of Uniforms at the End of the School Year

Since all uniform items (except for shoes and hosiery) are property of the school, students are obligated to return these items following the last concert of the school year. Items are specifically collected in a systematic manner immediately after that concert and all students must report to turn in uniforms. If a student does not turn in a uniform, he/ she will be added to a list of students who have debt in the amount of the replacement cost of the uniform (\$100 for dresses and \$150 for tuxedos). The student is subject to restrictions imposed by the school until the uniform is returned or a replacement cost is paid. These restrictions include loss of parking privileges and inability to participate in the graduation ceremony if the student is a senior. He or she will also not be able to receive a yearbook if one was ordered. Such debt also remains on school records from year to year if not paid.

Westfield High School Choral Boosters Organization

Westfield High School Choral Boosters is a non-profit organization. Its purpose is to promote and encourage community/area support of the Westfield High School Choral Program by providing volunteer and financial support. Additionally, the Choral Boosters administer a robust senior choral student scholarship program.

Membership in the Choral Booster organization does not require active participation or regular attendance at monthly meetings, though both are encouraged. Choral Booster membership forms and information can be found at <http://www.westfieldhschoral.org>.

Ad hoc committees are developed throughout the school year. These will present many opportunities for volunteerism. The majority of these opportunities are made available at meetings or via e-mail communications. To receive regular information about choral volunteer opportunities, please be sure to include a current e-mail address when completing your registration forms at the start of the school year. The Choral Boosters truly appreciate any assistance parents are willing to provide in support of the Choral Program! If you have more questions about how you can become involved in the Westfield High School Choral Booster Organization, contact Ms. Karen Joseph, President.

Choral Booster Board of Directors

Mr. David Reimschuessel, Choral Director	dvreimschusse@fcps.edu	703-488-6431
Ms. Karen Joseph, President	president@westfieldhschoral.org	
Ms. Sandy Sullivan, Vice President	vicepresident@westfieldhschoral.org	
Ms. Mary Shirley, Secretary	secretary@westfieldhschoral.org	
Ms. Carolyn Wall, Treasurer	whschorusmoney@hotmail.com	

Choral Program Website: www.westfieldhschoral.org

Tag Day and Other Fundraisers

The Westfield High School Choral Program requires financial resources in order to provide for the material needs of a superior program. Though Fairfax County Public Schools is generous, there is no financial allotment for uniforms, transportation, awards, scenery, accompanists, choreographers, professional musicians, and many other resources. The Choral Booster Organization works diligently to fill this financial gap through its membership and fundraising efforts. In addition, one of the highlights of the choral year is the annual Spring Competition trip, which students must pay for individually if they wish to participate. For all of these reasons, regular fundraising activities are coordinated by the Choral Boosters for the benefit of the Choral Program and the individual students who participate in these opportunities.

Tag Day is a Music Department fundraiser shared by the band, chorus, orchestra, and guitar programs. This year's Tag Day is Saturday, September 24, 2011. All music students at Westfield are expected to participate in this, the most important fundraiser of the school year. Students meet at the school and are assigned routes within the Westfield community. They work in teams of no less than four, and each team is supervised by a parent volunteer/driver. Teams are trained how to politely and effectively request donations from our neighbors within the community.

Each year, the music department raises approximately \$30,000. The proceeds are divided among the four music programs based on the percentage of student participation. In other words, the more choral students who participate in Tag Day, the more money Chorus will receive from the total proceeds. For this reason, all students are strongly encouraged to participate, and each year sign up for their teams during the first week of school. We are also always in critical need of parent drivers for the event. This is the only fundraiser for which students are not able to earn money for their spring trips. Rather, the money goes into the general choral budget and is spent throughout the year on budgeted items such as the ones mentioned above. Without a successful Tag Day, our resources are extremely limited.

Tag Day is September 24. Save the Date Now!

The Choral Boosters maintain Student Trip Accounts. There are several fundraisers that traditionally occur throughout the school year: annual pie sale, citrus fruit sale, and dance marathon. Many students defray the cost of their trips significantly by participating in fundraisers. In some cases, students pay for their trips exclusively through fundraising.

Annual Spring Choral Trip

The annual Spring Choir Competition is yet to be determined. Parents will be presented with trip possibilities and vote on the trip at Choir Night on September 21. Trip possibilities include Anaheim, Atlanta, New York, Orlando, and Boston. These trips range in educational and excursion opportunities. The cost will be based on the location selected and the excursions included. A more detailed packet of trip possibilities will be provided within the second week of school.

District and State Events

Throughout the school year, there are several events in which students are encouraged to participate. District 11 Chorus auditions are in November. All chorus students, especially those in advanced ensembles, are strongly encouraged to audition for this prestigious music experience. District Chorus takes place in February. Juniors and seniors who participate in District Chorus are eligible to audition for All-State Chorus. Auditions are in February, and the event itself takes place in April.

Honors Choir is for distinguished senior choral students who have proven to be very strong musicians and singers. Audition is by invitation and takes place in October. The Honors Choir event is held in November. None of these events present any conflicts with other choral events, as the calendar was developed with the dates in mind. Students pay a small audition fee for these events. If accepted, the student may need to pay additional fees to cover participation costs.

Choir Student Information Sheet

Student Name: _____
Parent Name: _____
Choral Ensemble: _____
Home Phone: _____ Parent cell: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Zip: _____
Parent e-mail: _____
Student e-mail: _____
Student employment: _____
Athletics: _____
Extra-curricular: _____

Please fill out this form and return it by Friday, September 16th. This form is needed to help keep accurate records for choir students. The information provided on this form will not be given to anyone other than the Westfield High School choral program including the choral director and choir booster board. If the information provided on this form changes during the school year, please request a new form and provide updated information.

Permission and Accountability Statement:

I have read and understand all of the objectives, requirements, and expectations for Westfield High School Choir, under the direction of David Reimschuessel. I grant my child permission to participate in the Choral Program, including concerts, fundraisers, rehearsals, and performances outside of the school day.

Student signature

Date

Parent signature

Date

Course Material Fee Form

The fee for all chorus students is \$100 per student. This fee cover costs related to each student’s participation in the chorus program. Examples of expenses covered by the fee include uniform rental, dry-cleaning, travel to and from local performance venues, sheet music, clinicians, accompanists, choreographers, equipment, and other expenses. Several payment options are available. Please select your payment option, and return this form with your payment in the form of check or money order made payable to WHSCBC. Please do not bring cash.

Please return this form and your payment by Friday, September 16th. Students will be unable to participate in any extra-curricular choir activities (with the exception of fundraisers) until this obligation has been met.

Student Name: _____			
Parent Name: _____			
Choral Ensemble: _____			
Please check the appropriate option, sign, and return the form.			
<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>	<u>Option 3</u>	<u>Option 4</u>
Pay all fees, in full, by September 16 th using check or money order.	Apply remaining student account balance from 2010-2011 school year and pay the difference by September 16 th with check or money order.	Break your payment into two separate payments of \$50 each. The first is due by September 16 th . The second is due by Nov 22 nd .	Students who receive free/ reduced lunch have the option of paying a <i>reduced fee</i> . If you select this option, the choral director will contact you directly to discuss options.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent Signature _____			
Date _____			
By completing this form, the parent/ guardian of the choral student accepts responsibility for meeting the fee obligation.			

Welcome to Westfield Choir. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to make music with you. You are all truly intelligent and talented individuals. Our goal this year will be to take your individual intelligence and talents and collectively merge them into a magical choral experience.

The true miracle of choral singing is found when each singer makes an individual commitment to artistic ideals that are beyond those currently known to exist. That's why music is art and not a science. There are no absolutes. There is no point of arrival. Only continued striving to sing with deeper understanding, greater intensity to line and phrase, greater accuracy of pitch, increased integrity of rhythm. ALL of which are funded by the inestimable depth of the human spirit to make musical experiences of the most genuine quality that cause us to perform with unbridled creativity and regimented discipline all at the same time. It's amazing this ever works at all.

My theory is that humans are wired to detect and respond to a heightened state of arousal (if you will!) in other humans. In other words, people are moved when they see that you, *yourself*, have been deeply touched. Think about it, even from a cinematic point of view. Isn't that the whole concept of character development? You become so involved in the intricacies of the character that you begin to empathize, assuming some of the burden to get the leading actor through the perils of a pre-determined script.

And so it is with live performance. People want to know that musical artistry is spawned from someplace deep within your soul. They want to know that you, yourself, have pondered the existence of the stars, or shared infinite love with someone else, or that you are simply elated to rise each morning and sing with each other. At best, art stirs something deeply inside us that needs to be released and shared with other humans. When it is truly meaningful to us, it becomes that much more meaningful to everyone else.

That's why *I* am excited about Westfield choral music. I think you have already sensed that this will require each of us to bring more to the table in each rehearsal experience as we search for artistic expression and how it might resonate in our collective and individual souls. We will work harder to strive for rhythmic and notational accuracy. We will be more diligent about singing with healthy and beautiful tone. But in the last place, we'll ask ourselves harder questions about the human obsession with all things artistic. That is the value of the process. Not the answers found in the performance, but the questions asked in rehearsal.

I apologize in advance for the frenetic pace of these next few weeks, but it is imperative that we overcome the limitations of the written page (the poverty of musical notation - as my theory professor used to call it) in order to focus and dwell on the artistry that lies below the surface. Don't spend time in the practice room because it is required. Do it because you have a once in a lifetime opportunity to work with 125 other really gifted musicians - each of whom have so much to give if only each one of us does our own part.... Hmm, it really does take a village!

-Mr. R.