

Southwest Guilford High School Chorus

Student Handbook

Catherine Butler, Choral Director

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**Welcome and Introduction**

Welcome to the Choral Department at Southwest Guilford High School! My name is Catherine Butler and I want to share a little about myself as a bit of an introduction. I earned bachelors and masters degrees from UNCG in Music Education. In 2003, I started my career at Penn-Griffin School for the Arts by establishing the choral program as part of the first middle school magnet in GCS. I began teaching high school when PGSA grew to a 6-12 program in 2006. After 11 years at PGSA, I decided it was time for a change of scenery and new experiences. I felt so fortunate to be offered the opportunity to join the team at SWGHS! My plan for this year includes building on the already established traditions here and creating some new ones. I believe that relationships are the foundation for a productive ensemble. I cannot wait to begin building those relationships with students and their parents and helping to foster positive relationships between students. I hope that this handbook answers many of your questions about the semester and year before us. If at any time you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email me. (Email will probably get a quicker response!) Again, I look forward to this year and all the adventures and beautiful music that it will bring!

Catherine Butler

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**Choral Program Overview**

The choral program at Southwest Guilford High School is aimed at producing excellence in its students through a challenging music curriculum that focuses on the development of the whole musician—as proficient performer, academic student, and caring citizen. Students in the choral program will have the opportunity to learn music and musical concepts from literature representing a diverse array of styles, historical time periods, cultures, and musical genres. The music selected will be appropriate for its educational and musical value, rather than its popularity, entertainment value or listener appeal. These music courses are indeed academic classes, and students will be expected to learn, participate, and demonstrate their knowledge about such elements. Concepts taught in the choral classes will be based on curriculum standards highlighted later in this handbook. The following elements are true of all choral classes taught at Southwest:

a) Chorus class is an academic field requiring preparation, devotion of time, personal commitment, and academic study

b) Chorus class is a community requiring civil behavior and the ability to put others first

c) Chorus class is a performing group requiring excellence and participation from each member to produce a product that people in our community will want to come and hear

**Choral Class Curriculum**

The curriculum taught in all choral music classes is based on the NC Essential Standards for Music Education, implemented in 2012.

A summary of the NC Essential Standards for Music Education:

--Understanding and demonstration of singing technique and vocal pedagogy

--Basic physiological understanding of tone production and care of the voice

--Musical literacy to include sight-reading, interpretation, composition and dictation

--Musical harmonic/tonal structure, including scale construction, aural identification and key signature knowledge

--Performance preparation skills and concert etiquette

--Evaluation, reflection and critique of musical performance in both written and oral formats

-- Understanding music as a product of history and world cultures

Musical Literature:

The literature learned and performed in class will be of high quality and will represent a wide variety of musical samples. We will also learn music that the North Carolina Music Educators Association suggests through a published music list for our state. Such music is sometimes sacred in nature, due to its role in the historical development of classical music literature, though religious themes will not be the focus of my teaching. Students will be encouraged to take seriously their exposure to new forms of musical literature. The purpose of the class is not to entertain (or to train students to be entertainers), but rather to further the musical knowledge and performance proficiency of the students. Such a goal will be the driving force behind all programming and rehearsal decisions.

**Honors Credit**

Four levels of proficiency now exist for arts classes—Beginning, Intermediate, Proficient and Advanced. All students determined by their directors (through content knowledge, performance ability, participation standards, literacy, etc.) to be in the Proficient and Advanced Levels automatically receive Honors Credit. However, it is the expectation that such credit merits enrichment or expansion activities to validate the credit. Thus, choral students at the Proficient or Advanced levels must complete an Honors Credit Project for EACH semester that they are enrolled in these levels. Clearly defined guidelines for the project and tasks will be given to students. Students should take seriously this project as the non-completion of it will result in the automatic lowering of a student’s final grade for the semester by 1 letter (as an “A” in Honors Credit is worth 4.5 quality points and a “B” is worth 4, the lowered average will be the same as the higher grade letter in a non-honors credit course—i.e. B in honors is the same quality points as an A in non-honors, etc.). In order to receive credit for having completed the Concert Evaluation Project, students must score a B on the project. A list of approved concerts will be handed out with the assignment at the beginning of the semester. If a student would like to attend a concert not on the list, please get it approved before going!

**Classroom Expectations**

The expectations of chorus students are few, but crucial for our success. Upholding these expectations will result in earning maximum participation points each day. Remember that these apply not only in our classroom, but wherever we are representing SWGHS and our Choral Department. Additionally, all SWGHS rules apply.

1. Be polite.
	* Being polite to those around you will take you far in life. It shows that you respect others and yourself and you will immediately be taken more seriously.
	* Respectful and polite words, tone, actions and attitude should be given to your classmates, teachers, college interns, student teachers, substitutes and yourself.
	* Note—Quality of art is a subjective. Our artistic output is choral music. You may not always like someone else’s singing or vocal quality. You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not at liberty to always share your opinion. We will never laugh or make fun of those around us because everyone will always be doing his or her best.
2. Be punctual.
	* Students must be on time for class and performances.
	* A call time will be announced for all formal performances.
	* If a student is late for call, a point will be deducted from the performance grade for each minute.
3. Be prepared.
	* Items needed for class each day are outlined in the supplies and materials section. Please note that the following items are not on the supply list and therefore have no place in our classroom: electronic devices, gum, work for other classes, makeup and hairbrushes, lotion, food, drinks other than water, etc. Anything that distracts from rehearsals will not be tolerated.
	* For performances, students will wear formal concert attire. Wearing this attire falls under being prepared for concerts. The attire is detailed later in this letter.
4. Be positive.
	* You get to sing for 90 minutes every day; be happy about that!
	* Your attitude can determine whether you enjoy our time together or loathe it. Why set yourself up for failure from the start?

Choosing to not uphold one of our classroom expectations will results in the following consequences. The severity of the action may require skipping steps.

1. Warning (may be verbal or a simple look that means “This is your warning!”)
2. Parent contact
3. Lunch detention
4. Office referral

**Supplies and Materials**

A chorus folder will be provided to all students for their music. This folder will stay in the Chorus Room during the semester with few exceptions. Leaving folders in the Chorus Room guarantees that students will always have the necessary pieces for rehearsal each day. In addition to their folder, students will need a three-ring binder with notebook paper for theory assignments, sight-reading supplements, writing assignments and handouts. In order to earn participation points for being prepared, students will need their folder, notebook, and a pencil each day. Students should carry a water bottle with a lid throughout the day. Water is the best way to keep your voice healthy and ready for singing. Drinking water during rehearsals only is not adequate for hydration!

If any parent feels inclined to donate items to the Choral Department, the following are always appreciated: hand sanitizer, tissues, Clorox/Windex wipes, dry-erase markers, colored copy paper for concert programs and pencils.

You can easily order these items (and more!) from our Amazon wish list and they will ship directly to SWGHS! http://a.co/eXxXD94

**Concert Attire**

Uniform concert attire will be required for all concerts, whether they be formal or informal.

For **formal concerts** (Winter Concert, Spring Concert, MPA, etc.), students will wear black and white formal attire. Options for formal attire for boys and girls are listed below. Please let me know as soon as possible if your family needs monetary assistance with concert attire. I cannot help if I don’t know that help is needed.

**Beginning and Intermediate Men:** black dress pants, white long sleeved dress shirt (tucked in), long black tie, black belt, black socks, black dress shoes (not tennis shoes). These clothing items may be purchased through the Choral Dept and may be paid on a payment plan if needed.

**Beginning and Intermediate Women**: long, plain black dress (not pants and a shirt), black dress flats with minimal decoration (not tennis shoes), no jewelry other than small stud earrings. You may also opt to purchase the dress that is required for Honors Vocal Ensemble students. It is $75 and may be paid on a payment plan. I do have a few black dresses available for students to borrow on a first-come, first-serve basis. Make-up at concerts should not include bright colors.

**Honor Vocal Ensemble Men:** black dress pants, white long sleeved dress shirt (tucked in), long black tie, black vest, black belt, black socks, black dress shoes (not tennis shoes). These items may be purchased through the Choral Dept for $75 and may be paid on a payment plan if needed. Individual pieces, as well as the entire ensemble, may be purchased .

**Honors Vocal Ensemble Women:** uniform black concert dresses, black dress flats, no jewelry other than small stud earrings. Dresses will be purchased through the SWGHS Choral Dept. The cost is $75 and may be paid on a payment plan if needed. Make-up at concerts should not include bright colors.

For **informal performances**, we will wear our chorus shirts. These shirts are required for Honors Vocal Ensemble and optional for other students. Remember that spirit wear may be worn everyday this year—chorus shirts count!!!

**Concert Dates and Attendance**

Public performance is one of the most effective means of music education assessment. Because chorus is considered an academic class, grades are assigned for participation in all scheduled performances. Unexcused absences from any of these events will result in a failing performance grade. We need ALL of our students for our performances—each person makes a difference!

Regularly scheduled concerts will be graded events assessed on the following criteria:

* Proper preparation: proper concert attire and on-time
* Singing with appropriate energy/attitude
* Focus, discipline and teamwork ethic (i.e. before concert and between songs)
* Off-stage etiquette and discipline

I understand that emergencies cannot be planned for and do happen. Should an emergency occur the day of a concert and prevent a student from attending the concert, the student should bring in a note the next school day explaining the emergency with parental contact information so the emergency can be verified. It is the student’s responsibility to remember to bring in the emergency note. Once I have verified the emergency, the student will be allowed to make-up the missed concert grade by singing his/her part alone.

Any reason besides an unexpected emergency or sickness will need to be approved within the first 10 days of school. *It is rare that concert absences for reasons other than illness will be approved*. Because concerts are scheduled months in advance, and students/parents have access to these dates, poor planning on behalf of the performer will not be excused (such as not having a ride). Please make plans now to attend our concerts!

If a student is absent from school (due to illness) on the day of a concert, he/she should contact me so that planning can be made on the night of the concert to rearrange singers, soloists, etc. If the student feels marginally better, he/she might come to the concert as an audience member and do a written critique of the performance due the next school day attended. Otherwise, when the student returns, a signed note from a parent, stating that his/her child was sick, is necessary to allow a grade substitution, which will be singing his/her part alone.

Any additional performance that is determined as a “graded/mandatory event” will be announced at least 1 month prior to the activity. Students that have conflicts must communicate their conflict immediately; an alternative assignment may be necessary for those with non-flexible commitments.

**Required school concerts:**

**Fall Chorus Concert Tuesday, October 30 at 7pm (6:45 call)**

**Winter Chorus Concert Tuesday, January 8 at 7pm (6:45 call)**

**(See comprehensive list of Chorus Dates on next page for other important events!)**

**Grading Policy**

**Classwork 30% (Includes homework and participation)**

Classwork may include worksheets, journal entries, essays, oral discussions, etc. Any classwork not completed in class is automatically homework unless otherwise specified. Little homework will be assigned, but may occasionally arise from time to time and will be graded under this category. Ten points will be deducted daily for late work. Participation includes daily involvement in questioning/answering, oral contributions, apparent singing effort, usage of appropriate posture, being on task, work ethic, etc. Every week a participation grade will be entered into the gradebook equaling 10 points per day.

*Note: good discipline does not necessarily mean good participation.* Participation is an active process that should be obvious in daily rehearsals and out of class performances.

**Performance Attendance 40%**

For performances, each student has a responsibility to other members of the choral class. The absence of a single singer will affect the total group’s performance. Students should arrive on time and dressed correctly. Performance etiquette, timeliness, singing energy and musical preparation will be the main areas of assessment for this grade.

**Quizzes and Tests 30%**

Students will be expected to complete both written and **singing exams** testing knowledge of musical and conceptual elements discussed in class. Because this is a high school course, students should be able to decide if they need to take notes whenever new concepts are presented, even if I don't specifically tell them to do so. Some of the concepts that might be present on such assessments include knowledge of vocal part, singing tone, physiology/anatomy of the vocal mechanism, music theory and history, as well as vocabulary/terminology examinations. A variety of testing methods will be used for the benefit of the students, including oral presentations, multiple choice, essays, self-evaluations, fill in the blank, etc.

**Closing**

I am looking forward to a great year. Please be in touch if I can do anything in particular to help make your child’s chorus experience more successful. Please sign and return the attached contract, information sheet, and concert attire/shirt order form. Returning these forms signed by Friday, August 31 counts as the first homework grade.

Catherine Butler, Choral Director Abbi Fleckenstein, Student Teacher

**Preliminary Chorus Dates 2018-2019**

Honors Chorus Clinic\* Sat, Aug 25 UNCG

**Homecoming National Anthem (HVE) Fri, Oct 12 Southwest HS**

Honors Chorus Auditions\* Fri, Sept 28 UNCG

Swarm Game National Anthem (HVE) TBA GSO Coliseum

Mars Hill Honor Choir Auditions\* Thurs, Oct 11 Weaver Academy

GCS All-County Chorus\* Fri, Oct 19 and Sat, Oct 20 TBD

Wingate 9/10 Select Choir Auditions\* Fri, Oct 26 online

**Fall Chorus Concert Tues, Oct 30 Southwest HS**

NC Honors Chorus\* Sat, Nov 10 and Sun, Nov 11 Winston-Salem

**Winter Chorus Concert Tues, Jan 8 Southwest HS**

Mars Hill Zone Rehearsal\* Thurs, Jan 24 Weaver Academy

Wingate 9/10 Select Choir\* Fri, Jan 25-Sat, Jan 26 Wingate Univ.

Mars Hill Honor Choir\* Thurs, Jan 31-Sat, Feb 2 Mars Hill Univ.

**Pre-MPA Concert (with MS) Tues, March 12 Southwest HS**

**Music Performance Adjudication Week of March 11 Wake Forest Univ.**

All-State Zone Rehearsal\* mid-March Northwest HS

All-State Chorus\* Fri, April 26-Sat, April 27 Charlotte

Possible HPU Concert Mon, April 29 High Point Univ.

Grasshoppers Game Nat. Anthem TBA GSO Stadium

**Spring Chorus Concert Thurs, May 23 Southwest HS**

\*For select students only

**Required events**

Southwest Guilford High School Choral Department Contract

I agree to abide by all the rules and expectations presented by Ms. Butler to the best of my ability. I will try my hardest each day to uphold the standards presented and work together with Ms. Butler and my classmates.

Student’s Signature Date

I agree to do my part in supporting and encouraging my child to abide by the rules and expectations presented. I will make sure my child has transportation and the appropriate attire for each performance.

Guardian’s Signature Date

I will do my best to provide an exciting and enriching experience for each student in my classroom. I will stand by the rules and expectations and make sure each student understands and abides by them.

Teacher’s Signature Date

PLEASE FILL OUT THE INFORMATION SHEET ON THE BACK

**Family Information**

Student Name Grade

Guardian Name(s)

Guardian Phone Number

Guardian Email

**Volunteer/donation opportunities: (please circle those you can assist with)**

Chaperoning field trips

Measuring students for concert attire

Concert door attendant

Bottled water

Granola bars/individual chips/packs of crackers

Plates/cups/napkins

Does your child have any medical conditions or religious beliefs that will affect his/her performance in Chorus? If so, please let me know. Is there anything else about your child that you would like to share with me?

**Student Name**

**Concert Attire Options**

**Please indicate in the appropriate section which option your family would like to choose in regards to concert attire for your child this semester. Concert attire will be ordered based on this form and students will be charged accordingly. Any girl may order the HVE dress; it’s only required for HVE.**

**Girls (long plain black dress)**

 Will purchase required Honors Vocal Ensemble concert attire for $75

 One payment of $75 due by Sept 7

 Two payments of $37.50 due by Sept 7 and Oct 5

 Three payments of $25 due by Sept 7, Oct 5, and Nov 9

 Four payments of $18.75 due by Sept 7, Oct 5, Nov 9 and Dec 7

 Will wear dress that I already own

 Would like to try to borrow dress from SWGHS (limited supply and sizes)

**Guys (black dress pants, white dress shirt, black tie, black vest [HVE only])**

 Will purchase required Honors Vocal Ensemble concert attire

 One payment of $75 due by Sept 7

 Two payments of $37.50 due by Sept 7 and Oct 5

 Three payments of $25 due by Sept 7, Oct 5, and Nov 9

 Four payments of $18.75 due by Sept 7, Oct 5, Nov 9 and Dec 7

 Will wear clothes that I already own/will purchase on my own

 Need a bow tie ($3) Need a vest ($28)

 Need a shirt ($13) Need pants ($26)

**Chorus Shirt Order**

**Shirts are optional and are $17 each.**

**Circle your size!**

Small Medium Large X-Large XX-Large

**Parent Signature**