

WELCOME!!

Hello Students and Parents of the Western Middle School for the Arts Vocal Music Program!

I am so excited to welcome you to the 2019 - 2020 school year. My name is Mrs. Cook and I cannot wait to work with you this school year! We have a big year ahead, including lots of learning, and several performances throughout the year.

As the Visual and Performing Arts Magnet School for middle schools, the Western Middle School for the Arts Vocal Music Program will bring our students the highest quality literature, highly specialized instruction, and the opportunity to work with professional artists in the field of music. Being a part of this program is a privilege I hope you, the student, do not take for granted. If you come into the choir classroom every day with a positive attitude and are ready to work hard to improve, we will have a great year together!

This handbook is to serve as a source of information (including syllabus) for all vocal music students. Each student and parent should read the handbook together, sign the last page, and return the last page to me no later than FRIDAY, AUGUST 23rd. If there are any questions that you still have, feel free to email me at:

Kathryn.cook@jefferson.kyschools.us

You may also call the school at 485-8345 and leave a message. I will return any calls within 24 hours.

I'm looking forward to the best school year yet!

Katie Cook

“You mean there’s more to choir than just singing?”

Of course there is! Sure, singing is “what we do,” but how we get to the end result entails so much more. Listed below are just some of the objectives of our classes.

- Develop proper vocal technique
- Develop the ability to read and notate music
- Develop the ability to perform music with appropriate expression
- Learn basic music history and music theory
- Sing pieces from all different musical periods, genres and cultures
- Be responsible for yourself
- Develop character traits such as leadership, poise, and dependability
- Develop the desire to continue participation in music
- Develop a life long appreciation of the arts

As you can see, a student who participates in choir not only develops his or her musical skills, but also learns many life skills that may help them, no matter which path they choose to take.

Responsibilities of Choir Members:

To attend school and rehearsals regularly and account for all absences

To make a genuine effort and improve daily

To become responsible for yourself and your actions

To have respect for those in authority

To follow classroom rules, school regulations, and travel instructions

To cooperate with and respect other choir members

To gain understanding of music

“What are the rules in this classroom?”

There are only a few hard and fast rules that should be remembered when in our classroom.

- 1. Respect yourself.**
- 2. Respect others.**
- 3. Respect the property.**
- 4. Respect learning.**

These may seem to leave some things out, but when you really think about it, they pretty much cover everything. Respecting yourself means caring enough to get the most out of this experience. Try to give yourself the best experience you can everyday. Come in with a positive attitude and be ready and willing to learn. Leave your distractions (cell phones, purses, iPods, work from other classes) at the door for one hour and enjoy making music with us.

Respecting others includes the director, accompanist, and your fellow singers. Respecting them means no talking during rehearsal, being supportive, never putting them down and being willing to lend a hand when needed. Negative attitudes spread like the flu, so if you do have a negative thought, keep it to yourself.

Respecting the property covers the room, the music, the piano and everything that does not belong to you (although you should respect your own belongings as well.) You may only write in your music in pencil, please do not put your drinks on the piano, stack your binder neatly in the cabinet, only water allowed during rehearsal, leave the gum outside the classroom, etc. This rule is intended to prevent any damage that could potentially be done to our music, room, or materials in the room. We are fortunate to have the facilities we are in and we need to do everything we can to keep them nice for everyone who uses them.

Respect for learning means allowing me (the teacher) to create a classroom where learning can occur at all times. Be focused, on task, and be prepared to learn something new every day!

“So choir is pretty much an easy A, right?”

Right...as long as you do what you are supposed to do!

Grading will be done on the following scale:

MASTERY – 50%

PROGRESSION – 30%

ENGAGEMENT – 20%

All of our assignments (daily participation, quizzes, projects, tests, performance assessments, etc.) will fall under one of these categories. Please consult Infinite Campus often to track your grades.

Grading Scale

90-100 = A

80-89= B

70-79=C

60-69 = D

0-59= U

Participation

Participation in the concerts and daily in class is vital to the success of each student, choir, and our program as a whole. The work a student misses when they are absent can rarely be “made up.” Additionally, the choir suffers when members are not there to do their part. If a student has an excused absence they will be allowed to make up participation points by completing an additional assignment. If a student has an unexcused absence, they cannot make up the participation points.

NOTE: Excessive excused OR unexcused absences may result in a student not being allowed to participate in the concert. As this is a performance based class, it would not be fair to the rest of the ensemble to allow a student to perform if they have missed too much rehearsal. Students with excused absences will be permitted to make up the points by working in the music library and/or writing a review of the concert CD.

Illness

If a student is ill, they will be excused for up to 2 class rehearsals without a note from a doctor or parent. Students should tell Mrs. Cook at the beginning of class if they are too ill to sing. Even if they cannot sing, the student should still have their music out and follow all directions given during rehearsal to receive participation points. Students are encouraged to remember that our voices are part of our bodies and when we neglect our health, our voices can be damaged as well. The following is a list of strategies for maintaining good vocal health.

- No excessive yelling
- Do not share food, drinks, or chapstick (you never know what germs others carry!)
- Get plenty of rest
- Wash your hands several times a day

Student Activity Conflicts

Although I try my best to avoid scheduling performances at the same time as other school activities, occasionally conflicts arise. It is wonderful that we have so many involved students in our choir, but we do have to make choices and compromises at times.

If a practice or rehearsal is scheduled as the same time as an event (game, concert, contest) the EVENT takes precedence.

When two events are scheduled simultaneously, a District event takes precedence over a regular event, a Regional event takes precedence over a District event, State over District and National over State.

When two practices/rehearsals or events are scheduled at the same time, the student may select the event in which he or she participates. The student should keep in mind that choir is also a class for which they will receive a grade and it should take precedence over non-graded activities. The student should notify all teachers/sponsors/coaches at least 2 weeks ahead of time of their choice.

“Mrs. Cook, I really love singing. What other things can I do?”

I'm so glad you asked!

Voice Lessons – As many of our students will want to audition for musicals, All State and Honor choirs, and perhaps the Youth Performing Arts School, I encourage each student to take private voice lessons. I will be happy to provide recommendations for teachers and other opportunities to work with voice teachers.

Vocal Academy (6th/7th Grades Only) – Once a week, juniors and seniors from the Youth Performing Arts School Vocal Program will come to WMSFA after school to teach small group voice lessons. This is offered at no cost to our students. At the end of each semester, there will be a recital for all students participating in Vocal Academy. Look for an information sheet with dates and times in the first week of October.

Solo and Ensemble – Solo and Ensemble is an adjudicated event that takes place at the U of L School of Music in the spring. This year, Solo and Ensemble will be April 18th, 2020. Each student prepares a solo or small group piece and performs for a judge. This is a great experience, especially for students who plan on auditioning for the Youth Performing Arts School. Look for more information for this event on our website.

All State Choir /All County Choir/ACDA Regional Honor Choir– There are 3 great Honor Choir opportunities for choral students. All of them require that students audition for the choirs and the students are notified if they are selected. Look for more information about Honor Choirs on our website. I will also have hard copies of info available for students.

Louisville Youth Choir - We are fortunate to have a great community youth choir that would be a fantastic additional singing outlet. Please visit www.louyouthchoir.org to find out more information. They will hold auditions at the end of August and again in January.

“So what do we wear to the concerts?”

When we perform, it is important to look like a group performing as one, not 70 individuals on stage. Therefore, all students are to wear the following when performing:

Formal Concerts: For our formal concerts (Winter Concert, KMEA Assessment) students should wear black pants or skirt, black socks, black shoes, and the WMSFA Choir Polo. Polos are \$15 and we will place the order the first week of October.

Informal Concerts: For our less formal concerts (Performances at Elementary Schools, Spring Pops Concert, 6th Grade Informance) students should wear black pants or skirts, black socks and shoes, and Western wear. We will be sending order forms home for new Western wear in the first weeks of school. Any shirt with the new logo is appropriate for informal performances.

Speaking of concerts...

We have several important performances on the calendar. **Please add these to your calendar TODAY to avoid potential conflicts.**

**Tuesday, October 22nd – 6th Grade Informance – 6 PM WMSFA
(6th Grade Choir ONLY)**

**Thursday, December 12th– Winter Concert – 6 PM WMSFA
(All Choirs!)**

NOTE: If you miss a concert for any reason other than illness or a death in the family, it will be considered unexcused. You will be required to sing your music from the concert by yourself for Mrs. Cook and will then receive your grade for the concert.

A few words about choral repertoire...

Choral music began in a church setting. From the traditional mass settings by Bach and Vivaldi to the African American Spiritual, choral music was literally developed in a sacred environment. For this reason, all of our choirs this year will be singing both secular and sacred pieces.

The following is a statement, given by the Music Educators National Conference, in reference to the topic of sacred music.

***Does music with a sacred text have a place in the public schools?
It is the position of MENC: The National Association for Music Education that the study and performance of religious music within an educational context is a vital and appropriate part of a comprehensive music education. The omission of sacred music from the school curriculum would result in an incomplete educational experience.***

For more information on this subject, please visit the MENC website at:
<http://www.menc.org/about/view/sacred-music-in-schools>.

Keeping you in the loop!

Please download the Remind app (free!) and text your child's class code to **81018**. I will be utilizing the Remind app, email, and the WMSFA Choir website to communicate. Your child may also message me through Google Classroom. Please keep in mind that I am teaching until 2:20 most days, so expect return calls and emails after that time.

6th Grade Choir - @bae7eb
7th Grade Choir - @829gh7a
8th Grade Choir - @3ag8ag8

“I love coming to the concerts. As a parent, is there anything else I can do to help?”

There is so much that parents can do help our program. Aside from volunteering at concerts or on trips, please consider the following:

- Show a genuine interest in the musical learning of your student
- Keep a record of the student’s various music activities
- Notify Mrs. Cook if your child is to be absent from a rehearsal or concert
- Teach your child to be punctual at rehearsals and performances
- Make sure your student keeps up with class work and makes up missed work
- Discuss with Mrs. Cook anything that may help her understand your student
- Attend our concerts and performances. Our best support comes from our parents and families!
- **JOIN THE MAESTROS, INC!** We have a wonderful organization, run by parents, that supports the arts needs of WMSFA students. Please consider joining and getting involved in some way. Visit the choir website below to get more info about The Maestros or visit the Maestros website at www.wmsfamaestros.wixsite.com/mysite.

Stay connected at www.wmsfavoice.weebly.com!

Print Student Name: _____

**Students and Parents – read, sign, and return to Mrs. Cook by
FRIDAY, AUGUST 23rd, 2019.**

I, (student name) _____, have read and understand the
Western Middle School for the Arts Choir Handbook. I know it is my
responsibility to follow all rules and procedures outlined in this handbook.

Signature of Student

Signature of Parent

Date

Parent Email _____

Parent Email _____

Parent Phone _____

I am interested in helping with the following:

Chaperone field trips **Help with concert set up**

Fundraising **Anything! Give me a call!**