



Northmor Jr./Sr. High School Choral Handbook

Miss Slezak

To be read, signed, and returned by **September 18th, 2020**

Dear Students and Guardians,

Welcome, or welcome back, to the Northmor Choral Program! I am excited to meet you and to begin making music while growing both in musicality and intellectually over the course of this year. I am committed to each student's individual growth and allowing every student to participate in an ensemble regardless of experience or skill level. The expectation is that every student comes into rehearsal everyday with a willingness to work hard, maintains a mature and responsible attitude, is always prepared, and willing to be a team player. A successful ensemble is a byproduct of the spirit and work ethic of everyone involved!

I graduated from Hickory High School in Hermitage, PA and then studied at the University of Mount Union with a focus in voice. Besides voice, I also have experience playing violin and piano. I was inspired to become a music teacher my sophomore year of high school and am so excited to begin my career at Northmor. Students, please remember that my door is always open, and I am always willing to be of help to you in or outside of my classroom. I can be reached at kslezak@knightpride.org, slezak.kaitlyn@northmor.k12.oh.us, and my school phone [\(419\)-946-3946 ext. 49259](tel:(419)946-3946).

The purpose of this handbook is to let students and guardians be aware of the following:

- Choral Placement and Informal and Formal Auditions
- Standards, Expectations, and Attendance
- Concert Etiquette
- Learning Process
- Grading

- Leadership Opportunities
- Uniform
- Costs
- Awards
- Outside Activities and Field Trips
- COVID-19 Update
- Signature Sheet

Choral Placement Auditions:

Every student is required to have an informal choral participation audition. Students will not need to dress up or choose a song in advance for placement in the 7th and 8th Grade Junior High Choir or the 9th-12th Grade High School Concert Choir. For this audition, students will only need to fill out a choral placement and audition form and be familiar with the song *America* (My Country 'Tis of Thee). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, these informal auditions will be completed and submitted online using FlipGrid.

For Knightsounds and the Junior High Honor Choir, a piece will be provided that the students will need to learn for a more formal audition. This year only, students interested in Knightsounds will either sing the Star Spangled Banner or the Northmor Alma Mater for the vocal component of the audition. Interested students for Knightsounds will need to sign up the first week of school and pick up the information packet with a more detailed description of the audition process. The Junior High Honor Choir will not meet until after Christmas Break.

Students will be placed in an ensemble that caters to their abilities and will provide them with the best learning environment that will challenge them without being overwhelming. The purpose of the informal audition is to let me know of a student's vocal range, comfortable tessitura, vocal timbre or tone color, sight-singing and rhythm reading abilities, and simply, to get to know them. Overall, it will help me determine the proper voice part assignment and also track progress from year to year. Once these auditions can be done in person, they will take less than ten minutes and students can choose to audition with a friend if they prefer not to come alone. For online submissions, the process should take less than five minutes and must be completed independently.

Standards and Expectations for Being a Member of a Choral Ensemble:

Qualities every musician can bring to the rehearsal regardless of musical skill sets:

- **Be Prompt** – Be on time to every rehearsal and seated when the bell rings. If you are late, please bring an excuse signed by a teacher.
- **Be Prepared** – Come to each rehearsal with all your music and a pencil. Use the restroom and discard gum before beginning warm-ups. If you miss rehearsal, contact a classmate to know what you missed.
- **Be Respectful** – Keep talking to a minimum throughout rehearsal as to not be disruptive to others. If you are confident on a part while others are still struggling, offer suggestions instead of criticism. Do not touch the pianos, audio cabinet, ceiling pipes or lights, or other students' materials and belongings.
- **Be Diligent** – Mark in measure numbers for all pieces, continue to study your part when I am working with another section, offer suggestions to improve the quality of the music, stay focused on every task.
- **Participate** – If you are struggling with the solfege, sight singing, or rhythm reading, do as much as you can. If you get one note or syllable, great! Work for two the next time. I am more interested in effort and progress than in perfection. Participation also lets me know what needs fixed sooner rather than later.

These rules, standards, and expectations are considered in your daily participation grade!

Attendance: The musical experience of each individual in the ensemble is influenced by each member being present. When there are absences in the classroom, there is an absence in the overall sound, productivity, and the learning. Attendance in this sense is then linked to participation. If you are physically present but not participating, you will therefore be counted as absent. To receive full attendance points each student must arrive on time, have their music, a pencil, and participate throughout the entire rehearsal.

Concerts and dress rehearsals are mandatory. Failure to attend without an excuse will result in a zero for the largest grades in this class. The only exceptions are a personal or immediate family member's extreme illness or accident, a death in the family, or an impossible to change family commitment (i.e. wedding, military departure or homecoming, etc.) You must

provide documentation of your absence and complete an alternate assignment to receive credit for missing these events.

Concert Etiquette:

- Do not applaud until you are certain the piece is over (This is when the conductor's arms are down.)
 - Only enter or exit the performance space between pieces or during applause breaks.
 - No cell phones on stage or in use as an audience member.
 - Do not talk during the performance or sing along unless it is specially requested.
 - Stay for the entire performance to support all performing groups.
- Remember that you are always representing the Northmor Choral Program. On stage or off stage, it is important to be an exemplary audience member, professional performer, and supportive peer.

**The Northmor School District and Northmor High School/Junior High do not sponsor, endorse, or promote any particular religious ideology or group. Any compositions containing religious lyrics are selected on the basis of their musical and educational values rather than the religious context. The omission of sacred music from the repertoire or study of music would present an incorrect and incomplete concept of the comprehensive nature of the art form.

Learning Process:

A portion of our music will first be learned on Solfege (Do, re, mi...). Unless a piece specifically calls to be learned by rote, it is against my philosophy to simply play all the notes of each part on piano until it is memorized. Students will learn to become music readers and capable musicians that can use the skills they learn in class to eventually be able to sight read melodies with little difficulty and without my help. Once the notes and rhythms are solidified, the solfege syllables will be replaced with text and then the extra musical elements such as dynamics, phrasing, articulation, and meaning. To aid in music reading literacy, our warm-up process will include sight reading melodies and rhythms as well.

Grading:

Listed below are the types of assessments you will be graded on for each quarter.

- Attendance and participation
- Score marking
- Recording Reflections / Listening Assessments
- Singing Assessments
- Quizzes

- Music terminology test (Q1)
- Music Research Paper (Q3)
- Concert and Dress Rehearsal (Q2 and Q4)
- Concert Reflection (Q2 and Q4)

**Grading periods without a concert or dress rehearsal will have smaller overall point values.

Leadership Opportunities:

There will be a variety of leadership opportunities for students offered. President, VP, Secretary, Treasure, and Section Leaders can be elected by the ensembles or assigned by the director.

President: Must be a senior that has been in the high school choir for at least two years. The president of the choir will be responsible for representing the choral program at school functions. They must also be in charge of leading rehearsal if the music director is temporarily not in the room or if there is a substitute. The president will also speak during the concert about the choir, the learning process, and types of students involved. A segment of this speech should also be given to the secretary for him/her to send to the local newspaper to promote the concert.

VP: Must be an upperclassman (Junior, or Senior) that has been in high school choir for at least two years. The Vice President will assist the president in any duties that require more than one person. The VP will also have some responsibility in the preparation and organization of the choir banquet. This will require working with the treasure on a budget, theme, and fundraisers.

Secretary: Can be an upper or lower classman that has been in high school choir or middle school choir for at least one year. The secretary is responsible for keeping the calendar in the choir room current. They also assist in the creation of the concert program.

Treasure: Can be an upper or lower classman that has been in high school choir or middle school choir for at least one year. The treasure must organize at least one fundraiser for the choral program during the year. They should also collaborate with the VP on the Choir Banquet.

Section Leaders / Choral Delegate: These positions will be assigned in each choir for each class period. They will assist in rhythm reading, solfege reading, diction, and musical expression. A section leader will also be responsible for beginning choir rehearsal on time if the director is not in the room. It is especially helpful if section leaders have some piano skills to assist in warm-ups, trouble spots, and knowledge of some basic conducting patterns to help keep the sectional running smoothly. Outside of regular rehearsal, students in this position may be requested to help with music, robes, or paperwork. The amount of involvement and responsibility will vary depending on the needs of that class period.

Uniforms:

Please keep in mind the purpose of the uniform is for everyone to look uniform and keep the attention focused on the music! Make sure that your hair is out of your face. Please do not wear any sparkling jewelry, have bright colored makeup, multicolored bracelets, or anything else that would cause the attention to be drawn away from the performance. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me.

- **7th and 8th Grade Junior High Choir / Junior High Honor Choir** – The women will wear their insignia shirt, black skirt or dress pants and black socks and black close-toed shoes. If you choose to wear a skirt, you must also wear black tights. The men will wear black close-toed shoes, black socks, black pants, and their insignia shirt.
- **9th-12th Grade High School Concert Choir** – The women will wear black, close-toed shoes with black socks or nylons, and black pants and their choir robe. The men will wear black, close-toed shoes with black socks and black pants. They will also wear a white collared shirt and black tie and their choir robe.
- **Knightsounds** – The women will be in a uniform knee-length dress, nude dance tights, and nude 1 ½ inch dance character shoes. The men will be in a white or black dress shirt, colored tie corresponding to the ladies' dresses, black dress pants, and black socks with black shoes.

**Make sure that following the performance your robe is put away correctly. Failure to do so may result in a loss of overall points for the concert!

**If there is anyone that is uncomfortable with the uniform or wishes to make any adaptations, please speak with me privately to make those arrangements.

Costs to the School:

Checks can be made out to “Northmor Music Boosters” and the note should specify which cost(s) you are paying. Checks or cash must be turned in by the first concert in order to participate.

- \$10 fee for 9th-12th grade students using a choral robe to help cover dry cleaning costs at the end of the school year.
- \$20 fee for the 7th and 8th grade special insignia performance shirt.
- \$150* One-time purchase for the dress used for Knightsounds.
- \$15* One-time purchase for the tie used for Knightsounds.
- Black close-toed shoes, black pants, black socks, nude nylon tights, and white or black collared dress shirts are to be purchased on your own and not through a school order.

**If there are any issues concerning costs or needing an extension, please speak with me privately to make those arrangements.

Awards:

Junior High:

- 1st Year – Certificate
- 2nd Year – Black and gold ribbon
- Recognition of officers and section leaders
- Ubuntu Award – An award for a first-year member who embodies that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” and “I am who I am because of who we are all together.”
- Outstanding Participants’ Awards– Students vote for two, two-year members who display talent, leadership, and a positive attitude.

High School:

- 1st Year – Certificate
- 2nd Year – Letter
- 3rd Year – Choir Pin
- 4th Year – Special Choral “Person” (Blanket??)
- Recognition of officers and section leaders
- Ubuntu Award – An award for a first-year member who embodies that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” and “I am who I am because of who we are all together.”
- Outstanding Underclassman Award – Students vote for an outstanding freshman, sophomore, or junior who displays talent, leadership, and positive attitude.
- National School Choral Award – Students vote for an outstanding senior who displays talent, leadership, and a positive attitude.
- Choral Director’s Award – The director chooses an outstanding senior who displays talent, leadership, and a positive attitude.

** The director reserves the right to make the final decision on awards if warranted.

Outside Activities and Field Trips: (Subject to change or be cancelled due to COVID-19):

Solo and Ensemble Contest: This is an event designed for students to better themselves. It is not a competition against other classmates or schools. Students can prepare a solo, perform in

small ensembles, or do both. The High School event typically takes place in January or February and the Junior High event happens in March or April.

Key points to remember:

- **Individual practice is a must!!** The director reserves the right to revoke your participation in the contest if necessary. The Music Boosters will cover your entry fee.
- If you do not attend for whatever reason, you are required to repay the Boosters. Fees are nonrefundable!
- Accompanist fees are due on/or before the day of contest.
- You are required to provide your own transportation to and from the contest sight.

Honors Choir (District X): This event typically takes place in November and the Director reserves the right to nominate students for this opportunity. Decisions will be based on talent, seniority, and attitude. However, if you are nominated, there may be a fee to participate or for the music. If selected, individual practice is a must. You should attend these events with your music already learned so the guest conductor can focus on higher level music making!

Field Trips: Make sure to see classroom teachers about missed work before we depart as trips do not excuse you from required schoolwork. The following points are essential to follow if there is going to be another trip in the future.

- Dress appropriately as instructed.
- Be prompt, alert, and polite at all times.
- No bus switching.
- Cell phones may be brought with you but must be turned off during all performances.
- No drinking or eating on the bus.

**I, the director, reserve the right to refuse field trip participation to any member. (Concert absence, excessive school absences, or placement in AEP automatically takes you out of field trips for the entire semester as does suspension from school.

COVID-19:

While the situation regarding the new Coronavirus remains fluid, the Northmor Choral Program continues to stay updated, flexible, and current on effective and safe ways to proceed. As of 8/22/2020, these are some of our procedures and expectations:

- Students are able to sing without a mask as long as they are six feet or more apart and all facing the same direction. If students are uncomfortable singing without a mask or face covering, I would prefer if students were to wear a face shield or a see-through mask.
- In the past, students would share music or materials. This year, each student will have their own music, folder, and storage slot. Students cannot share music and materials will need to be sanitized daily.
- Students must wear their mask or face covering if they are not actively singing.
- Students who sit on the right side of the room will enter the classroom from the right side near the mirrors and exit out of the same door. Students who sit on the left side of the room will enter the room through the door near the storage room and exit through the same door. Students will be dismissed by their row to limit the number of students leaving at one time.
- Extra time will be given to students before starting rehearsal and at the end of rehearsal so students do not congregate near music storage areas and can socially distance properly.
- Make sure to check Remind for updates about changes in procedures. Class codes are on google classroom pages.

Northmor Choir Member Contract

I, _____ have read and understand the Northmor Jr./Sr. High School Choral Handbook and agree to the student expectations and standards. I also understand the grade breakdown and the costs that are required in addition to each ensemble. Lastly, I have made note of the calendar, any conflicts, and COVID-19 expectations.

Grade (Circle One): 7 8 9 10 11 12

Student Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Northmor is using Final Forms as the new electronic system for school information. You can now complete the Choir Member Contract and medical forms and only have to update from year to year. Fill out the form once and all information is transferable to any activity your son/daughter is involved in at school!

For Choir – students will need to have a completed medical form!