



Homer Senior High School's
2023-2024

Choral Handbook



**Please keep this handbook to refer to throughout the year.
Pay special attention to required concert dates.
Sign and return indicated pages.**



September 2023

Dear Students, Parents and Guardians,

Welcome back! I hope that all of you had a safe and restful summer and are excited to be starting a new school year! We are excited to be looking forward to participating in many exciting events, and bringing back touring by going to New York City!

Each year I select a new area on which to focus. Over the last few years we have been reminded of how music connects us in a profound way! Sharing a musical experience, practicing songs, working together to tackle musical challenges, and bringing that product to our community touches us in a way that nothing else can. We did some of that last year, and look forward to connecting even more with our community through performances, mentoring and connecting with younger students, and going to see professional performances locally and farther afield!

One of the great things about our choir is that each person can decide how much they want to be involved. Some will just want to focus on the projects in class. Others may want to be involved in outreach projects. Still others may want to design projects of their own that will further spread the positive effects of music throughout our community! Decide what works for you, and what you can take on this year!

Research over decades has shown that singing relieves stress, stimulates the immune system, improves both mental and physical health, and develops a sense of belonging and connection. Let's capitalize on all that can do for us and those around us this year!

It's going to be a GREAT YEAR!

Musically yours,

Mrs. Cara K-B McLaughlin
High School Vocal Director
cmclaughlin@homercentral.org
749-7246 ex.4948

Course Description

Choir is a performing ensemble that meets every day for one scholastic credit. Students who are also in band first period split their time between the two ensembles, attending chorus on days 2, 4, and 6, and receiving ½ credit for each performing group.

In chorus, students learn and perform a variety of choral literature. Skills that are developed include music reading/literacy, sight reading, vocal technique, listening skills, ensemble sensitivity, stylistic differences, singing in different languages, performing different styles of music, historical and cultural background of pieces, performance etiquette, working as a member of a team, following choral conducting gestures, and constructive evaluation of performance.

Students will be evaluated and graded in a variety of ways. Short quizzes will be given every few weeks, as well as a final exam. Students will be graded on their performance of choir music at least once every quarter. Students will be expected to do some work outside of class every quarter and can select a way to fulfill this requirement from a variety of options presented on page 4. Please pay close attention to the requirements for the option you chose, as this will affect the grading of that assignment. The homework requirement is intended to give students a deeper understanding of music, singing, and performing and to cover the New York State Standards for the Arts which are not as easily covered in an ensemble setting.

National Core Arts Standards

1. Creating Art
2. Performing, Presenting and Producing Art
3. Responding to Art
4. Connecting to Art

The public performance of our music is a mandatory part of this course, with four required concerts. Attendance at these events contributes 20 points to that quarter's grade. The ***only excused absences from a concert are*** sickness or a family emergency, both of which ***require a note*** to the director for record-keeping. Please mark these on your calendar to avoid any confusion:

Winter Concert – Thurs., December 7
All-District Vocal Concert – Wed., March 20
Music Competition – New York City, Sat., April 6
Spring Concert - Wed., May 22

Concert Dress

Students will be provided with a choir robe and stole for all concerts unless noted otherwise (community concerts). At concerts students should wear the following under their robes:

On Bottom: Black dress pants and socks or long black skirt and black dress shoes
On Top: School appropriate black dress shirt

** Members of Ruby Rhythms and Blue Notes will wear their concert dress.

Class Rules:

Respect

1. yourself
2. others
3. the music
4. the time
5. the space

Grading

Students will be graded every quarter based on the following categories:

Class Participation	40%	*(rehearsal participation each day)
Out-of-class Development	20%	** (lessons, extra musical activities)
Concert Attendance	20%	(required concerts)
Skill/Literacy Assessment	20%	(content quizzes & singing assessments)

* **Absenteeism** – All students are absent at some point or another, and if it is an occasional occurrence it is easy for the student to pick up what he/she missed, but if it becomes a frequent occurrence, the student(s) get quite behind. Since choir is an active interaction between student and teacher (and group), this work cannot be made up on one's own. As a result, **for every 4 classes that a student misses in a marking period, they must attend 1 - Homeroom or 9th period with Mrs. K-B McLaughlin to make up the missed class credit points and material.**

** Out-of-class Development

Each student can earn 90% of their grade for choir during class time and at concerts. The remaining 10% of the grade is earned by applying what is learned during class by completing one or more of the following approved activities below. Each activity is worth a certain amount of points according to how much it reinforces the student's development of their choral skills. Make sure that the points you complete add up to 10 to ensure that you receive full credit in this category.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Marking Period(s) Available</u>
School Voice Lessons	20	All
*Private Voice or Piano Lessons	5	All
*Community/Church Choir	5	All
*Program Notes	5	All
*Choral Concert/CD Review	5	All
Blue Notes, Ruby Rhythms	5	1 st , 2 nd , 4 th
Spring Musical	5	2 nd & 3 rd
Christmas Ensemble	5	2 nd
Honor Choirs (e.g. Area All-State)	5	Varies
NYSSMA Solo Festival	5	4 th

Be sure to plan to complete **20 points worth each quarter** to maximize your grade. If you miss your voice lesson, be sure to make them up, preferably by the end of the same week, but definitely by the end of the quarter. **You may earn up to 5 bonus points in this category.**

*** See following pages for corresponding forms and requirements for these assignments.**

Vocal Lessons

Vocal lessons are an opportunity for students to get individualized attention, work on solo and small ensemble music, reinforce and solidify choir, co-curricular choir, and musical music, and prepare NYSSMA solo and ensemble music. Group lessons are rotated through the school day so that each student ***does not miss the same class more than once in four weeks.*** Lessons are essential for the vocal and musical growth that each student can achieve. All high-level choirs attribute a major part of their success to the vocal lesson component of their program.

Participating students ***will report first to their regularly scheduled class*** (on or ahead-of-time) to let their teacher know that they have a lesson that period. If you cannot miss the class (because of a test, etc...), no problem, ***speak to Mrs. K-B McLaughlin ahead of time or the next day*** to schedule a make-up lesson. The student is responsible for any ***homework, reading, and assignments in the class they are missing!!!!***

Blue Notes and Ruby Rhythms

Blue Notes and Ruby Rhythms were established several years ago as select ensembles designed to give high-level performers experience in different musical genres and as a way of giving back to the community through performances. Over the years, each group has earned a strong reputation of musical excellence and is in demand throughout the community. Auditions are held each September for those interested in joining their ranks. If selected, members are expected to attend regular rehearsals (Rubies on Tuesdays and Blue Notes on Wednesdays, both from 3:00-4:30) and to attend all dress rehearsals and performances (barring sickness or emergency).

Christmas Ensemble and the March Musical

The **Christmas Ensemble** performs holiday tunes for the JM Murray Center, Walden Place, the Elementary School and for the public at other possible events/locations. All students currently enrolled in Band or Choir may participate as long as they can attend the required rehearsals.

The **March musical** is open to all Homer HS students as long as they can attend the required rehearsals. An audition is required so that we can determine how best to place each member of the cast. Cast members are given singing credit.

NYSSMA Solos & Honor Choirs

All members of Homer choirs may select to prepare a NYSSMA solo or small ensemble for the solo festival in the spring. The student would prepare the song at home and in vocal lessons, then perform at the festival for a state-certified judge to grade and give comments on his/her performance. This is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and highly recommended for any student willing to put in the preparation time. If cost is an issue, please see Mrs. K-B McLaughlin for assistance.

If you perform particularly well on an upper-level NYSSMA solo (Levels V, VI, or All-State VI) you ***may be selected to participate in an Area All-State Choir or All-State***, the most prestigious of all ensembles. If accepted, the student would prepare music at home and at a time arranged with Mrs. K-B McLaughlin. All students who perform a vocal NYSSMA solo will be ***given the option to opt-out of the final exam for choir.***

Private Voice or Piano Lessons

For those students taking private voice or piano lessons, please have your private teacher email me in the last week of ***each quarter*** to receive credit.

Community/Church Choir Participation

Applying the skills one learns in an academic choir by performing and giving back to the community is highly encouraged. If you participate in this sort of ensemble, please fill out the following form ***each quarter*** to receive credit.

Community Choir Participation		
Homer High School Choir		
I _____ verify that _____ is singing with the		
_____ (name of group) with rehearsals occurring on		
_____ (dates) and performing _____.		
1 st Quarter	_____	_____
2 nd Quarter	_____	_____
3 rd Quarter	_____	_____
4 th Quarter	_____	
	Signature of teacher	Date

Program Notes

Program notes are a short paragraph or two that give background information about a piece of music, the composer who wrote it, and other pertinent information about its performance and history. A student wishing to write program notes must request one of the songs they are performing with Mrs. K-B McLaughlin, receive approval, and then submit the program note at least one week before the concert or the marking period, whichever comes first. Program notes must be ***at least 200 words*** in length and must cover ***at least two of the following*** topics:

- History of the musical piece
- Biographical information about the composer
- Explanation of the meaning of the lyrics
- Translation of the text (if in a language other than English)
- Musical characteristics of the piece (major melodic themes, form, contrast, style)

All program notes ***must be the student's original work***, with any quotations citing the source. See Mrs. K-B McLaughlin for professional examples of program notes.

Choral Concert Review

Students are encouraged to see others performing choral music in the community. If you choose this as your assignment turn in a typed and double-spaced paper (minimum of one page), reflecting on three songs from a choral concert, meeting the following criteria:

- In the *introductory paragraph*, tell us the name of the group, where and when they performed (or released the recording)
- In the *three body paragraphs*, state the name of each song, the composer or arranger of that song, and critique the performance using the following vocabulary:
 - Vocal Technique (blend, balance, tone, diction, etc)
 - Dynamics (piano, forte, mezzo piano, whatever applies)
 - Descriptors of the mood or feeling of the piece
- In the *conclusion paragraph*, give your overall impression and/or rating of the performance

Choral Officers

In the first week of school, the Choirs will elect officers to assist in the maintenance and improvement of the choral program as a whole. The choirs will nominate candidates, and interested nominees will prepare a statement to present to the choir on why he or she would be a strong candidate for that position. After the statements are presented to the choir there will be an election. (The exception being the position of treasurer, which will be appointed by the director.) This elected body will meet once a month (or more, if needed) to manage choral activities. The titles and responsibilities of the offices are:

- President** - oversees all duties, takes attendance, reports to choir
- Vice-President** - organizes and oversees committees, takes attendance, assists pres
- Secretary** - takes and posts meeting minutes, organizes public relations
- Treasurer** - manages choral account, assists director with fund-raisers
- Historian** - tracks and documents the activity of the choral program over time

Music Boosters

The Homer Music Booster Club was organized to encourage and maintain an enthusiastic interest and support for the music program of the Homer Central School District. Its purpose is to lend all possible support to each of the music groups of the district in accordance with district policy. ***Meetings are listed on the school calendar*** and are generally the ***second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the high school cafeteria***. Parents of all Homer music students are ***strongly encouraged*** to get involved for the sake of all our students in this district wide activity. The time commitments to maintain a successful booster program are generally minimal, and the rewards that our students receive for our efforts are tremendous!!!

Boosters need parent volunteers on a variety of levels, from low commitment to more involved leadership positions. ***Your assistance is vital to the survival of this group!*** The Boosters need parents and families to:

- Become members of Homer Music Boosters
- Attending meetings and voting on items
- Sell concessions at music, theater, and athletic events throughout the year
- Man tables at Open House
- Help with the discount card sale
- Assist in Cabaret, their main fundraising event by:
 - Help with planning and set up
 - Baking desserts, attending, and tear-down
- Assist in putting on the Music Booster Awards Banquet, which
 - Recognizes student accomplishments that year
 - Awards scholarships to graduating seniors

2023-2024 Music Booster Meetings:

- Wednesday, September 13
- Wednesday, October 11
- Wednesday, November 5
- Wednesday, December 6
- Wednesday, January 10
- Wednesday, February 7
- Wednesday, March 13
- Wednesday, April 10
- Wednesday, May 8
- Wednesday, June 12

Vocal Music Calendar

(Course required concerts are in bold and underlined)
(Fourth performance options underlined)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Groups Involved</u>	<u>Location</u>
September 8	Theater info Meeting 9 th Per.	Any interested students	Auditorium
September 13	Music Booster Meeting	Any interested parents/guardians	HS Cafe
September 21	Auditions for Rubies & Blue Notes	Any interested choir students	Choir Room
September 26	First Ruby Rhythm rehearsal	Select students	Choir Room
September 27	First Blue Note rehearsal	Select students	Choir Room
October 26	Auditions for musical	Any interested students	Choir Room
October 27	Call-back workshop for musical	All auditionees	HS Auditorium
November 3-4	(7-9 th gr.) Area All-State	Select students	Homer HS
November 11	Le Moyne Vocal Jazz Festival	Blue Notes	Le Moyne College
November 27	First rehearsal for HS Musical	Musical cast and crew	HS Auditorium
<u>December 7</u>	<u>Winter Vocal Concert</u>	<u>All choirs</u>	<u>HS Auditorium</u>
December 22	Christmas Ens. Concerts	Christmas Ensemble	JMMurray/Walden Pl.
<u>January 5, 12-13</u>	<u>All-County Choir Festival</u>	<u>Select students Homer</u>	<u>Cortland HS</u>
Feb. 2-3	HS Area All-State	Select 10-12 th gr. Students	Ithaca College
February 26	Musical Promo Performances	Musical cast	Homer schools etc.
March 1-2	HS Musical	Cast, crew, pit band	Homer HS Aud.
March 16	Cabaret Night	RR, BN, WW, MIB, duets/trios	HS Gym
<u>March 20</u>	<u>All-District Vocal Concert</u>	<u>Concert & Chamber Choirs</u>	<u>HS Auditorium</u>
<u>April 6</u>	<u>Choral Competition</u>	<u>All Choirs</u>	<u>NYC</u>
April 9	Music Recruitment Day	RR, BN, WW, MIB, Concert Band	IS Bonné Aud
April 18	All-County Jazz Festival	Select students	Cortland HS
May 3-4	NYSSMA Solo Festival	Interested Lesson Students	Trumansburg
<u>May 22</u>	<u>Spring Vocal Concert</u>	<u>All Choirs</u>	<u>HHS Aud.</u>
<u>May 23</u>	<u>Vocal Recital</u>	<u>All interested lesson students</u>	<u>HS Auditorium</u>
June 11	Music Awards Banquet	Seniors, award recipients	HS Cafeteria
June TBA	HS Honors & Awards Ceremony	RR, BN	HS Auditorium

Blue Notes and Ruby Rhythms may have additional gigs that occur throughout the year, so watch for gig sheets and let Mrs. K-B McLaughlin know *within the week* if you cannot make one or more of the gigs.

Watch [Google Classroom](#) and [ParentSquare](#) for updates! ☺

**K-B McLaughlin has a
WEBSITE!**

Visit

www.hhsvmusic.weebly.com



Homer Senior High School's
2023-2024

Choral Handbook

Signature Slip



In an effort to be more environmentally friendly, only the signature sheet is being printed.

Please go to the Homer HS Vocal Music Website to view the entire handbook for a detailed explanation of our program:

hsvmusic.weebly.com

Please complete this paper and return it to Mrs. K-B McLaughlin by

Wednesday, September 13th!

Welcome!

We're excited that you have decided to make vocal music a part of your school year!

Student Name (Last, First) _____

Student & Parent/Guardian Survey 2024 New York City Music Competition

- *My child is ***interested*** in participating in the 2024 performance tour. Yes _____ No _____
- *My child is ***available*** to participate on Saturday, April 6, 2024. Yes _____ No _____
- *My family is ***able to fundraise/pay*** \$200-\$300 for the performance tour. Yes _____ No _____
- *We would like to ***apply for a scholarship*** to cover part of the cost of the trip. Yes _____ No _____
- *I am interested and available to ***chaperone*** the trip. Yes _____ No _____

Choir Handbook Info

I have read the Homer High School Choral Handbook and understand the policies and rules set forth in it. I realize that I must participate in all required performances unless an acceptable excuse is given in advance to the director (illness or family emergency). I realize that a grade penalty of 20 points is in effect for each required performance missed as well as the other grading procedures for this course.

I realize that there is ***required concert dress*** and I will come dressed appropriately for each concert.

Required Performances:

Winter Concert – Thurs., December 7
All-District Vocal Concert – Wed., March 20
Music Competition – New York City, Sat., April 6 *
Spring Concert - Wed., May 22

* = if unable to attend competition, alternate performances are available to fulfill requirement

Grading

Class Participation	40%	(rehearsal participation each day)
Concert Attendance	20%	(required concerts)
Skill/Literacy Assessment	20%	(content quizzes & singing assessments)
Homework	20%	(out of class work, such as lessons, etc.)

Student Signature: _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date _____