

Yvonne A. Ewell
Townview Center

Choir Handbook

Devlin DeCutler, Director

Updated 8/16/19

Welcome to the Townview Choral Department

Greetings to all students, parents, friends! With your help, we look forward to another successful year of music making. I am excited about our program and its potential for the coming year.

Our school has a strong and long-standing commitment to excellence and the Townview Choral Department can only thrive when we continue that commitment. The success of this program depends on the cooperation of **ALL** students and parents. Please understand that **EACH AND EVERY** member must claim personal responsibility for their actions. We are a team, and we must work as one. Together, we have the power to do great things!

It is with pleasure that I present this handbook to you in an effort to answer any questions you might have. The following pages provide an overview of the choral program and address rules, expectations, and choir events. If you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed in the handbook, please feel free to contact me.

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Music Is... (This is something given to me by another choir director.)

Music is a Science

It is precise, and it demands exact acoustics. A conductor's score is a chart, or graph, which indicates frequencies, intensities, volume changes, melody and harmony all at once and with the most exact control of time.

Music is Mathematics

It is rhythmically based on the subdivisions of time, which must be done instantaneously, and not worked out on paper.

Music is a Foreign Language

Most of the terms are in Italian, German, or French; and the notation is certainly not English, but rather a highly developed kind of shorthand that uses symbols to represent ideas.

Music is History

Music usually reflects the environment and times of its creation, often the country and/or racial feeling.

Music is Physical Education

It requires extraordinary coordination of fingers, hands, arms and facial muscles, in addition to controlling the abdominal muscles and the respiratory system, all of which responds to the sound the ears hears and the mind interprets.

Music is all these things, but most of all,

Music is Art

It allows a human being to take all of these dry, technically boring (but difficult) techniques and use them to create feeling and emotion. That is why your child should take music, not because we expect them to major in music, not because we expect them to sing all of their life, but—so they will be human, so they will recognize beauty, so they will be sensitive, so they will have more love, more compassion, more gentleness, more good—in short, more life.

Music allows the soul to sing!

Choir Description

The choir at Townview differs from many other choirs because the students do not always meet at the same time. In fact, there are five class periods that add up to make one large choir. The only time the entire choir can work together is outside of school hours. Because of this, students will be expected to attend rehearsals after school. I know that everyone is busy, and that schedule conflicts often occur, so I will try to keep evening commitments to a minimum. However, near the date of concerts and competitions, the choir must rehearse together. A schedule of the year's events is available from Mr. DeCutler.

9th Period Choir

In an effort to accommodate students' interest in choir, Townview offers an after school choir during the 9th period time: Monday-Thursday, 4:20-5:20pm. This choir performs along with the other classes and works very much the same way, except that it meets every day after school. You will receive a fine arts credit and a grade and must enroll in it with your counselor, just like any other class.

CHOIR CODE OF CONDUCT

Attendance Policy

Unlike other academic classes, your grade in choir is based largely upon your daily performance and participation. It is impossible to “make up” missed classes. Unexcused absences from class rehearsals, afternoon rehearsals, and concerts will **severely** lower your grade. Students with excessive absences may be asked to perform portions of their choral literature individually for a grade. They must receive a passing grade on this assessment to perform with the choir in the concert.

Additional Rehearsals/Activities

Rehearsals are course requirements and are integral to our success. Students will be given at least two weeks notice for all extra rehearsals, sectionals and activities. Every effort will be made to minimize the amount of out-of-class time required.

Concerts

Concerts are the ultimate evaluation of many weeks of hard work and preparation. They are an opportunity to demonstrate students’ achievement, skill, and growth as musicians. It is imperative that students attend every concert. Concerts are a large portion of a student’s grade, and as stated above, an absence from a concert will lower a student’s grade dramatically. For educational and evaluation purposes, concerts may be recorded.

Absences

Excused absences in accordance with DISD policy will not penalize a student’s grade as long as written notification is provided. Documentation should be submitted to the school office and to www.townviewmusic.org/conflicts. Excessive absences may prevent a student from performing, at the discretion of the director. Reasons for excused absences include: Personal Hospitalization, Family Death or Emergency, and Religious Holidays. If an excused absence is anticipated, prior notification (7-10 days in advance) is required. If a student misses school on the day of a rehearsal, their rehearsal absence may be excused only if notification is given. Acceptable notification must come from a parent or guardian and can be in the form of a signed note, phone call, or email. If prior notification from a parent or guardian is not received in a timely manner, the absence may not be excused. To give notification for an absence, please contact the choir room:

In the event of a conflict with another school activity, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the sponsors of both activities. The sponsors will then determine the student’s obligation. Multiple rehearsal absences may prevent students from performing or competing with the choir.

The following excuses will not be accepted:

- “Had to work”—Plan ahead. Work does not constitute an excused absence.
- “Couldn’t find a ride”—Plan ahead. Arrange a ride in advance.
- “Forgot about it”—Keep up with your calendar.
- “Just couldn’t come”—means you don’t really care.

Note: If a student is part of a school-sponsored internship, they must notify Mr. DeCutler immediately. In the past, students have been able to participate actively in both an after-school internship and the choir, but this must be organized in advance.

Grading Policy

Daily Grade 40%

Daily Grades measure the continued effort and dedication toward our educational objectives or TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). Points are deducted for failure to meet TEKS objectives. Common deductions from the daily grade are caused by:

Talking	Cell phone use	Eating in class
Chewing gum	Not participating in class	Tardiness
Being unprepared for class		

Concert and Rehearsal Grade 40% (Tests – 25%, Six Weeks Test – 15%)

As stated above, concerts are the ultimate evaluation of students’ work and rehearsals are necessary for our success. Students are expected to attend all rehearsals and concerts. These events are listed on the Calendar of Events. Students must arrive on time with all necessary supplies and stay for the duration of the event. Absences follow the criteria listed above. An unexcused absence from a concert will result in a grade of ZERO and make it difficult, if not impossible, to pass the current six weeks. Students may be given the opportunity to complete an alternative assignment to replace the grade for a missed rehearsal. Alternative assignments must be turned in on time or will not be accepted.

Assignments and Quizzes 20%

Assignments and quizzes will be given to monitor progress throughout the course. Some of these include individual sight-singing tests, music theory tests, and written work in our choral scores. Late work will be penalized 10 points per calendar day late.

Rules

1. **RESPECT** – Treat yourself, others, and your surroundings with care and respect. Listen and respond appropriately. Be a positive contribution to the group.
2. **WORK HARD** – Arrive on time prepared to work. Depart only when instructed. Follow instructions immediately.
3. **STAY FOCUSED** – Do not have distractions such as cell phones, gum, candy, food, or drinks (except water in a bottle) during class. Do not groom in class.

Musicianship

In a rehearsal, either in class or after school, students should strive to maintain the highest level of musicianship. This goes beyond the basic rules listed above. Members of the choir should always contribute to the quality of the rehearsal. They should:

- Encourage others and speak without negative comments or profanity.
- Respect the opinion of the director and accept constructive criticism positively.
- Learn your music and take care of your music and music folder.
- Ask questions when information or directions are unclear.
- Show a desire to succeed.

Consequences

If a student fails to follow one or more classroom rules, the director assumes that they have *temporarily forgotten* what the rules are. The director is more than willing to remind students what they have forgotten. After several reminders, however, it becomes apparent to the director that a student's "I forgot..." is actually "I don't care...".

Be aware that repeated reminders will result in temporary removal from the choir room, parent conferences, disciplinary referrals, and permanent removal from the choral program at the discretion of the director.

Concert Etiquette

Parents and friends: With your help, we can set an atmosphere befitting the long hours of hard work our students have put into every concert. It is extremely important that our audiences remain quiet and attentive so that each member of the choir can perform with the utmost concentration and skill. Family and friends who come to support their chorister should not be distracted as they listen and enjoy the beauty of the human voice.

- Please silence all cell phones, tablets, etc. for the entire duration of the performance.

- If you bring young children to our concerts, please sit near an aisle so you can exit quickly and quietly if necessary.
- Please do not talk during a song. When a song has ended and you wish to comment, do so with a warm round of applause.
- Do not yell at or draw attention to a choir member on stage. Congratulate your student after the concert.

Eligibility

All members of the music department are expected to embody academic excellence and maintain academic eligibility throughout the entire year. Eligibility is in accordance with UIL policies and requires a report card grade of 70 (60 for AP and pre-AP). Students will not be allowed to travel off campus for performances or competitions unless they are academically eligible. Song tests will be administered periodically throughout the year in class and/or as homework. Failure of a song test may cause a student to be ineligible for performances or competitions.

Uniforms

It is traditional for choir to perform in formal, uniform attire. Ladies will be issued a conservative, long dress and gentlemen will be issued a tuxedo and tuxedo shirt. The choir's appearance makes an impact on the audience. Students should keep their uniforms clean and wrinkle-free. The ladies' dresses and the men's shirts may be machine-washed on the delicate cycle. Dresses should be laid flat or hung to dry. The tuxedos may only be professionally dry-cleaned. Women should clean their dresses as needed, but **at least** twice a year, once during Winter break, and once before their uniform is returned. Men must wash and iron their shirt as needed to keep it clean and nice. They must dry-clean their tuxedos as needed but **at least** once just before they return them. This uniform belongs to the choir and students are expected to take proper care of it and return it in the condition it was issued. If at the end of the year, a uniform is lost or damaged, the student must pay to replace it. Uniforms typically cost between \$70-\$130.

Additionally, ladies must provide **BLACK, CLOSED-TOED DRESS SHOES** (low heels or flats, please). Gentlemen must provide a **PLAIN, WHITE UNDERSHIRT, BLACK SOCKS, and BLACK DRESS SHOES** (no athletic or tennis shoes allowed). There should be no large or excessive jewelry and no facial jewelry of any kind. Ladies should not wear any earrings larger than a quarter, and men should not wear any earrings at all.

Arriving at a concert out of uniform will result in a significant grade reduction. If a student is not presentable or is missing major parts of their uniform, they may not be allowed to perform.

Choir T-shirt

Students are requested to support our organization by purchasing a choir t-shirt. Money from t-shirt sales will be used to feed the choir prior to concerts and purchase supplies throughout the year. Much of our budget for our accompanist comes from this.

This shirt will be used as a uniform for more casual choir events. This is their shirt to keep, but must be kept in good condition throughout the year. Additional T-shirts, for parents or friends, may be purchased when T-shirt orders are placed if so desired. When wearing the choir T-shirt for special events, students should also wear blue jeans unless otherwise directed.

- Shirts must be purchased prior to the fall concert for \$30 as part of our fundraiser. Additional shirts may be purchased for \$15.
- Checks should be made out to: TMCC Booster Club
- Recruiting additional choir members can decrease this cost. See Mr. D for details.

Special arrangements, such as payment plans, can be arranged if necessary. If this is the case, students should speak to Mr. DeCutler in private during the first few weeks of school. To address any questions or concerns, students or parents may contact Mr. DeCutler via phone or email (972-925-6301, ddecutler@dallasisd.org).

Sheet Music

Students will be issued a binder and choral sheet music throughout the year. This music functions as a textbook for this class and should be taken care of. Students should make notes in their music as we work in class, but as stated above, **may only write lightly in pencil**. Music should be returned in the condition it was issued with all marking erased. If students fail to promptly return music in that condition, they will be charged for its replacement.

Choir Websites

The choir website allows students to access information pertaining to the choir and contains links to our YouTube and SoundCloud channels. Please visit the site at:

www.townviewmusic.org

Our YouTube channel is: www.youtube.com/townviewmusictheory

Our SoundCloud station is: www.soundcloud.com/townviewmusic

Our database is Charms Office, and it can be found at: www.charmsoffice.com

In Charms Office, you can find information and downloads such as the choir calendar and any financial records (including student balances and electronic receipts). On the top right corner, you will see the ENTER link. Click Parents/Students/Members and enter “townviewhschoir” as the school code. On the next screen, enter your password. The

default password is your student ID. The next screen will show links to financial records (“finances”), a copy of the handbook (“handouts”), and other features. Not all of the links are active, but many will be activated as the year progresses.

Select Choirs

In the past, the Townview Choir has a select pop group called No Strings Attached. This group is selected by audition in the fall or previous spring and rehearse after school throughout the year, with a variable schedule. They often perform additional concerts at venues around the city.

Choir Officers

Student officers help the choir to be more organized and encourage leadership and peer mentoring. Officers are selected by application in the fall and serve a term of one year. Officer positions include President, Vice President, Secretary, Historian, and Section Leaders for each of the four voice parts. Information and applications are available at www.townviewmusic.org/choir-officers.

Letter Jackets

Students will be given the opportunity to earn a letter jacket through active participation in choir events. Points will be awarded for specific events. Please see the website for a list of activities and their point values as well as pricing information for letter jackets.

Calendar and Forms

Students will be given a choir calendar and forms that must be filled out and returned. The calendar contains a list of all the anticipated events for the coming school year. As the school year progresses, the calendar will be updated and events may be added. The calendar is subject to revision at any time throughout the year. Students will be given ample notification of any changes to ensure their participation.

Please return these forms as soon as possible. The Photography and Video Release Form asks you for your permission to use photographs for publicity purposes such as our website, YouTube, and the choir video. Please make certain you are signing on the correct line. It is important for all students to be able to participate in music and we take the safety and security of our students very seriously. Student information will not be published online and records are kept in secure, password-protected areas. Denying permission for your student to be photographed and recorded may jeopardize their involvement in performances. Before denying permission, please speak with me.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. I am excited that you have chosen to be part of our musical family.

Thank you,

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