

Sparta Middle School  
**Choir Handbook**  
2018-2019



Ms. Whitney Brainard, MS Director  
Mr. Jim Walsh, HS Director

480 S. State Street  
Sparta, MI 49345  
616-887-8211 ext. 2351

Whitney.Brainard@spartaschools.org

[www.spartabands.org](http://www.spartabands.org)

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Exploratory Choir Course Description:

Choral instruction is first introduced in the seventh grade. Students will learn to read music and the proper technique for singing without any prior knowledge needed. Seventh Grade choir students will experience several different genres of music. This is a 9-week exploratory course.

**Goals and Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Name the notes on a music staff.
- Read rhythms using note and rest values from whole notes through eighth notes.
- Describe music using proper music vocabulary terms.
- Proper posture, breathing, tone quality, and diction for singing are introduced.
- Echo basic solfege patterns and sight-read basic exercises.
- Continue on to 8th grade choir with a basic understanding of singing.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Choir Course Description:

Choral instruction in the eighth grade is built upon the fundamentals learned in seventh grade. Because these fundamentals will be reviewed at the beginning of the year, students entering eighth grade choir do not need any prior experience in chor. Students participate in several performances throughout the school year, including the Fall Concert, Winter Concert, and Spring Concert. Because this is a performance-based class, we ask for a yearlong commitment.

### Units of Study:

**1<sup>st</sup> Semester:** Introduction or review of fundamental concepts. Emphasis is placed on posture, breathing, pitch accuracy, diction, tone production, note and rhythm reading, presentation, and basic terminology (which will include things like notation symbols and dynamics). Sheet music will be introduced in preparation for performances and students will be instructed in proper concert and stage etiquette and the importance of teamwork and responsibility to the group.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Semester:** Building on the concepts learned during the first semester, emphasis will be placed on working with two-part choral literature. Precise pitch matching, diction, and a greater understanding of individual musicianship and responsibility are developed.

**Goals and Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Name the notes on a music staff.
- Read rhythms using note and rest values from whole notes through sixteenth notes and dotted rhythms.
- Describe music using proper music vocabulary terms.
- Proper posture, breathing, tone quality, and diction for singing are developed. .
- Echo basic to intermediate solfege patterns and sight-read basic exercises.
- Sing in two-part harmony.
- Continue on to High School Choir without any significant gaps in musical knowledge or ability.

# SMS Choirs Grading Policy

## 10%: Weekly Practice Assignments

Students are graded on turning in weekly practice journals and other assignments. This is a weekly practice assignment, to be completed at home. Practice journals are due each Tuesday. At-home practice is vital to the success of your child in band! This category also includes any formative written assessments done during class.

## 30% Rehearsal Skills

Students are graded on coming to class with all materials every day (music/book/folder, pencil) and demonstrating good rehearsal skills by following classroom rehearsal expectations.

## 60% Performance

Students are graded on singing part memorization and written tests, and on concerts (8th grade only). Students MAY retake all performing assessments. For concerts - students are graded on attendance, punctuality, being in uniform, having all materials, following instructions, and demonstration of proper audience and stage etiquette.

## What are Rehearsal Skills?

A very important part of middle school choir is learning how to properly rehearse. The general flow of rehearsal is: choir sings, director cuts off and makes corrections, teaches, or helps students, choir sings again. If the teaching between the singing is interrupted, the choir cannot progress to a higher level. If a student comes to class without their proper materials, there is no way they can show good rehearsal skills because they cannot fully participate in the rehearsal.

## Rehearsal Expectations

1. BE NICE: This means be positive, let others hear the speaker, and never use mean words.
2. TRY! Never give up. Be ready to sing. Think about your body language. We will never give up on you!
3. BE PREPARED DAILY: Bring your music/folder, pencil, and brain! ☺
4. RESPECT THE PROCESS:
  - Immediately get ready to warm up upon entering the room.
  - Always be ready to sing when cued.
  - Only touch items that YOU own (or that are signed out to you).
  - Please dispose of gum. Food should be finished in the hallway. Water is okay, but be careful around instruments.
  - Control your voice. Please, no yelling at anyone. This could damage your singing voice!
  - Allow the director to teach after the cutoff.
  - Please do not use electronic devices during class. They should be away and out of sight.
  - Do your best to not interrupt rehearsal. This means: use the bathroom during passing time (the pass is for emergencies), use your filter instead of blurting out, take care of materials or music issues before or after class and not during instructional time

## Classroom Procedures

1. Students should enter the room and immediately get their folders from the slots at the front of the room. They should go to their seats and begin their daily listening journal. Stand for warm-up when the director indicates.
2. There should be minimal talking between activities (warm-up, sight-reading practice, song rehearsal).
3. If your sheet music is lost: Please ask another member in your section to borrow their music, and pin it on the copy board at the front of the room. Check back the next day for your copies. If you are the only person in your section and you are prone to misplacing your music, you may want to make some extra copies on your own when it is handed out. Figure out a system that works for you!

## Performances/Attendance Policy (8th Grade Choir only)

Unlike most other class absences, which affect only the individual involved, **an absence from choir affects the entire ensemble**. Public performances are the culmination of many weeks and sometimes months of preparations. The reputation of the group, the music department and the school is often a reflection of such performances. **It is required that every student be in attendance for all scheduled performances**. If you realize there is an **unavoidable** conflict (death in the family, extreme sickness) with one of the scheduled performances, please let one of the directors know as soon as possible. Please make every attempt to keep these concert dates open for your child. Unexcused absences from a public performance will result in lowering the grade for the marking period involved. Excused absences generally are given only for illness or family emergency. Students who have an excused absence from a performance will be given an opportunity to make the points up, but they will not be given points until they have completed a make-up assignment.

*Ms. Brainard must be contacted two weeks in advance for known conflicts and as soon as possible for sudden illness related absences. An absence is unlikely to be excused if this procedure is not followed.*

## Concert Uniform (8th Grade Choir only)

- White, long-sleeved dress shirt
- Long Black Dress Pants (no leggings or capris, please) or skirt (ankle length)
  - Black Socks and Black Shoes

*The goal of a uniform is for the choir to look like a team without individuals drawing attention. We hope our home audience will be able to recognize our uniformity when we are together on stage. Your child IS welcome to steal the show with their amazing voice as long as they do it in their uniform. ☺*

- Boys and Girls: Black Socks and ALL Black Dress Shoes (no tennis shoes)
  - Style is up to you. Just wear something you are comfortable walking in. If you are not comfortable in heels, a high stage is not the place to try them out. ☺ Any dress shoe that is all black will work.
- Students should avoid colored jewelry or colored undershirts that can be seen.
- Ties look awesome but they are not part of this uniform for boys or girls. For the sake of keeping the color white from EVERYONE on the top, please keep your cool ties at home for choir performances. The same goes for accessories. We want ONLY white on top. Please do not wear black sweaters or scarves.

The first time the concert uniform is required is October 30th. Goodwill and Salvation Army are great places to pick-up the required clothing items for a lower cost.

If you cannot afford a piece of the uniform please let Ms. Brainard know far in advance. We have families donate uniform parts for this purpose.

If you have items to donate to families who need assistance, please send the clothing in with your child. We are grateful for hand-me-downs!

## **Sparta Middle School Music Department Performance Calendar 2018-19**

**October 5:** Homecoming Parade (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Bands) 4:30 PM call time, location TBA

**October 30:** Choir & Marching Band Concert (8<sup>th</sup> Grade Choir) 7:00 PM concert

**December 13:** Holiday Concert (6-8 Bands, 8<sup>th</sup> Choir) 6<sup>th</sup> Band and 8<sup>th</sup> Choir at 7:00 PM, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Band at 7:40 PM.

**February 25:** Pre-Festival Concert (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Bands) 7:00 PM

**Between February 28-March-9:** MSBOA Festival, location and time TBA (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Bands)

**May 9:** Combined 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Band and HS Spring Concert (8<sup>th</sup> Grade Band) 7:00 PM

**May 16:** Spring Choir Concert (8<sup>th</sup> Grade Choir) 7:00 PM

**May 21:** Middle School Spring Concert (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Bands) 7:00 PM

**Last week of May (Date TBA):** 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Recognition (7<sup>th</sup> Grade Band performs): 6:30 PM call, 7:00 PM Performance

*Concerts take place in the Sparta High School auditorium. Call time is 30 minutes before the performance in the HS Band Room (unless told otherwise). **All performances are required.***

## Handbook Scavenger Hunt

1. What are the names of your music teachers? Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. \_\_\_\_\_
2. What day of the week is your practice journal due? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the materials needed in class each day?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
4. What color is your concert uniform?  
Shirt \_\_\_\_\_ Pants \_\_\_\_\_  
Socks \_\_\_\_\_ Shoes \_\_\_\_\_
5. List two of the extra opportunities available for your grade.
  - 1.
  - 2.
6. The date of my first performance is \_\_\_\_\_.

### True or False

1. I can wear any combination of white or black for my concert shirt. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I receive a grade for the evening performances in this class. \_\_\_\_\_
3. If I cannot afford the uniform, I can just wear any dress clothes. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If I cannot afford the uniform I should let Ms. Brainard know so she can help me. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Practicing singing isn't all that important to my success. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The Music Boosters only help the high school grades. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Singers are allowed to chew gum in class. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I can miss a concert if I don't feel like coming. \_\_\_\_\_
9. I am allowed to forget my folder or pencil many times before my first RTC. \_\_\_\_\_
10. If I lose my sheet music I first ask a teacher for a copy. \_\_\_\_\_

*"I have received, read, and agree to follow the policies set forth in the 2018-19 Sparta Middle School Choir Handbook, and I have put all of the concert dates in my family calendar."*

Student Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_