



August 21, 2019

Dear Swope Middle School Choir Students and Parents,

I feel grateful for the opportunity to help continue the tradition of excellence of the Swope Middle School music program this year as the official full time Choir & Orchestra teacher. I am excited to once again work together with hard-working, talented students and supportive parents to make quality music, provide a quality education, and share the gift of music!

You are now an important member of a team called an ensemble that will work toward musical mastery. I sincerely hope your membership in choir will increase your love for singing, learning music, and contributing to positive traditions. Singing in a music ensemble provides a student with opportunities to grow musically, intellectually, and socially. As I have expressed before, it is full of STEM practices and Crosscutting Concepts. The arts are essential in providing students with a means to think, feel, and understand the world in unique ways. Meta-cognitive skills learned through instruction in the arts fosters effective work habits, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. Each of these skills transfer across content areas preparing students for life in the 21st century.

Choir is designed as the study of vocal production & music fundamentals. A variety of choral music is included in the music curriculum and is selected based on its place in music history, educational content, vocal demand, and support for modern and ongoing compositions & composers of the choral art. Much of the standard choral music literature includes settings of religious texts. Religious ideas are not taught in the Swope Middle School choir classes, although the integral parts of context and culture may be explored when learning the music. Musical selections with religious texts are only used to teach classic music history, style, concepts, and techniques.

Ultimately, as it has from the beginning, music training gives us a way to share our thoughts, feelings and ideas; touching our own lives and the lives of those we share it with. For...

*"We are the music makers, And we are the dreamers of dreams, Wandering by lone sea-breakers, And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers, On whom the pale moon gleams: Yet we are the movers and shakers Of the world for ever, it seems."*

Arthur O'Shaughnessy

The Syllabus/Handbook contained in this packet explains grading procedures for this class and gives important information about class procedures and program expectations. Please complete and return any attached forms in this packet by Wednesday, August 28, 2019.

I am looking forward to working with each one of you. Your talent and hard work can make this year at Swope exciting, fun-filled, and musically rewarding for all of us.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Janet R Orton
Choir & Orchestra Director
Swope Middle School



Swope Middle School Choir 2019-2020 Handbook

Janet Orton – Director

janet.orton@washoeschools.net

www.washoeschools.net/janet-orton



Our Mission: To be educated as vocal musicians and make excellent music that will touch the lives of ourselves, as the musicians, and our listeners. In order to accomplish our mission, we must strive to be well educated and trained musicians. We do this through practice, participation, and persistence.

Classroom Rules, Routines & Regulations: I believe that *Structure gives us the Freedom to Create*. Therefore, I have established class routines that have been thoroughly discussed and practiced with the students. I have worked together with an experienced group of my students to create our class rules based on characteristics. They are as follows: **Our Class. . . 1) Is Prepared 2) Respects others 3) Listens 4) Is Engaged in Learning 5) Works Hard 6) Makes Music!** If any member of our class is acting contrary to these class expectations or our school PROWL expectations, they will receive the following reproofs: **1st offense:** Warning or correction and loss of Learning Engagement and Behavior points. **2nd offense:** In addition, more points lost and a phone call to parents. **3rd offense:** A 15 minutes Lunch detention will be added. **4th offense:** A Minor Referral will be added. **5th offense:** The student will be referred to the school Dean for disciplinary action. However, if members of our class are acting in accordance with our class and school expectations Class Points toward a class reward will be given and/or PROWL tickets may be given for individual rewards.

Grading Categories & Weights:

Learning Engagement (50%) - Students will receive 20 points daily according to their preparedness and active engagement in their learning process in class for their learning engagement grade. Being fully engaged includes: Coming to class with materials (Pencil, Class Music Folder, and Panther Planner). Following our First Five and Final Four class routines. Actively participating in class, such as singing at the appropriate times, listening and staying engaged during all aspects of warm-ups, instruction & rehearsal, and using correct posture & positioning for a vocalist. If they fail to do these things, they will lose points in this category of their Academic grade and their Behavior and/or Work Ethic grade will be affected as well. Students will assess their own grade in this category. If the student's assessment of their grade differs from the teacher's, then they will conference until they can agree on a grade.

Mastery of Content (20%) - Occasional singing & written mastery checks (assessments) will be given to evaluate a student's progress and mastery of music content standards such as: vocal techniques, music reading, presentation, etc. Students will always be given advanced notification of these checks and will only be tested on concepts that have been covered in class. If a student is practicing regularly and engaged in the learning process in class, they will not have a problem with any of these checks.

Performance Events (20%) - The goal of a choir is to perform for an audience. Therefore, students must attend and participate in all concerts, performances, and extra rehearsals in preparation for these events. These grades are based on such criteria as arriving on time, signing in, wearing the concert uniform, and exhibiting professional behavior. Student attendance at these events is mandatory and a major part of their grade. The Choir Events calendar is in the process of being approved and will be communicated to students and parents through the methods described below on or before Wednesday, August 28, 2019. Should an emergency arise that prohibits a student from participating in a performance or a performance preparation rehearsal, the student will be eligible for the alternate assignment provided that the student or parent/guardian notifies the teacher in writing of the absence two weeks prior to the event and requests an alternate assignment. If the teacher is not notified in a timely manner, the student may not be eligible for an alternate assignment. The following alternative assignment is the only option for students who miss a performance and must be completed/submitted within 3 days of the missed performance: Perform your concert music using the following criteria:

- Student must dress in full concert uniform.
- Student must perform for the teacher either in person (outside of class time) or submit a video (showing full concert uniform).
- Student may choose to sing with other ensemble members or alone.
- Student must sing through all of the programmed concert songs.
- Student may choose to sing a cappella, accompanied, or use provided accompaniment tracks.
- The vocal performance must be clearly audible and of good quality.
- The performance must take place by the specified due date above, and prior to the end of the grading period.

Homework & Classwork (10%) - Occasional written work will be given in class (worksheets, journaling, etc.), and this will be graded as the classwork of any academic class would be. The great majority of our Homework, however, is practicing. Practicing is a critical element of mastery for any musician. All the concepts and techniques covered in class need to be practiced at home. The details of practice assignments and the length of practice time needed will be given to the students on a weekly basis.

Behavior (Citizenship) - Students' Behavior grades will be self-assessed weekly for following the PROWL Qualities and our established Class Expectations.

Work Ethic – Students' Work Ethic grades will also be self-assessed weekly for exhibiting the PROWL Qualities and following our Class Expectations.

Absent Work - According to the new WCSD guidelines, absent students are required to complete work missed when absent in order for an absence to be considered "excused." There is a Make-up notebook at the front of the classroom which lists the work that was completed in class each day or states the make-up assignment for missing that day of class. The student will need to complete the Make-Up Work form (contained in the Make-up notebook pocket) with what they missed and what they did to make that work up and turn the form into Mrs. Orton within the WCSD make-up policy terms (number of days absent plus one) to have that absence be considered excused. Students lose their 20 daily Learning Engagement points in their academic grade when they are absent. These lost points will also be considered "made-up" when they complete the Make-up form. Although the WCSD only accepts make-up work for an excused absence the number of days absent plus one, I will accept make-up work for the academic items missed (such as Learning Engagement points) until 2 weeks before the grading period ends.

Class Fees: Unfortunately, the choir programs in our school district do not receive any funding, therefore in order to cover program costs, we ask each student to contribute to the program via a class fee. This money covers such items as: music for concerts, choir folders, after school rehearsal snacks, WCSD Festival registration & transportation fees, our class piano repair and tuning, music classroom supplies, and purchase or replacement of music equipment such as a piano dolly, and so forth. This year's Choir class fee is \$25.00 and is due on or before **Wednesday, August 28, 2019**.

Required Performance Uniform: We will wear our music performance uniforms at concerts and other such performance events. The Swope Choir uniform consists of 1) The Swope Music Polo shirt. These polos are \$15 and need to be purchased through Mrs. Orton using the attached order form. These are the same concert polos as last year, therefore, returning choir students will only need to purchase a concert polo if they no longer have theirs from last year. 2) "Concert Black" from waste to floor. This would include A) Solid black dress pants (no jeans, no yoga pants, no athletic pants, no shorts, no capris), a solid black skirt with black tights, or something semi-formal of this nature. B) Solid black dress shoes (no ski or Ugh style boots, please). 4) Solid black socks or tights. Please ask for more clarification if these guidelines for concert attire are not clear.

Communication: Updates and reminders (such as concert dates) will be distributed through the following methods: 1) Email via Infinite Campus. 2) Posted on my WCSD webpage: www.washoeschools.net/janet-orton 3) Posted in the classroom in our daily reminders 4) Hardcopy letters sent home with students. Please make sure your contact information (especially email) is up to date in Infinite Campus, and that you set your message settings to allow teacher messages to go to your email. The best way to contact me is through email: janet.orton@washoeschools.net I receive dozens of emails daily, so please understand if it takes a few days for me to respond. Students can come and see me for make-up work, questions, vocal help, etc., nearly any day before school, during lunch, or after school.

Additional Information: • Students assume responsibility for transportation to and from choir events held after school. Please make sure students are picked up no later than 20 minutes at the conclusion of an event unless otherwise arranged in advance with the teacher. • Technology will occasionally be used in the classroom. If a student has a smart phone or similar device, they may only use it during approved activities as directed by the teacher • I love parent volunteers! Please let me know if you are interested in assisting with choir in any fashion. • We like staying healthy. Please consider donating a box/bottle or two of tissue, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and/or baby wipes to help keep germs from spreading in our classroom. • Swope tradition includes a music department trip each year. This year's trip has not yet been decided. A band, orchestra and choir council are going to be formed and once these are running, they will be working with our Swope music teachers and administration to decide on our music trip for this year. These trips have additional costs and parent chaperones are required. They have always been an amazing experience for our music students but are completely optional. Look for information on this year's trip in the following months. • Lastly, I sure do love teaching these students. Thank you for the support to make this happen. :-)

Swope Middle School Choir
Class Acknowledgement & Order Form

Due on or before **Wednesday, August 28, 2019**

We have read the SMS Choir Handbook and agree to abide by the policies set forth contained therein. We understand the commitment necessary to participate in choir, and will return this form and fees by **Wednesday, August 28th**. Also, the parent/guardian listed below hereby gives consent and approval for the student named below to participate in all required concerts and functions of the Swope Middle School Choir Program for the 2019-2020 school year.

Student First and Last Name (printed) _____

Grade: _____ Class Period: _____

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name (printed) _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Please select your Swope Music Class Concert Polo size (if needed).

- Youth Large
- Youth Extra Large
- Adult Extra Small
- Adult Small
- Adult Medium
- Adult Large
- Adult Extra Large

I am making a payment for (fill the bubble for all that apply):

- Choir Class Fee (\$25)
- Swope Concert Polo (\$15)

For a total of \$ _____

- Check
- Cash

Please contact Mrs. Orton if these fees are a financial burden and you need to make payment arrangements.