Dear Parents and Students,

Choir rocks! Greetings and welcome to what will be an exciting year of Women’s Chorus at St. Johns High School. I am Mrs. Eller and I look forward to getting to know each student as an individual and helping them to grow and appreciate the art of vocal music.

I am so glad you have chosen to take this class and to be a part of a wonderful ensemble. We will be focusing a lot on challenging ourselves, as singers, beyond the basics and fundamentals of singing such as breathing properly, posture and proper vowels. This class offers an amazing opportunity for each student to grow musically, vocally and personally to the fullest potential.I encourage all students to dare to push their limits and truly have a great experience in vocal music at St. Johns.

This handbook has been designed to give parents and students an overview of the director’s expectations, guidelines, rules, grading procedures, and tips on becoming the BEST musician possible. Please read it through carefully. If you have a question/concern at any time during the year, consult the handbook first. If you cannot find your answer, then please don’t hesitate to contact us. Communication with students and parents is very important to me and to the success of our vocal music program.

The choir room is a safe place for students and any negative behavior will not be accepted. If you follow the rules in this handbook, we can have a very successful year together and gain experiences you may not find anywhere else. My goal is for you to leave this class with a sense of pride, self-confidence, self-satisfaction and a thirst for more!

I am so excited to kick-off this year and begin making music.

*Sing*cerely,

Mrs. Nichole Eller

Vocal Music Director

St. Johns High School and Middle School

(989) 227-4274

Ellern@sjredwings.org

Check out the new Choir Website! sjpschoir.weebly.com

**Please read the handbook and turn in the last page to Mrs. Eller by Monday, September 14th.**

Why Music?

**Music is a Science.**

It is exact, specific, and it demands exact acoustics. A conductor’s full score

is a chart, a graph that indicates frequencies, intensities, volume changes,

melody, and harmony all at once and with the most exact control of time.

**Music is Mathematical.**

It is rhythmically based on subdivisions of time into fractions, which must be

done instantaneously, 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 a highly developed kind of shorthand that uses

symbols to represent ideas. The semantics of music is the most complete

and universal language.

**Music is History.**

Music usually reflects the environment and time of its creation, and often

times the country of origin.

**Music is Physical Education.**

It requires fantastic coordination of fingers, hands, arms, lip, cheek, and

facial muscles in addition to extraordinary control of the diaphragmatic, back,

abdominal, and chest muscles, which respond instantly to the sound the ear

hears and the mind interprets.

**Music develops Insight and Demands Research**.

Music is all these things, but most of all: music is ART! It allows a human being to take all the difficult techniques and use them to create emotion.

**Music promotes:**

Problem Solving Skills

Teamwork

Goal Setting

Self-expression

Coordination

Memory Skills

Self-confidence and self-esteem

Concentration

Poise and confidence

Higher SAT and ACT scores

Stronger higher-order thinking skills such a spatial reasoning

That is WHY we teach MUSIC!

**Classroom Expectations**

1. BE ON TIME – You are expected to be quickly making your way to your seat when the bell rings. This means that you also have your pencil, binder and music. (Pencils ONLY)
2. BE PREPARED
3. BE RESPECTFUL – This applies to your peers, your teacher, any classroom guests and the instruments that are in the room.
4. BE CREATIVE – Music is art, creativity is welcomed

Every student is unique and consequences will vary on each individual situation. If a student fails to adhere to classroom expectations, the teacher and student will come to an agreement on the appropriate action. Some examples may include: detention, note/call home, office referral, etc.

I appreciate your support at home and your willingness to encourage your student to be consistently successful in music.

**Grading Policy**

Students are graded at the end of each academic trimester with a progress report halfway through.

**Rehearsal/Participation Expectations (5 pts/day) (20%)**

*Each student is expected to come to class prepared.*

* Each student can earn up to 5 participation points each class. Throughout weekly classes, students will be evaluated on their level of participation and effort towards following classroom expectations.
* The penalty for chewing gum will increase the more a student is caught chewing gum. For example, 1 point for the first time caught, 2 for the second time and so on.

I care about YOU and don’t want you choking while taking a good ole healthy singer’s breath ☺

**Performance Expectations (40%)**

Performances are why we put all the hard work in during rehearsal. It’s your chance to showcase all that you learned and to finally get the experience in performing. With that said, performances are MANDATORY. Please make sure to mark the performance dates in your calendar to avoid any scheduling conflicts. Always keep the performances in mind while scheduling anything.

If there is a school-related conflict, the student is expected to notify the coach/teacher in a timely fashion. The teacher, coach and principal will then decide how best to resolve the conflict. **95% of the time things can be worked out so that the student can participate in both events.** If participation in both events is NOT a possibility, the decision about which event the student will participate in becomes the responsibility of the St. Johns staff.

(Continued on next page…)

There are two types of absences from choral performances: excused and unexcused.

1. **Excused Absence –** An absence is excused if, and only if:
* You are ill and are out of school the FOLLOWING day (a parent note is required)
* There is a family emergency (a family note is required)

Excused Absence performance points CAN be made up. You must attend an approved concert and write a descriptive paper about your experience, or work on another approved music-related project. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the make-up procedures; failure to do so will result in a complete loss of points for the concert.

1. **Unexcused Absence –** An unexcused absence occurs when you miss a concert and are NOT ill and out of school the following day or there is NO family emergency. The points lost due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.

Students will also lose points for the following:

* Tardiness
* Not dressed in the appropriate performance attire
* Not following directions during the pre-concert warm-ups and procedures

The rules have been put in place to stress the importance of performances. Remember: Choir works as a team and we need every player to do our best!

**Quizzes (10%)**

Students will take quizzes based on concepts covered in class. Quizzes are normally announced, but the director holds the right to give pop (unannounced) quizzes if necessary.

**Tests (20%)**

Students will have several tests per marking period. The tests will be both written and performance based. They will cover concepts covered in class and an accumulation of quizzes.

**Theory and worksheets (10%)**

Students should have a FOLDER that is separate from their vocal music folder that is provided. This folder will be used to hold any hand-outs, assignments, quizzes and tests. It is in the student’s best interest to hold onto past quizzes and test to help with their exam at the end of each trimester.

**Tardy Policy**

It is the expectation that all students be in their seats, ready to sing at the time the bell rings. Class begins with vocal and physical warm-ups designed to encourage healthy and successful singing. It is imperative that all students are ready to participate in the beginning rehearsal procedures. The SJHS Tardy policy will apply along with the following:

* 1st Tardy – Lose 1 point
* Any Tardy After – Lose 2 points

**Uniforms**

Students are to wear the attire that has been given to them provided by the Vocal Music Department.

**Ladies:** Black Robes (provided by school)

* Please wear all black underneath including socks.
* Shoes are to be closed-toe and closed-heel and also all black. No higher than 2”.
* Hair must be up off your shoulders and out of your face.

*Choirs are a team and being uniform has an even greater aesthetic effect for the audience.*

**Failure to comply with uniform expectations will result in a lower performance grade.**

**Section Leaders and Leadership Opportunities**

- In order for our choir rehearsals to run smoothly, I will be appointing section leaders. Section leaders are expected to be positive role models for not only their section, but the whole choir.

- Other leadership roles will be appointed in the classroom to make the class run smoothly and will be decided within the first weeks of class.

**If you would like to be considered for a leadership role please check the section leader box, class leadership box or both on the last page!**

**Travel**

There will be travel opportunities throughout the year and students are expected to be on their absolute BEST behavior. Students are not only representing themselves and their choir, but they are also representing their peers outside of choir, their principals, school and community. Mrs. Eller and St. Johns High School are not responsible for any lost or damaged mp3 players, CD players, cell phone or any other portable electronic device that students bring on buses.

**Private Lessons**

Every student is encouraged to participate in private lessons. Taking private lessons not only enhances the student’s experience in vocal music but also strengthens the choral program as a whole. Private lessons will also help with a student’s preparation for solo and ensemble should they choose to participate.

**Fundraising**

Throughout the year there will be various vocal music fundraisers. We use this money to support trips, and purchase things that are essential to our program! Mrs. Eller needs everyone’s help and commitment to make fundraisers as successful as possible. The more each student can participate in fundraisers, the more I can do for you and offer you!

**Vocal Music Concert Calendar**

The following dates are mandatory.

2015

Friday October 2nd – Sing National Anthem at the Pep Assembly for Homecoming

* During the school day.

Thursday October 29th – Fall Choir Concert @ 7:00pm

* Doors open @ 6:30pm
* Call time for HS students is 5:30pm

Tuesday December 15th – Winter Concert Dress Rehearsal 6:00-8:00pm

Wednesday December 16th – Winter Choir Concert @ 7:00pm

* Doors open @ 6:30pm
* Call time for HS students is 5:30pm

2016

Wednesday March 2nd – MSVMA Pre-Festival Concert @ 7:00pm

* Doors open @ 6:30pm
* Call time for HS students is 5:30pm

Tuesday or Wednesday March 8-9 – MSVMA Choir Festival @ CMU

* Official dates and times will be released in February

Wednesday May 25th – Spring Concert Dress Rehearsal/2nd Annual PJ Party 6:00-8:00pm

Thursday May 26th – Cabaret Dinner Fundraiser and Spring Choir Concert @ 5:00pm

* Specific times will be released later in the year
* We will need LOTS of parent volunteers for this event!

**Other dates that are not required but highly recommended!**

The performance dates listed below (not including solo and ensemble) may be used as the descriptive papers if a student has an excused absence for a performance.

The Weekend of November 13-15 – The high school production of *Cinderella*

Saturday January 30th – MSVMA Solo & Ensemble

* Students may work on their own with some guidance from Mrs. Eller to participate in Solo & Ensemble (more information to come)

Sometime in April – The Middle School Musical

Tuesday June 7th – Middle School Spring Concert @ 7:00pm (in the MS auditeria)

* We could use HS students to help at this concert and it’s also GREAT morale to come support the MS students!

**Please take the time to check these dates with your calendar, write them down, and report any issues to me immediately. This page would look GREAT on your fridge** ☺

Please return this page to Mrs. Eller by Monday, September 14th.

**Student Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Grade\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Please put an X next to section leader and/or class leader if you would like to be considered.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Section Leader

\_\_\_\_\_ Class Leader

**Parent/Guardian Names\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

By signing this form, you and your student acknowledge that you have read the vocal music handbook and agree to the policies stated.

**Parent/Guardian Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Student Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**