

*Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts  
Department of Choral Music*

*Student Handbook of Policies and  
Procedures*

2021-2022



“Safety, Respect, Responsibility”

**Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts**  
**Department of Choral Music**  
**Handbook of Information and Procedures**

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## Introduction

Dear Choir Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Meyerland Department of Choral Music. We are excited to have such a wonderful, talented group of young singers. You have chosen to be a part of an organization that can offer you many opportunities for growth and provide experiences in music that you will remember for a lifetime.

This handbook is designed to introduce you to the Meyerland Choral Department and to answer as many questions as possible. In an active program like this one, your cooperation helps ensure a successful experience for all. Parent and community involvement and support for our program is our greatest asset.

There are multiple pages in this handbook that you and your student will need to read. **Please sign and return the last page in this book by August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.** We hope that you will take a moment to look over this information carefully. Here is to a successful and happy year to all who love music.

Sincerely,



Melanie Stapleton  
Director of Choral Studies



Donovan Harris  
Assistant Director of Choral Studies

*“The life of the Arts, far from being an interruption, a distraction in the life of a nation, is close to the center of a nation’s purpose- and is the test of the quality of a nation’s civilization”.*

-John F. Kennedy  
President of the United States of America

## **Meyerland PVA Choral Directors**

### **Melanie Stapleton, Director of Choral Studies**



A native of Plano, Texas, Ms. Melanie Stapleton has been an active member of Texas choirs all of her life. She holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Louisiana State University, where she minored in English, and a Master of Music Education from University of North Texas, where her primary research focus was on social justice, advocacy, and inclusion in the choral ensemble. Ms. Stapleton began her career in Lamar CISD, teaching elementary music, before moving to La Porte ISD, where she was the Head Choral Director at Lomax Junior High and Baker Sixth Grade Campus. Ms. Stapleton holds active membership in TMEA, TCDA, and ACDA. She is a highly sought-after clinician, having presented sessions at some of the biggest conferences in music education. Her choral career has allowed her to sing under the batons of conductors such as Dr. Ken Fulton, Derrick Brookins, Dr. Allen Hightower, Dr. Z. Randall Stroope, and Dr. Anton Armstrong. She is a strong believer in the power of the choral ensemble to create a musical family where all are respected and offered unconditional love. When not jamming to the latest choral hits, Ms. Stapleton can be found spending time with friends, cooking in her Instant Pot, playing video games, hanging out with her Golden Retriever, Queso, or binge-watching her latest TV show obsession.



### **Donovan Harris, Assistant Director of Choral Studies**

Mr. Donovan Harris is a native of Port Arthur, Texas. He graduated from Prairie View A&M University with a Bachelor of Arts in Music. While attending Prairie View, he began his career as a professional singer. Mr. Harris has performed with various companies such as the Houston Grand Opera Outreach Program and the Houston Ebony Opera Guild. He has toured all over the country including a tour of South America with the HBCU 105 Voices of History. Before coming to MPVA, Mr. Harris began his teaching career in Fort Bend ISD. He was the Head Choral Director of Missouri City Middle School where his ensembles received excellent ratings in UIL contest and festivals. He has 6 years of teaching experience which includes both choral and private vocal work.

Mr. Harris loves spending time with his wife and three children. When he's not hanging with the fam, he enjoys basketball, movies, and fishing (crabbing too!)

As a teacher and performer, Mr. Harris is thrilled to introduce all students to the artistry of choral music. The goal is to provide a creative learning culture while allowing students to enjoy the world of performance. He believes that the methods students will use in class will become tools that can be beneficial in the future. Here we live, we laugh, we learn, and we SING!

## **Choir Membership**

Students selected for membership in the Meyerland PVA Choirs, should adhere to the following:

*Respect, Professionalism, and the Pursuit of Excellence*

We are dedicated to developing musical knowledge and experience using a wide variety of styles of music. Members are to give 100% of their cooperation, concern, and support to their director and to each other. Together we strive to meet these expectations for continued success. The goals of our program are simple:

### Program Goals:

- To present students at Meyerland Middle School with the opportunity to learn, sing, and perform music in our graded and leveled choir program.
- To develop students' sight-reading ability, tonal memory, and a strong, mature vocal quality.
- To offer a quality musical experience through performance and competition of diverse choral literature.
- To promote the cultivation of student relationships through teamwork and camaraderie.
- To offer motivated students opportunities for leadership.
- To promote and develop good character in each student including, but not limited to, self-discipline, creativity, self-esteem, and enthusiasm for learning.
- To develop an aesthetic appreciation for choral music in students and in the surrounding community.

*"A performing group is a microcosm of society. In addition to well-documented skills related to music reading, self-expression, self-discipline and concentration, performers become interdependent. There is no more important skill required in a democratic society than that of sharing common goals with others and working together to achieve them."*

- Sally Schott, President of Southwest ACDA

## **Choral Ensembles**

2021-2022

*All ensemble placements are the direct result of each members' audition.*

### **Melodia**

Melodia is an introductory choir open to all sixth-grade students. Regardless of previous choral experience, all sixth-grade choir students will be enrolled in Melodia by default. This choir teaches the very fundamentals of the bel canto singing technique and the choral rehearsal. Emphasis is placed on TEKS-based elements of singing, including proper choral posture, tone, breath support, and vocal quality. Students are instructed in these elements through myriad warm-ups, the UIL sight-reading process (including an introduction to solfege and Kodaly hand signs), and a wide range of diverse literature. This class is geared to provide a seamless transition into the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade ensembles.

### **Cantus**

Cantus is the default choir for all treble voices after finishing our 6th grade Melodia ensemble and for incoming treble voices who did not participate in Melodia at MPVA. Cantus is a fast-paced beginning class with repertoire geared toward the maturing adolescent voice and mentality of the young musician.

### **Lux Fortis**

Lux Fortis is the default choir for all tenor/bass voices after finishing our 6th grade Melodia ensemble and for incoming tenor/bass voices who did not participate in Melodia at MPVA. Lux Fortis is a fast-paced beginning class with repertoire geared toward the maturing adolescent voice and mentality of the young musician.

### **Lyra**

This is an auditioned ensemble for treble singers. The Lyra ensemble will extend and enhance a student's 6th-grade year's learning or continue the advanced training they received in Cantus. The masterful application of the first year's knowledge base takes a lot of time for development; therefore, it is not unusual or unfair for a student to develop that mastery from 7th to 8th grade. Every year presents us with a new set of music and learning opportunities with an expectation of some outside performances.

### **Kantorei & Voce Futuro**

These are elite audition-based advanced classes. These choirs are available to those students who display a clear knowledge of music theory, sight-reading skills, well developed choral vocal timbre, self-discipline, organization skills, and a desire to sing. Students in these ensembles are held to the highest of behavioral standards and expectations in their conduct, both inside and outside the choir room. These singers are expected to participate in TMEA Region choir auditions, HISD Solo and Ensemble competition, and many other extra community performances. With the extraordinary amount of music these choirs are expected to learn, these students must be able to practice and memorize music outside of the classroom.

## Standards of Conduct

1. Choir members are expected to behave maturely **at all times**, and to treat every teacher, administrator, and student with mutual respect. Students gathered for choral functions at any time are bound by the rules of MPVA as well as those within this handbook.
2. The quality of performance is determined by the quality of rehearsal. Daily and additional rehearsals are very important in achieving continuous quality performance. Members must focus with mind, body and spirit while maintaining maximum self-control regardless of the style of music or type of program/concert.
3. In an effort to prepare students for the outside world, professionalism is expected at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, punctuality for all classes, concerts, and rehearsals, attitude towards directors, colleagues, and members of the community, as well as etiquette both on and off the stage.
4. The Choir Officers are charged with the responsibility of aiding the director in maintaining our standards of behavior and should be respected by the membership for their efforts.

## Daily Expectations

***Class participation and cooperation on expectations will contribute to the success of our choir.***

1. Get your choir binder out as you enter the room. Be seated. Make sure you have a pencil! Check boards for dates, due dates, and announcements.
2. Place all backpacks out of the way in assigned areas. Under no circumstances should you go to someone else's folder unless asked to do so by the director. **DO NOT TAKE OUT ANY PERSONAL BELONGINGS (PHONES, MAKE-UP, ETC.) IN YOUR SEAT.**
3. If for some reason, you cannot sing in rehearsal, clear it with your director **before class begins**. Even if you cannot sing, you are expected to participate in all other ways (ex: have music and a pencil out, follow along with the rest of the ensemble, and make all markings as needed).
4. Misbehavior, talking without being recognized or any other disruptions will not be tolerated at any time.

5. Warm-up begins promptly after the tardy bell rings. Students will be counted tardy if not seated and attentive **when the director begins the rehearsal**. Listen for announcements, due dates, sectionals/rehearsals, etc.

6. No chewing gum, candy, food, drinks (except for plain water), or hats are allowed in the choir room.

7. Members should remain in their assigned seat during rehearsals unless otherwise instructed by the director.

### **Student Consequences of Rule Violation**

1. First offense: Student re-direct and/or private conference with student.
2. Second offense: Private conference with student, parent contact, ½ conduct mark drop.
3. Third offense: Parent contact, discipline referral, and an S in Conduct.
4. Fourth offense: Administrative referral, and a P/U in Conduct.

### **Magnet Program Cost**

The Magnet Program Cost for students is **\$50 per student**. This will pay for a student's choir shirt, and any remaining funds will go directly to the choral department to allow for student-gear expenditures (ex: transportation to contest, the purchase of sheet music, etc.) Our goal is to minimize the necessity of fundraisers during the year, though 1 or 2 may occur, while still providing the best experience for our students. If there are financial concerns, please reach out to your student's director.

### **Grading System**

Daily Grades = 40 %

*Daily class rehearsals, daily classroom materials, scheduled sectional rehearsals, reflective writings, worksheets, etc.*

Major Grades = 60%

*All performances, dress rehearsals, sight reading/singing quizzes,*



## Attendance

All choir students are expected to attend all scheduled performances and rehearsals of their particular choir, as well as full choir events, sectionals, and rehearsals.

In the event of a schedule conflict, the student is expected to make arrangements and communicate with the director in writing.

## Absences From Performance

The only justifiable excused absences from performance are: illness, death in the immediate family, religious belief conflict, immediate family funeral, subpoena, court, or “pre-arranged” by principal. The student should notify their director well in advance of the absence if possible.

In order to be excused and to avoid a grade reduction, **the student must bring a written excuse of the absence on the first day back from the absence. Absences from performance due to any other reasons are considered unexcused and will either result in a makeup assignment, or a grade of zero for the performance.** *Please remember that performances count toward 60% of the final grade.* As the performances are scheduled in advance, it is the responsibility of the student and parent to plan ahead to avoid conflicts with work schedules and appointments. An absence is a detriment to the rest of your performing group, as well as the elimination of the student’s opportunity to learn performance skills, which are an essential element of choir.

Though the director will make all efforts to avoid other school activity conflicts, these conflicts do occur from time to time. School activity conflicts will be worked out by the director with the teacher/coach involved. Students have a responsibility to all organizations they are involved in, not just one. Therefore, communication from the student is vital. Conflicts in schedules can usually be resolved if given adequate time.

It is not possible to produce a quality performance without ample preparation. **To meet expected standards, there will be times that rehearsals outside of class will be necessary. In order for the entire group to benefit, all must be punctual and in attendance.** Advance notice will be given and attendance is necessary. An unexcused absence from dress rehearsal can result in grade reduction and may result in the student’s suspension from the ensuing performance.

## Recovery

In the event a student obtains an unexcused absence for a performance or dress rehearsal, the director will assign a written assignment reflective of the prepared choral music to the student. It is the students’ responsibility to obtain this assignment from the director and turn it in within the allotted time of 5 school days following the performance, or **a grade of zero** will be entered in the grade book for the performance/rehearsal missed.

# Charms



## How to access parent/student information in Charms

- Log on to [www.charmsoffice.com](http://www.charmsoffice.com), and click “ENTER / LOG IN” in the upper right corner.
- Locate the “PARENT/STUDENT/MEMBERS LOGIN” section of the web page.
- Login to your student’s program account using the following School Code:

### MeyerlandChoir (all one word/case sensitive)

- This will bring up the main “Public” page. This will allow you to look at the “public” calendar for your organization, event list, and handouts and other “publicly shared” files, as well as a few other options.
- The first time you go here, enter your child’s ID NUMBER (provided by your Director) into the ***Student Area Password*** field. You will be directed to the Change Password screen, to set a personal password different from the ID, for future use. You may also be directed to create both a unique Username and Password for the student. There are also mechanisms to recover/reset a lost Username/Password – when you create your new password, create a “hint” as well.

### The password is case sensitive

- Whenever you enter using this Username/password, another more detailed screen appears, with various button options for you to access areas in the Charms account. What appears here is partially up to the Account Administrator or Head Director.
- Two areas in which you can help the director/administrator maintain his/her records:
  - **Update Personal Information** – if the director has allowed it, you may help make changes to your and your child’s student information page (such as updating phone numbers / cell carriers and email addresses if they change) to help them communicate with you more effectively. You may also be able to indicate which parent volunteer/resource groups you would like to participate in, if this feature is activated. Click ***Update Info*** to save changes.
- You may also see links to enter ***Practice Logs***, view ***Grades***, and use the ***Recording Studio*** if the teacher has enabled these options.
- The ***Calendar*** may list events, rehearsals, and volunteer/RSVP opportunities.
- Most importantly, the parent page assists both you and the teacher to communicate with each other. Stay up to date on what’s going on with your student!
- You can also download the Charms App to your smartphone – search your App Store for “Charms Parent/Student Portal” (or “Charms Blue”). It’s the way to stay in touch on the go!

# Remind101

This year, Meyerland Choir will be using Remind101 to help communicate any reminders or announcements. Please join using [www.remind.com/join/meyerlandc](http://www.remind.com/join/meyerlandc). Our general class code is “@MeyerlandC” (for everyone) To learn how to use Remind, go to [www.remind.com](http://www.remind.com) for more information.

## Uniforms and Attire

***ALL STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONDITION OF THEIR OWN UNIFORMS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SCHOOL YEAR***

### **Informal Performances:**

All choir students will need to have an MPVA choir shirt and have a pair of dark blue jeans in good repair (no holes, rips, tears, bedazzling, etc.). Sneakers are acceptable; however, they must not be distracting to the performance. Choir shirts will be purchased at the beginning of each school year. 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will use their choir shirt and jeans for all performances.

### **Formal Performances:**

*Note: In lieu of charging a uniform fee, students are required to have their uniform dry cleaned before being turned in at the end of the year.*

**7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students** have 2 different formal uniform options (see directors if another option is desired):

**1. A black choral dress that is provided by the department.**

- a. Students are in charge of ensuring their dress is properly hemmed and taken care of throughout the year.
- b. Please do NOT make permanent alterations to the dress. If permanent alterations are made, a fee may be charged. If there are any issues with the dress, please contact the director ASAP.

**2. Black dress pants, long-sleeve white tuxedo shirt, a vest, and tie.**

- a. The vest and tie will be provided by the choral department.
- b. Students will need to provide their own dress pants and tuxedo shirt.

**6<sup>th</sup> grade students** will need a formal white top and formal black bottoms with black dress shoes.

### Shoes:

Black dress shoes: close-toed, flats, or a 1”- 2” heel are acceptable. No clogs, sandals, flip-flops, boots, or platforms will be accepted.

### Hair:

At all performances (unless stated by the director) the hair should be placed out of the students’ eyes in a professional style. No bows, ribbons or barrettes. All hair clips and accessories should be discreet and blend with the hair color.

### Jewelry

Jewelry should be worn under the uniform. All earrings should be small loops or studs.

## Choir Officers

Choir officers are elected by their fellow classmates and should be based on their leadership, service and participation in the choir program. These students are expected to exhibit outstanding behavior, excellent leadership and a positive attitude **at all times**.

In choosing your officers, remember that popularity is not the most important criteria! Your student leaders should above all exhibit a desire to serve the needs of our choir.

**Please understand that being an officer is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, the directors reserve the right to remove anyone from office at any point who does not exemplify the above or exhibits inappropriate behavior or conduct not befitting an office.**

### MPVA Choir Officer Duties and Responsibilities

*Choir Officer roles are only open to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders.*

#### **President:**

- Only open to 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Kantorei or Voce Futuro.
- Presides over officer meetings.
- Initiates and guides officer activities.
- Supervises and delegates activities of other officers.
- Serves as liaison between choir and other school organizations and activities.
- Represents their choir in all school functions.
- Serves as the “right hand” to the directors.
- Is in charge of coordinating social gatherings for the choir.

*Anyone running for the office of **Choir President** should expect to be responsible for the entire department directly under the directors in terms of leadership and responsibility. This person should intend to call the choir room “home” and make choir one of their top priorities. They should be prepared to help set up for all choir functions including concerts, activities, etc. and be one of the last to leave.*

#### **Vice-President:**

- Assist the President in all activities and preside over his/her responsibilities in case of their absence.
- Maintain an accurate record of uniforms issued to students.
- Serve as the resource person for uniform questions or problems.

#### **Secretary:**

- Assists the directors with clerical duties (organization, tidiness) in the classroom as well as before and after school, if needed.
- Assists the directors with roll checking during class and other choir functions.
- Organize and maintain a working choir folder system.

- Organize and maintain all choir book keeping items.

**Librarian:**

- Assist the directors with all library functions.
- Check in and file all new music.
- Librarians are responsible for the condition of the library at all times.

**Historians:**

- Responsible for taking pictures at all choir activities throughout the year including concerts, parties, fundraising activities, meetings and trips.
- Prepare a musical slide presentation in which all choirs are represented.

**Section Leader:**

*Chosen by the director:*

- Maintains a current telephone list of all people in his/her section both at home and cell.
- Acts as the telephone coordinator in case of a need to reach a section of the choir at home.
- Organizes and maintains a positive rehearsal in the director's absence.

**Please understand that being an officer is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, the director reserves the right to remove anyone from office at any point who does not exemplify the above or exhibits inappropriate behavior or conduct not befitting an office.**

# **2021-2022 Meyerland PVA Choir Calendar**

## **Year At A Glance**

*Please be advised that dates and events may change throughout the calendar year.*

*We will give as much notice as possible if a date, time, or location change occurs.*

*\*\* - Indicates a need for parent volunteer/chaperones.*

### **August –**

21 – Varsity Choir Camp @MPVA from 8:00 AM – 4 PM

23 – First Day of School

28 – Choir Camp for All Choir Students @MPVA from 8:00 AM – 2 PM

### **September –**

6 – Labor Day

14 – Choir Parent Information Night @ MPVA Auditorium 6:30-7:30 PM

16 – Fall Holiday (Students Only)

20 – Choir Officer Elections

### **October-**

16 – Mr. Harris's Birthday

**14 – Advanced Ensemble Concert 7:00 PM\*\***

**19 – Fall Concert After-School Rehearsal 4:00-6:30 PM\*\***

**21 – Choir Fall Concert @ MPVA Auditorium 6:30 PM\*\***

### **November-**

13 – Ms. Stapleton's Birthday

22–26 Thanksgiving Break (No School)

### **December-**

**7- Winter Concert After-School Rehearsal 4:00-6:30 PM**

**9- Winter Concert @ MPVA Auditorium 6:30 PM\*\***

20–31 – Winter Break Starts

### **January-**

3 – Classes Resume

17 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School)

### **February-**

9 –12 TMEA Convention (Ms. Stapleton and Mr. Harris out)

**24 – Pre-UIL Concert- Time and Location TBA\*\***

### **March-**

**7–10 UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Contest\*\* @ St. Peter's UMC, Katy, TX**

14–18 Spring Break (No School)

28 – Chávez/Huerta Day (No School)

30-31 **Katy Sixth Grade Choir Festival** (During the School Day)

### **April-**

15 – Spring Holiday (No School)

### **May-**

**14– Spring Concert/Pop Show @ MPVA Auditorium 6:30 PM\*\***

19-20 All School Musical

30 – Memorial Day (No School)

### **June-**

**7 – Last Day of School**

### **Chaperones/Parent Helpers**

In a large program such as this one, parent chaperones and helpers are instrumental to our students' success, and more importantly, their safety. All chaperones need to be verified and approved through the VIPS service on the HISD website.

While chaperoning or assisting the program in any capacity, we ask that all adults do the following:

- Stay vigilant of any potentially troubling or reckless student behavior.
- Assist in managing students and preventing problems before they occur.
- Help ensure students are on time and where they need to be.
- Respond to any potential emergencies.
- Report any problems to a director swiftly.

If you are available to chaperone, please let a director know! We need you!

### **General Magnet Policy Statement:**

Students enter our magnet program through the audition process in their primary areas of interest. Students will remain in that discipline for their three years at Meyerland PVAMS and will not be permitted to leave their primary area of interest. Should a student wish to change their area of acceptance, they must reapply and audition during audition season for the following year. Students are also expected to remain in their second magnet class throughout their time in our program unless there is sufficient reason (schedule conflict or after a conference with teachers, change is deemed necessary) presented to necessitate a change. As magnet transfer students, all choir students must maintain a minimum grade of 80 in their magnet classes, and 75 in core subject areas, as well as no less than an S in conduct. If a student fails to meet this requirement, they will be placed on a Magnet Growth Plan to improve their grades or behavior, and an accumulation of three Growth Plans will directly affect a student's magnet status or enrollment at MPVA.

### **Conclusion:**

Your decision to participate in the Meyerland PVA Choir represents the opening of a door to tremendous opportunity. We are incredibly fortunate to be in a school that has a tradition of excellent choirs and a school administration that values and supports this type of study. Please recognize the value of this opportunity and make the most of it.

This handbook is a guideline to make your experience in choir as productive and enjoyable as possible. The rules it contains have been developed over many years of experience and refinement. All of the rules are meant to serve one purpose: to promote the learning and development of the choir members. If you have any questions about the policies in this handbook, please do not hesitate to discuss it with your director.

Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts  
Department of Choral Music  
Handbook Contract 2021-2022

All students need to return this sheet signed by you and your parents/ legal guardian in order to be considered a member of the Meyerland PVA Choral Department.

Please initial by the following to indicate your understanding and acceptance of the following forms or paperwork:

_____	_____	Uniform Policy
Student	Guardian	

_____	_____	I have registered for Charms, using the Registration Instructions (pg 10)
Student	Guardian	

_____	_____	Magnet Program Cost (\$50)
Student	Guardian	

I have read this handbook and understand how it applies to me and to my student.

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Student : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian : \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign and return this page by Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**