

BELLEVILLE EAST
Choral Department Handbook

2022-2023

Choral Directors

Dr. Andrew Cowell

Director of Choirs

Mrs. Jessica Williamson

Associate Director of Choirs

LETTER TO FAMILIES

Dear Parents and Choral Students,

We are excited about this school year and welcome you to the 2021-2022 music season.

This handbook has been prepared for the choir families of Belleville East High School. In it you will find an outline of the grading system, classroom/rehearsal expectations, a list of student leadership opportunities, a calendar of musical events for the year, and other information you may find relevant for the success of our department. This also includes forms that will need to be signed and returned to your student's choir teacher in the first few weeks of school.

Information on how we can be reached is listed below. If, at any time you need to contact us, PLEASE feel free to do so at ANY TIME!!! The more communication between parties, the more successful we can all be!!!

You are urged to read through the entire handbook carefully. We look forward to your support and involvement throughout the school year.

Dr. Cowell

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E-Mail Address:	acowell@bths201.org

Mrs. Williamson

School Phone:	(618)222-3718
E-Mail Address:	jwilliamson@bths201.org

GRADING POLICIES

All grades are based on accumulated points throughout the semester. Students may be assessed and graded by the directors in the following areas:

1. Attendance (concerts, rehearsals, punctuality)
2. Positive Participation/Responsibility (observance of classroom rehearsal expectations)
3. Cooperation/Teamwork
4. Attitude
5. Vocal Efficiency/Body Alignment/Breath Management/Vocal Health
6. Sight-Singing and Part-Singing Tests
7. Knowledge of your voice part
8. Any written work/quartet tests/theory
9. Listening, reading, & writing activities (varies each Quarter)
10. Binder checks & classroom resource management

GRADING POLICY & DAILY ATTENDANCE

Excused Absences: Occasionally students are ill. Excused absences are granted with no penalty as long as the student has an excused absence through the attendance office. Each rehearsal is considered a daily assignment. As it is important to replicate ensemble singing, it is very difficult to make up absences in choir. When absences become excessive (regardless of legitimacy), however, a student may lose ensemble participation privileges and/or course credit out of respect to the rest of the ensemble.

Unexcused Absences: Unexcused absences are against our philosophy for success; these cases will be handled personally by the directors. Since it is impossible to make up absences in a group participation setting, unexcused absences from the attendance center will also result in the loss of that day's participation grade.

Tardies: A tardy is defined as a student not being in their assigned seat ready to work when the tardy bell rings. If you are not in your seat when the tardy bell rings—YOU WILL BE COUNTED TARDY! If a student is habitually tardy and has not met with the director to discuss extenuating circumstances, your director may inform you that your participation grade will be lowered or performance privileges revoked as a result of future tardies.

Types of Assignments

Daily Rehearsal Points:

75% of student's grade

- Ability to get along with others
- Self control in the classroom
- Following directions including being quiet when requested
- Responsibility and accountability.
- Getting to class on time
- Daily assignments & activities (written quizzes & tests and/or singing tests)
- Chromebook, phone, headphones and other technology is only out and visible at appropriate and directed times.

Concerts/Shows/Dress Rehearsals:

25% of student's grade

Performance points cannot be made up. Absence results in 0 Points.

NOTE: We are aware that there can be extenuating circumstances. In the event that there would be a legitimate reason for a student to miss a rehearsal or performance, the parent **MUST** notify the director personally in advance or leave a message via email or school voice mail. The directors will use their discretion on make-up work.

Semester/Final Exams & Self-Evaluations:

Points vary

Every choir student will have the opportunity to evaluate his or her learning and performance in the ensemble. Choir members are encouraged to use these tools to reflect on their musical growth, the strength of the ensemble, and the music the ensemble has worked hard to perform. Self-evaluations may be used at the directors' discretion.

All hour-long choir classes **MUST** include a semester and final exam. These exams are administered during the designated exams by the district. Half hour choir classes are exempt from taking both semester and final exams.

Ensemble Expectations

1. Choir members will attend every rehearsal and performance for their ensemble.
2. Ensemble members will bring all materials: black binder with music, pencils, water bottles, and anything else needed for a successful class or rehearsal.
3. Choir students will rehearse and practice daily. This may take many different forms whether focused on in class learning during rehearsal or individualized practice at home. Either way, constant and consistent practice both in and out of the classroom is crucial to the ensemble's success.
4. Choir students are expected to be mindful and attentive during rehearsals. Students should have work for other classes put away with their focus on the teacher and music being made in class. Choir students should be engaged in their learning by actively listening, participating with their peers, and asking questions.
5. Choir students will appropriately use technology as a tool in the classroom instead of as a distraction and will be instructed when its use is appropriate.
6. Choirs students will take extra initiative. They do more than they are asked to do. They take advantage of extra performing groups. They accept extra projects and assignments when they are offered.
7. Music students are thoughtful and attentive during rehearsals. They don't chat, stare out windows, or work on assignments from other classes.
8. They use pencils to mark on their printed music.
9. They participate in class even if their attempts are a bit clumsy. Mistakes are proof that they are trying! Their class participation goes beyond answering questions and performing music. When they don't understand something, they ask questions which show their initiative and intellectual curiosity.
10. Music students should engage their teachers in meaningful conversation. They seek out their teacher before school, after school, and during the free periods. They talk about music and school, but they also discuss career planning, current events, and anything else that seems musically interesting.
11. Finally, they actively listen to and appreciate a wide variety of music.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Exhibit Positive and Effective Behavior in Class and On Stage

Respect:

We will take pride in respecting all classmates, directors, and property.
Develop a “listening attitude” in following class expectations.

Contribution:

Work on the development of proper vocal skills, positive participation, and present an eagerness and willingness to learn!

Leadership:

Set examples of positive self-discipline; learn music quickly to help others with their parts; take initiative in all class activities.

Illinois High School Association League Rules for Participation:

See Attachment entitled Division 4----4.000 Non-Athletic Eligibility By-laws. You are responsible for knowing and abiding by these rules. Violations will affect the entire group! Please understand that the music faculty firmly believes very strongly about these rules. We believe that alcohol, drugs, tobacco and other destructive behaviors will prevent students from achieving the success they deserve. We have the highest regard for students who are strong enough to say “NO” to these destructive behaviors. We would like our music program to be 100% chemical free. If you are ineligible for a concert, it will be handled the same as an unexcused absence.

Academic Eligibility

The music faculty members take academics VERY seriously. You must maintain minimum academic eligibility to participate in some music events. We WILL track your academic progress in other classes during the year, and remind you that the best way to maintain good grades is to attend your classes and turn in your work! We expect this of you! If you know you are in academic trouble, please see Dr. Cowell, or Mrs. Williamson immediately. We can get you the help that you need for success!

Harassment

Music is internationally understood as an art form that brings people of diverse backgrounds and opinions together. Harassment in the music program will not be tolerated. We expect you to do your best to resolve simple disagreements on your own. Please report any serious issues to the directors. Any harassment issues will be dealt with by immediately involving both the parents and the AP of all involved students.

Choir Chairs, Folders and Music

- Chairs are set up for a specific rehearsal need. Please respect the rehearsal facility and the need to have various changes made in rehearsal set-ups.
- You are responsible for your folder and the contents therein. If music is lost or damaged, you may be assessed the current replacement cost. Music is the sole responsibility of the student. If lost, electronic copies may be printed at the expense of students and their families.

Fundraising

We will be raising funds for music activities and equipment. These funds are to be used for choir activities only! Students may earn credit towards expenses acquired during their involvement in the choir program. Expenses and credits are annually calculated and may not roll over unless specifically stated by their director. Funds are not transferable to other student accounts or redeemable. Excess funds will be deposited directly into the general choral fundraising account.

Concert Attire:

We will be performing in **CONCERT BLACKS**. Concert Blacks are a form of performance attire used that allows the performer to have a more personal choice and feel comfortable in what they are wearing. The goal is to create only a few guidelines and then allow students and their families to create their own performance uniforms. This type of performance attire also ensures students the versatility of being able to wear these garments in more situations than just a choir concert.

CONCERT BLACK REQUIREMENTS:

- 1.) Only black may be worn.
 - a. This means everything above the waist... must be solid black. Everything below the waist... must be solid black. Shoes... must be solid black. Socks... must be solid black. Ties, cardigans, vests, exposed undershirts or camisoles, scarves, headbands, belts, etc... must all be solid black. \
- 2.) Because of the formal nature of performances, you may not wear...
 - a. Denim
 - b. Spandex, Jogging, Sweatpant, or other Athletic Materials
 - c. Open-toed shoes or heels over an inch (for safety reasons)
 - d. Visible Brand name logos, graphics, or wording (including on shoes)
 - c. Rip, holes, or tears in any article of clothing.
- 3.) Decorative fabrics such as sequins, lace, velvet, etc. must be solid black.
- 4.) Students and families are encouraged to create performance attire that takes into account the weather and student comfort when performing.

Travel & Performance Privileges

Performing, including at festivals, events, theme parks, or anywhere else, is always a privilege. It is important to understand that certain expectations of eligibility can be administered by your directors to ensure equitable participation by all. It is, however, your director's duty to make these expectations clear to all choristers and their parents.

Discipline Protocols

Directors will do everything in their power to maintain order and ensure productivity in the vocal music classrooms at Belleville East. Please know that students who are participating and engaged in learning and making music will be recognized and praised for their contributions to the ensemble. However, behaviors such as refusal to participate or being disrespectful towards directors, classmates, or the music making process will be recognized and stopped immediately. Students will always be warned; however, if such choices continue to be made, students may be removed from the classroom and appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken by administration. Please know, it is the preference of the directors that behavior issues are handled respectfully within the classroom. Making music as an ensemble requires positive social attitudes.

Exceptions will be made if a student is placing themselves or others in harm's way. Egregious violations of student conduct policies will result in immediate removal.

CONCERT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are required to attend all events that are required for their choir. This is a graded activity. Students are also required to remain at concerts for the ENTIRE concert. This will require advance planning by parents to line up transportation. Students will receive only half credit if they leave before the entire performance is finished. Also—any student who does not display appropriate audience etiquette while listening will receive partial credit only for the performance grade. Listening is as much a part of your learning as the performance. There will be very few excused absences granted by the directors. All students are extremely valuable members of the performance teams!!!!

To obtain an excused concert absence: The parent must contact their student's director 24 hours in advance of the concert/performance. If a student brings a note, the directors will ignore it. We want the opportunity to dialogue with the parent about the absence and the make up assignment. Absences will be granted for extreme illnesses and funerals. Transportation problems and job conflicts are NOT excused. Many other students and their families are willing to help out with transportation issues. The make-up assignment will be determined on a case by case basis with the student's director and equal to the time missed at the performance. We are very generous with students who are honest and have a serious illness or family tragedy.

Unexcused absences are a student choice and therefore result in a zero.

TRAVEL POLICIES

1. Travel is a privilege earned by an ensemble and its members; students should be aware that merely being slated to travel does not mean they will be guaranteed participation. Grades, behavior, and fundraising will all be taken into account.
2. The choir will follow all school rules according to the school handbook at all times.
3. NO student-driven cars are allowed on any choir trip. NO EXCEPTIONS!
4. The choir travels together and follows the same schedule attending all planned events together.
5. Always remain seated on the bus; do not wander the aisles---unless, of course, you just love sitting by Dr. Cowell or Mrs. Williamson for the remainder of the trip!! Never exit the bus until told to do so.
6. Use headphones so that others will not be bothered. Keep all noise at a normal conversation level. No yelling allowed and no singing unless instructed by your teacher.
7. Be courteous on the bus at all times—No strike that---Just BE courteous at all times!
8. A dress code will be in effect AT ALL TIMES DURING CHOIR TRIPS. The school dress code will be in effect when traveling (unless otherwise instructed by your director). If you have any doubt or question about an article of clothing—consider it inappropriate and leave it at home. The final decision will be made by the directors, so please don't leave yourself without an alternative.
9. A polite and positive manner will be expected at all times. Be courteous and considerate to one another and to everyone you meet. Also refer to #6 if questions.
10. Always be on time and be responsible for all equipment and your music.
11. Consideration for others, responsibility for yourself and for your belongings, will be the guidelines for all of us.

STUDENT DIRECTOR DUTIES

1. Memorize all performance music as quickly as possible. If you do not know the music, the choirs will not know it as well either.
2. Assist and help the choir learn the music.
3. Take attendance before each rehearsal, as well as throughout each performance and trips. Report those absences to the director immediately for documentation.
4. You are responsible for overseeing all other managers and section leaders. You must make sure that they are doing their jobs and have completed all responsibilities prior to their departure after rehearsals and performances.
5. Pass out and collect all music during rehearsal—You may designate this responsibility to class librarians (or another student) if you wish.
6. ALWAYS ARRIVE EARLY!!!!
7. Be able to lead warm-ups and sectionals at the discretion of the director.
8. Be a positive role model and act in a responsible manner at all times.
9. Assist directors when asked.
10. This position is appointed by the ensemble's director.

SECTION LEADER DUTIES

1. Learn and memorize your music quickly.
2. Assist and help your section learn the music. You will be responsible for your sections success of their part.
3. Lead sectional rehearsals at and inform directors if extra rehearsals are needed. Plan convenient times for your section, including after school hours.
4. Assist the student director in attendance of each rehearsal by reporting your section absences for rehearsals and performances.
5. If you have an absence in your section, you need to know where and why that person is absent. If you do not know to make sure you can share with them any rehearsal notes or important information from class.
6. ALWAYS ARRIVE EARLY!!!!
7. Be a positive role model and act in a responsible manner at all times.
8. Make sure sectional recordings are completed and submitted at Director's request.
9. Assist directors when asked.
10. This position is appointed by the ensemble's director.

Executive Board & Choir Council Leadership Team

1. Hold regular meetings at least once a month to discuss concerns and future of the choir regarding activities and fundraisers.
2. Be positive role models and act in a responsible manner at all times.
3. Create activities, events, and opportunities to increase morale and a sense of community between **ALL** choir students.
3. Assist the directors when asked.

Choir Officers:

President: Must be at least a 3rd year hour choir student in AMC, TC, or CC

- Will plan & lead monthly executive board & choir council meetings
- Manage the responsibilities of the leadership team
- Be direct line of communication between students & the directors

Vice President: Must be at least a 3rd year hour choir student in AMC, TC, or CC

- Will assist in planning and running meetings (especially in PR absence)
- Manage the responsibilities of student volunteers at events
- Be direct line of communication between students & the directors

Secretary: Must be at least a 3rd year hour choir student in AMC, TC, or CC

- Keep a record of all executive board & choir council meetings
- Supply meeting agendas & minutes accordingly
- Assist directors in communication with students & families

Treasurer: Must be at least a 3rd year hour choir student in AMC, TC, or CC

- Assist and manage fundraising efforts for the Lancer Choirs
- Help manage the snack stand and uniform distribution
- Be direct line of communication between students & the directors

Class Reps: Each hour-long section of choir is allowed to nominate/elect one board member.

- Attend all choir council meetings
- Report back to their choir classes about leadership meetings & opportunities
- Be a direct line of communication between students & the directors

Nominations, Applications, & Elections:

Nominations: To be considered for a leadership role on the executive board or leadership council, students will need to be nominated by their peers.

Applications: Students must then complete an application to run for office. These applications will be considered by both choral directors. Additional input from a student's teachers as well as academic and disciplinary records will be considered at this time.

Elections: For executive board members (President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer), students who were nominated and selected during the application process will be included in a general election including all hour-long choir students. For class reps, individual directors will handle the nomination and election process as they see fit during their classes to ensure class representation on the choir council.

PERFORMANCE GROUPS & ENSEMBLES

Advanced Mixed Choir: Hour Choir

- General choir is a graded ensemble that meets during the school day. There is no audition requirement, however, students are expected to maintain the understanding of musical standards and strive for continued individual improvement. Grades 9-12.

Treble Choir: Hour Choir

- This choir is a graded ensemble and meets during the school day with required additional rehearsals. This group is selected by audition only OR personal placement by the director. Grades 10-12 (exceptions for auditioned Grad 9).

Concert Choir: Hour Choir

- This choir is a graded ensemble and meets during the school day with required additional rehearsals and performances. This group is selected by audition only OR personal placement by the director. Grades 10-12.

Vocal Jazz Ensemble 1: Lunch Choir

- This choir is a graded ensemble and meets during the school day with required additional rehearsals and performances. This group is selected by audition only OR personal placement by the director. Grades 10-12

Vocal Jazz Ensemble 2: Lunch Choir

- Open to any sophomore-senior who has been in an hour choir for one year or longer with the approval of the directors. Grades 10-12

Mixed Choir: Lunch Choir (treble voices only)

- Open to any student grade 9-12 who are currently enrolled in Advanced Mixed Choir or only a half hour choir.

Upper Mixed Choir: Lunch Choir (treble voices only)

- Open to students who are currently enrolled in Treble or Concert Choirs. Students may also be placed here by Directors' Approval

Bass Choir: Lunch Choir

- Open to any bass singing student grade 9-12 with no previous choir experience at Belleville East.

OTHER ODDS AND ENDS

Voice Lessons: The voice is a complex instrument. Each person's voice has unique and special qualities. If you are interested in private voice lessons, there are several options available to you.

- The choir director will be available on a limited basis before school to help students who are struggling with parts, sight-singing, scholarship auditions.
- Lessons from professional studio voice teachers are available after school, evenings, and even some times during the school day. See Dr. Cowell for a list of quality voice teachers.

Choir Office, Practice Rooms, and Other Areas of the Music Building: These spaces are designated for staff use only unless instructed otherwise. To ensure student safety, please note that no students may be unsupervised within the music building. This includes before school, during the school day (including lunch), and after school. The Choir Office is the work space of Dr. Cowell and Mrs. Williamson. This is NOT a location for students to have lunch, hang out, or socialize. It is not a storage room or a cafeteria space. The refrigerator and microwave in the Choir Office are for staff use only unless other permissions are given. Please respect any and all expectations of your directors in these spaces.

IMEA All-District/All State Choirs: . Senior division ---- concert and jazz choir, band, jazz band and orchestra.

Section Leaders: Your director may choose to implement section leaders in your choral ensemble. These leadership roles will be used in rehearsals as a means of helping efficiently teach music to the ensemble. Section Leaders must have exceptional musical skills and respect from their peers. Students will be expected to recognize section leaders in their roles which are appointed by the directors.

Choir Accompanists: If you are an accomplished pianist, why not give accompanying a try? See Dr. Cowell if you are interested.

Office Workers: Only students designated as Student Office Workers have the ability to be in the office and run errands or complete jobs for the directors. If you are interested in doing this, you must complete paperwork through the counseling and main offices; furthermore, there is paperwork that must be completed by your directors as well. See the World Language and Fine Arts Department chair, Mrs. Jenny Hotze-Wilton if you have any questions about office working.

STUDENT AND TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS

Having such an incredibly active program as Belleville East, we understand the importance of students being well informed about important assignments, expectations, performances, rehearsals, or any other notes your director might need to communicate to you to ensure your success. However, we also want to maintain a professional relationship as educators with our students. For that reason, students will be expected to follow these guidelines when communicating with teachers outside of the classroom:

- 1.) **STUDENTS MUST CHECK THEIR SCHOOL PROVIDED E-MAIL ADDRESSES:**
This is the most effective means for your directors to communicate with you. Check your e-mail and google classroom announcements regularly.
- 2.) **STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW HOW TO ACCESS AND USE THEIR GOOGLE CLASSROOM AND GOOGLE CHAT ACCOUNTS.**
- 2.) **IF INSTRUCTED, STUDENTS SHOULD ENROLL IN REMIND:** Your directors will be using REMIND. This messaging app allows for one-way communication between teachers and students in certain situations such as travel. All messages are also data-based to ensure respect and safety for all students and teachers.
- 3.) **STUDENTS SHOULD NOT CONTACT TEACHERS USING THE TEACHER'S PERSONAL CELL PHONE:** Again all communications should happen through e-mail, using the school provided phones, or via REMIND only.

PARENT AND TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS

We are always here to serve the needs of our students, our musicians, and their parents/families. However, please consider the following:

- 1.) **MEANS OF COMMUNICATION:** Public communication methods provided by the school (phones and e-mail) are preferred. However, occasionally a teacher may need to contact you from home or using their cell phone in the evening.
- 2.) **PRIVACY:** Your child's teacher will never share your contact information without your explicit consent. Please do the same for your student's teacher.
- 3.) **HOURS OF CONTACT:** Teachers will be respectful and courteous when selecting the best time to contact you. Please extend that same courtesy to your child's choir director. Every effort will be made to reply to any correspondence within 24 hours; however, if you haven't gotten a reply please consider trying a different means of communication (as the phone or email servers may be malfunctioning).

CHOIR WEBSITE

We have designed and implemented a department website. This website will be used to manage and maintain an updated choral calendar. It will also be used to store and distribute information for students. Students and parents should become familiar with navigating the site to locate the items needed for success in the classroom. Also, parents/guardians and students may use the website as a means of contacting their directors. We're hoping that centralizing all information in one place will make communications even smoother.

WWW.BEASTCHOIRS.COM

Events Calendar 2021-2022

FIRST SEMESTER

Wednesday, October 12th, 2022

AMC, TC

Fall Choral Concert PRACTICE (3:30-4:30pm) – PAC

Thursday, October 13th, 2022

AMC, TC, CC, UMC, MC, BC

Fall Choral Concert (6 pm) – PAC

Saturday, November 5th, 2022

Selected Students

District Jazz Festival (All Day) – Belleville-East

Wednesday, November 9th, 2022

CC, TC

Veterans Day Assembly (7th Hour) – PAC

Saturday, November 19th, 2022

Selected Students

District Concert Festival (All Day) – Belleville West

Wednesday, December 7th, 2022

AMC, TC

Winter Holiday Choral Concert PRACTICE (3:30-4:30pm) – PAC

Thursday, December 8th, 2021

AMC, TC, CC, UMC, MC, BC, VJE

Winter Holiday Choral Concert (6pm) – PAC

Friday, December 9th – Sunday, December 11th, 2022

CC, TC, BC

11th Annual Madrigal Dinner – The CAVE

SECOND SEMESTER

Wed. Jan. 25 - Sat. Jan. 28, 2023 **Selected All-State Singers, CC, TC, VJE**
ILMEA All-State Event (Peoria, IL)

Wednesday, February 22th, 2023 **AMC, TC**
POPs Concert PRACTICE (3:30-4:30pm) – PAC

Thursday, February 23, 2023 **AMC, TC, CC, UMC, MC, BC, VJE**
POPS Concert (6pm) – PAC

Thursday, April 21, 2022 **All Families are Welcome**
Annual Family Banquet, Awards Night, & Senior Spotlight
(6:30pm) – Cafeteria

Thursday, April 28 – Saturday, May 1, 2022 **Selected Students**
Spring Musical (7pm) – PAC

Wednesday, May 4th, 2022 **AMC, TC**
Spring Choral Concert PRACTICE (3:30-4:30pm) – PAC

Thursday, May 5, 2022 **AMC, TC, CC, UMC, MC, BC, VJE**
Spring Choral Concert (6pm) - PAC

ENSEMBLE GUIDE

AMC = Advanced Mixed Choir

TC = Treble Choir

CC = Concert Choir

UMC = Upper Mixed Choir

MC = Mixed Choir

BC = Bass Choir

VJE = Vocal Jazz Ensemble

schedule is subject to change

CHOIR PERMISSION SLIP

I give permission for my son/daughter, _____ to travel with Belleville East High School Choir during the 2021-2022 school year to scheduled events, and to be excused to participate in such events as necessary.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

MEDIA RELEASE

I give permission for the directors to use photos/videos that may include my student on Belleville East associated media accounts.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Signature

Date

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I have read the Belleville East Choir handbook and understand that I will be responsible for the policies outlined therein, including the fact that there are performances and or rehearsals outside of the regular school day for which attendance is required to fulfill the class grade requirements. I understand that the policies and procedures indicated in this handbook are subject to change at the directors' discretion if adequate notice is given.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Signature

Date

Date