

Ross Local Schools

Choral Program

Handbook



2026-2027

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"Music is the great uniter. An incredible force. Something that people who differ on everything and anything else can have in common."

-Sarah Dessen

Why We Teach Music

1. MUSIC IS SCIENCE: It is exact, specific, and must be 100% correct. It is unalterable. It requires exact acoustics.
2. MUSIC IS MATHEMATICAL: It is rhythmically based on the sub-division of space into fractions which must be done instantaneously and not worked out on paper.
3. MUSIC IS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: Most of the musical terms are in Italian, we sing in Latin, German, French, and Italian, and the notation of notes certainly is not English, but a highly developed kind of shorthand.
4. MUSIC IS HISTORY: Music has always reflected the environment and times of its creation - often even the country.
5. MUSIC IS PHYSICAL EDUCATION: It requires fantastic coordination of fingers, hands, arms, lips, and facial muscles in addition to extraordinary control of the back, stomach and chest muscles which must respond instantly to the sounds the ear hears and the mind interprets.
6. MUSIC IS ALL OF THESE THINGS, BUT MOST OF ALL MUSIC IS ART: It allows a human being to take all of these dry, technically boring (but fantastically difficult) techniques and use them to CREATE EMOTION!

That is the one thing that science can not duplicate - humanism, feeling, emotion, or call it what you will.

THAT IS WHY WE TEACH MUSIC - not because we expect anyone to major in music; not because we expect anyone to perform music all of their life; not so you can relax; not so you can have fun. We teach music so you will be human; so you will recognize beauty; so you will be sensitive; so you will be closer to an infinite beyond our world; so that you'll have something to cling to; so that you will have more love, more compassion, more gentleness, more good. . . in short, more life.

THAT IS WHY WE TEACH MUSIC!

Foreword

The goal of this handbook is to thoroughly and efficiently educate students, parents, school administrators, and the community about the expectations and purpose of the Ross Choral Department. This handbook serves as a learning tool in the beginning of the school year, and as a reference material as the year progresses. It must be read in its entirety to guarantee a common knowledge for everyone associated with the choral program.

2026-2027 Choir Offerings

Ross Middle School - Directed by Mr. Kayden Cordell

5th Grade Choir - 5th grade treble choir held during 1st Bell

6th Grade Choir - 6th grade treble choir held during 2nd Bell

7/8th Grade Choir - 7-8th grade treble/bass choir held during 6th and 7th Bell

Next Generation - 6-8 auditioned advanced treble/bass show choir -

*extracurricular

Ross High School - Directed by Mrs. Hallie Herman

Voices of Excellence - 9-12 treble/bass choir held during 2nd semester

Chamber Singers - 9-12th grade treble/bass advanced auditioned choir held during 2nd semester

Legacy - 9-12 auditioned advanced treble/bass show choir

Learning Outcomes

Students, the progress and success that you will achieve will come through your willingness to express yourself, your desire to be an involved member, your attention to detail, and remarks given by the teacher. To achieve a high level of success, you must be willing to be personally accountable for working individually, as well as with your peers. You must continually strive to improve as a member of the Ross Choral Department and be proud of your accomplishments. We will maintain a reputation of excellence through the outstanding work of each student. Remember, talent is only the "raw untrained ability that requires hard work and focused effort to reach its full potential". Our hope is that through hard work and dedication, students not only become better musicians, but stronger leaders within their community.

Vocal Skills Emphasized

Knowledge and demonstration of...

1. the proper care and use of the voice
2. breath support
3. vowel production and modification
4. dynamics
5. time signatures
6. key signatures (major and minor)
7. general musical terminology
8. musical phrasing
9. expression markings
10. proper tone for any given genre of music

Personal Skills Emphasized

1. Having pride in yourself, in your peers, and for the Ross Choral Program
2. Working together for a common goal: the fulfillment of singing
3. Being personally accountable for attendance at daily rehearsals, dress rehearsals, concerts, festivals, and lessons
4. Displaying positive self-discipline and classroom behavior
5. Development of leadership skills
6. The willingness to continually develop your singing voice and musicianship
7. Discovering choral music as an art
8. Learning to become intelligent and sensitive musicians in expressing the emotion of music
9. Striving to make yourself and the Ross Choirs the best that they can be
10. Setting standards of excellence for the future
11. Showing respect for yourself, your peers, and your leaders
12. Becoming a better active listener
13. Showing a desire to attract new students to the choral program
14. Responding and using to positive, constructive criticism, responsibly

Required Materials

At the beginning of the school year, students will be assigned a music cubby number in which they are to keep their materials for class if they are not taking them home to practice. Students are responsible for providing a plain, 1" black binder (no front plastic sleeve preferred) for RMS or a ½" black binder (no front plastic sleeve preferred) for RHS and a pencil for the class. All music will be furnished. All music provided must remain in excellent condition or a

replacement fee will be assessed through the school district for any missing or damaged copies. Furthermore, there is a \$100 participation fee required of every student for the RMS and RHS choirs. Any unpaid fees assessed will result in a hold on your final transcripts until all past due fees have been paid. Any RHS Student who participates in multiple ensembles will be waived of any additional \$100 participation fees.

Behavior Expectations

In order for our choirs to run smoothly while being successful, there are behavioral expectations that need to be met in rehearsal every day:

1. Show respect for everyone and everything
2. Class begins when the bell rings- be in your seat with your binder, pencil, and water ready to go!
3. No gum or candy at any time
4. Everyone will *actively participate* with a positive attitude
5. Minimal talking throughout rehearsal
6. No phone usage during rehearsal
7. Display personal accountability for your desire, discipline, and dedication

If you choose to not meet these expectations, the following consequences will be applied:

1. Verbal Warning
2. Call/email home to parent/guardians
3. Discipline referral
4. Recommendation for removal from Choir

Behavior Expectations Cont.

It is our expectation that students who have chosen to be in choir are here because they *want* to be, therefore, no behavior issues are foreseen for the school year.

Please keep in mind that grades are earned, not given. Choir is a performance-based class and effort and attitude are part of your grade, so please show up everyday ready to participate and be a contributing member of a *well-respected* organization.

Cell Phone Policy

In accordance with the Ohio House Bill 250 and the Ross Local School District policies, students are not permitted to have their cellphones, smart watches, and/or earbuds during instructional time and passing periods. It is Mrs. Herman and Mr. Cordell's expectation that students keep these devices powered off and put away unless they have a direct medical exception or have been given direct instruction to use them for an instructional purpose. If a student does not abide by these expectations, Mrs. Herman and Mr. Cordell will follow their building's disciplinary actions and students will lose their participation points for the day.

Literature Expectations

Students in the Ross Choral Program will be exposed to music from a variety of musical styles and periods throughout the year-long course. This could include Classical, Sacred, Secular, Popular, Multicultural, and/or Seasonal works. Music is chosen for the teaching purposes of broadening the student's musical knowledge about choral literature, its meaning, its origin, and to provide an exposure to cultures outside of our own.

Absences

The Ross Choirs are co-curricular, performing ensembles; therefore attendance at all after-school rehearsals and performances is *mandatory*. However, sometimes an emergency situation cannot be avoided. Acceptable reasons for missing a performance or rehearsal are:

1. Personal Illness (Communication from a parent/guardian required)
2. Family Emergency (Communication from a parent/guardian required)

Other personal conflicts or reasons for missing a performance or rehearsal will be dealt with on an individual basis with Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell and the administration if necessary.

Work, family outings, babysitting, another activity, or lack of transportation will not be accepted as legitimate reasons for missing a concert. The dates for concerts and other important events are listed on the calendar included in this handbook and on our website, www.rosschoirs.org. Please plan ahead and schedule around them, arranging for proper transportation, if necessary. It is the student's responsibility to notify Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell of any other extenuating conflict at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled conflict. Remember, choir is a graded

class - *not* an extracurricular activity.

If a student is absent from school on the day of a concert, a note from the parent/legal guardian is still needed stating the reason for the absence. In order for a student to receive full credit for the missed performance, along with an excused absence, a make-up assignment must be completed. (See the make up assignment section)

Students are expected to stay for the entire concert unless arrangements have been made with Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell prior to the start of the performance. An unexcused absence from a performance will automatically result in a '0/100' for the performance grade.

Evaluation/Assessment

Students will receive a daily participation grade for being an active and effective participant of the ensemble. Students will earn a daily 5 points based on the following criteria:

1. Agency- being in your seat, ready for class, when the bell rings; not wandering the room, socializing, or searching for materials
2. Technology Use- keeping phones and chromebooks put away, unless specifically directed by Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell to use them
3. Communication- keeping side conversations to a minimum; speaking respectfully to others in the room
4. Gum/Food/Drinks- only having bottled water throughout rehearsal, unless given direct permission by Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell
5. Preparedness- having your binder, assigned music, pencil, and any other class materials when class begins

Other factors that are considered into students' grades are vocal part checks, Sight-Reading submissions, any written assignments/ assessments, etc.

As an educator, part of helping our students succeed is the implementation of continuous assessment. Therefore, throughout the year, students will be given vocal part checks to measure their growth and knowledge. These are not based on the student's talent, but are based on an evaluation of how well the student learned the music that was rehearsed, as well as how much growth as a musician the student made between one vocal check to the next. **Students may be evaluated in groups, as individuals, or via video in front of the class, privately, or online.** Special consideration will be given to those who may need accommodations. Please keep

in mind that this is a performance based class and that performances, whether in a concert setting or in class on an individual basis, are part of the student's grade.

Parents, if you have any questions about your student's grade, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell. We will be more than willing to give recommendations for future grades and how your child can improve, if needed.

Students, one important aspect of the Ross Choirs is that we are able to form relationships built on trust and respect. If you ever feel the need to talk to a director about your grade, voice, the person sitting next to you, etc..., please do not hesitate to see us. Communication is not only important, but it is *necessary*.

If students come prepared, actively participate in class, and attend every mandatory practice and performance, there should be no worry of what their grade will be at the end of the quarter. This class is designed to help students succeed as they grow as a musician and leader.

AI Policy

In accordance with the Ross Local Schools District AI Policy, students are responsible for ensuring they have used their own knowledge and resources to complete their work. The use of AI is strictly prohibited and will result in a 0% for the assignment.

Concert Point Recovery Assignments

Concert point-recovery assignments will only be permitted to students whose excused absence has been approved.

Since a "live" performance cannot be "made up", students who miss a required performance with an excused absence must complete an alternative assignment to earn their grade. This is not intended to be a punishment, but simply a project to substitute for the missed performance.

Students will need to complete one of the following prompts:

1. Using one piece performed at the concert and a song of your choosing, please compare and contrast the musical similarities and differences you see and hear. Students should use musical terminology learned in class to write their paper. Papers should be 12pt. font, double spaced, and one page in length.
2. Using a recording of each piece, students will record a concert performance

of the missed concert. The video should clearly show the student's face and display a mastery of the pieces performed.

The make-up assignment is the student's responsibility and is due 1-week after the missed performance or 2 days before the end of the grading period, whichever occurs first. Mrs. Herman and Mr. Cordell will provide the due date, but will not remind the students to complete their make-up assignment. If a student with an excused absence chooses not to complete the make-up assignment, the student will receive a 0/100 for their concert grade.

Concert Attire

Musicians are expected to look their best for any performance, as this provides the "first impression" for the audience. Studies have shown that students perform better when they take pride in their appearance. In large groups, a uniform is a necessary component to looking professional and there will be no exceptions. No student will be permitted to perform without the proper uniform. This will be considered an unexcused absence, resulting in a '0' grade for the performance. Uniform information for each choir can be found in each course syllabus. If you have concerns regarding providing your personal uniform items, please let Mrs. Herman or Mr. Cordell know. We will do our best to accommodate every student, regardless of need.

Fundraising

This year, we will hold multiple fundraisers throughout the year. Student participation in each fundraiser is strongly encouraged. Some fundraisers will benefit the student's individual accounts, covering costs such as uniforms, trip expenses, etc... Other fundraisers will go towards the general account to cover expenses such as Music in the Parks, the RHS Choir Banquet, music, equipment, piano tuning, risers, etc... We are always looking for new and creative ways to fundraise. If you have any ideas, please let us know!

Ross Local Schools Choral Association

Why join the RLS Choral Boosters?

Every membership is important to the mission of the Ross Local Schools Choral Association. Your membership provides Ross choral students with enhanced opportunities for growth and leadership in an award-winning choral program. Booster Club members and volunteers help to bridge the gap between what declining public education funding can provide and what our kids deserve. The Arts are a vital part of the high-quality Ross Local School District educational

experience. From show choir to marching band, concert choir to jazz band, and visual arts to stage crew, the arts are activities available to capture the imagination and passion of all participating students. As a vocal booster club member you can help ensure that the students of the Ross Local Schools Choral Program benefit from a wide range of experiences that support and encourage lifetime learning and achievement.

Whether your children attend Ross Local Schools today or graduated years ago, we all have a stake in offering rich experiences that compliment academics and develop the **whole person**.

Thank you for your continued support! We cannot do this without you!
For more information, visit the 'Choral Boosters' page at www.rosschoirs.org.

RLS Choral Association Officers 2023-2024

President: Bridget Smith rlschoraldpresident@gmail.com

Vice President: Abby Sherwood rlschoralvp@gmail.com

Secretary: Beth Ziepfel rlschoralsecy@gmail.com

Treasurer: Miranda Sheppard/Neil Miller rlschoraltreasurer@gmail.com

Show Choir Rep: Becky Graf rlschorallegacyrep@gmail.com

Concert Choirs Rep: Tami Kunkle rlschoralchoirrep@gmail.com

Choir Important Dates

Quarter 1 (8/20-10/16)

Ross Choirs Fall Concert | 6th Grade Choir, 7/8th Grade Choir, Legacy
Wednesday, 10/7 | RHS PAC | 7:00pm

Quarter 2 (10/19-12/18)

Harvest Gathering | Next Generation, Legacy
Saturday, November 7th | RHS Cafeteria | 10:00am

'Tis the Season Concerts | 6th Grade Choir, 7/8th Grade Choir, Legacy
Wednesday, 12/9 & Thursday, 12/10 | RHS PAC | 7:00pm

Quarter 3 (1/4-3/12)

Mics-N-Lights | Next Generation, Legacy

Sunday, 1/17 | RHS PAC | 7:00pm

RMS Music in Our Schools Concert | 5th Grade Choir, 7/8th Grade Choir

Wednesday, 3/10 | RHS PAC | 7:00pm

Quarter 4 (3/15-5/27)

Show Choir Final Show | Next Generation, Legacy

Tuesday, 3/16 | RHS PAC | 6:00pm

Ross Choirs Spring Concert | 5th Grade Choir, 7/8th Grade Choir, Chamber Singers, Voices of Excellence

Wednesday, 4/28 | RHS PAC | 7:00pm

Conzart | Voices of Excellence, Chamber Singers

Tuesday, 5/11 | RHS PAC | 6:00pm

Baccalaureate | Voices of Excellence, Chamber Singers, Legacy

Sunday, 5/23 | RHS PAC | 7:00pm

RHS Commencement | Voices of Excellence, Chamber Singers, Legacy

Tuesday, 5/25 | Miami University Millett Hall | 7:00pm