

# Tahoma High School Choir Handbook

2023-24



Mr. Riggs, *director*

The Tahoma High School Choir program has a strong history of excellence. The choirs are consistently among the very best in our area, due not only to student talent and director expertise, but also because of the hard work and dedication that is required of the singers. This handbook outlines some of the expectations that help to keep our program successfully moving forward.

There are currently seven choirs offered at THS.

#### Concert Choir

This is our large mixed choir. This choir is made up of singers with previous THS choral experience, and functions much like one of the auditioned groups. The choir ranges in size from about 35 to over 50 male and female singers, depending on the year.

#### Treble Choir

This is our auditioned women's choir. The 32 singers in this group are carefully chosen to be able to sing in a variety of voicings. While the choir sings mostly 2, 3, or 4-part music, they have been known to perform pieces that split into as many as 8 parts. It is important that the musicians in this group are able to sing their own parts accurately with very little support around them.

#### Chamber Choir

This group is our most advanced traditional choir. Through the audition process, the 32 students that are chosen for this group have the strongest voices and the highest degree of musicianship. They perform a variety of challenging choral music, and perform more often than any other choir at THS.

#### Men's Choir

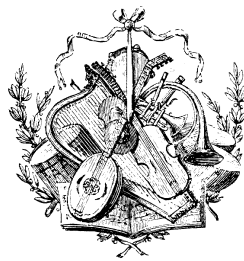
The Men's Choir is a good starting point for tenor and bass singers. This non-auditioned group has between 30 and 40 singers, and will perform music for 3 or 4 part men. This is a good class for male singers to begin their choral experience, as well as for more advanced singers to build skills and experience repertoire written for men's voices.

#### Women's Choir

We are excited to offer multiple sections of non-auditioned women's choirs at THS. These groups have around 40 singers, and will perform music for 2, 3 or 4 part women. This is a good class for female singers to begin their choral experience, as well as for more advanced singers to build skills and experience repertoire written for women's voices.

### Jazz Choir

Each member of this group is also in one of the other choirs listed above. They sing a variety of styles of music focusing on vocal jazz, but ranging into other pop styles as well. This group performs with a rhythm section (piano, bass, drums) and uses individual microphones. This small ensemble of 15 to 17 singers is chosen not only for their musical expertise, but also for their sense of style and solo abilities.



# THS CHOIR COURSE SYLLABUS

## Course Description:

Through studying and performing a variety of choral music, students will learn good vocal technique (breath support, diction, etc.), relevant aspects of music theory and history, performance etiquette, and the distinction between choral singing and solo singing. This is an elective class. When you agree to join this class, you are making a commitment to all performances and other activities of the class. The choir classes count as a Fine Arts credit.

## Class Expectations:

1. Be on time and prepared for rehearsal.
2. No food or gum allowed in the choir room during rehearsal - you cannot sing well with something in your mouth. Feel free to bring water to drink.
3. Cell phones should be put away when the choir is actively rehearsing.
4. Be supportive and respectful of others. The choir room should be an environment in which it is safe to try new things without fear of rejection or making mistakes.

## Grading:

Your grade will consist of three factors: Daily participation and effort, Performances, and Written work.

Daily participation: This is the largest part of your grade. Assisting students in establishing lifelong habits of reliability and promptness is an instructional objective of this particular course. Progress toward this goal will be measured, at least in part, by tracking student attendance. Therefore, a student's grade or credit in the class may be adversely affected by reason of tardiness or absence. If you are not here, you cannot participate. In addition, merely showing up is not enough to receive a passing grade. Daily effort will be required on your part. Every time a voice is missing or not singing to its potential, it affects the choir as a whole. If you choose not to participate fully, your grade will be heavily impacted. In the rare instance that you cannot sing, you are still expected to follow along in your music and learn what you can after informing the director.

Performances: You have been given a list of performance dates. In addition to these, there may be other performances scheduled. **Attendance at all performances is mandatory.** Set up and break down of equipment is part of the requirement for performances. You will usually need to report to the concert venue 45 minutes to an hour before the performance begins. Missed performances cannot be made up. If there are

conflicts or extenuating circumstances, you will need to let me know ASAP, and have your parents contact me no less than a week after the performance.

Written work. We will study music theory and history as they relate to the pieces of music covered in this class. There will be some written assignments, quizzes, and you will be required to attend one concert per semester in which you do not perform, and turn in a brief concert review.

Your grade breakdown is as follows:

70% - daily participation and effort  
20% - performances  
10% - written work and quizzes

Late work will lose 10% and an additional 10% for each week it is late. There is no make-up work or alternate assignment for a missed performance.

Graded Performance Trips:

Chamber Choir to CWU

Chamber Choir Tour to TSD Schools

Jazz Choir to GRMEA Vocal Jazz Festival

Jazz Choir Tour to TSD Schools

GRMEA Choir Contest (Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, Treble Choir)

GRMEA Choir Festival (Men's Choir, Women's Choir)

Tahoma Men's Choir Festival (Tenor/Bass singers)

Tahoma District Choir Festival (all choirs)

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

email for Mr. Riggs: [kriggs@tahomasd.us](mailto:kriggs@tahomasd.us)

website: [tahomachoir.weebly.com](http://tahomachoir.weebly.com)

*See the website for things like concert dates, announcements, important documents, and homework.*

## **SHEET MUSIC AND FOLDERS**

Music and a folder will be checked out to you, and fines may be issued for any damaged or missing materials. Take care of the music you have been assigned.

Keep a pencil in your folder and make your marks in pencil only.

You may take your music folder home with you (practice outside of class is encouraged, but not required). It is very important that you have your folder for each rehearsal, so if you decide to take it home, please remember to bring it back for each class.

If you would rather leave your music in the choir room, a folder slot is provided.

## **PERFORMANCE OUTFITS**

All of the choirs except for the Jazz Choir will wear choir robes for their performances. Choir robes are numbered on the tag and will be assigned before the first concert. They will be worn for most concerts and contests. What you wear under the robe is not that important except for where it shows below the robe. Robes have an 8" hem, and anything that shows below the robe should be black.

Men: black slacks, socks and dress shoes

Women: black dress shoes and a skirt or shorts that don't show below the hem of the robe. Black dress pants are also OK.

Robes should be returned to the closets in the choir room after each performance.

**There will be a \$10 fee to cover dry cleaning costs, due by the end of September.**

### Choir shirts:

You are encouraged to purchase a choir shirt (required for Chamber Choir). We will wear the shirts with blue jeans for less formal performances (assemblies, tours, etc). Shirt order forms can be found in the Documents section of the choir website.

### Jazz Choir outfits:

Outfits will be decided on by the members of the group once auditions are complete. In past years, the cost has been around \$50.

## CONCERTS

Concerts are a required part of the course. Most concerts will be held in the THS PAC. In case of a conflict or emergency, please contact me ASAP to let me know. If I know of a problem far enough in advance, I can sometimes make arrangements to mitigate the problem. **The only way to get full credit for a concert is to show up on time and perform with the choir.** There is no makeup work for missing a concert, as it is not an experience that can be replicated on your own. Some points are still possible for a missed concert with timely parental notification, depending on the reason and with sufficient notice, but it will never be more than 90%.

Choirs will warmup 45-60 minutes before the performance time (which is usually 7pm). **Being on time for setup/warmup and staying until cleanup is done are both part of the concert grade.**

## FIELD TRIPS

There will be a number of field trips this year that will give our performing ensembles a chance to perform outside of our own school. These will be important to attend, as the choirs cannot perform their best without all of their members. Please make sure you have the contest and tour dates on your calendar in addition to those for the evening concerts. Those with a current grade of D or F will be excluded from field trips.

## HOMEWORK

There is very little homework in the choir program, except for the following:

1. Practice at home, as necessary. If you are behind the rest of the class in learning your parts, you should spend some time on them at home.
2. Concert Attendance Homework. Each semester, you will need to attend one choral concert of your choice in which you do not perform. Any choir concert will suffice (neighboring high schools, college or community choirs, other schools in our district, concerts of other THS choirs, professional choirs, etc.) This will give you a chance to practice your audience skills, make you more aware of the audience perspective, and expand your experience when it comes to choral music. You will need to turn in a concert program and a brief review of the concert. Please make sure your name is on your review, and staple the concert program to it. If you usher a concert, you don't need to do the writeup. You can sign up to usher at the bottom of this page: <https://tahomachoir.weebly.com/concert-dates.html>

3. A brief written reflection at the end of the year. Questions can be found on the homework tab of the Choir website.

## **STUDENT LEADERSHIP**

There are many opportunities for student leadership within the choir program. Every student is encouraged to build their capacity for musical leadership during rehearsals, and older or more experienced singers will set an example for the younger and less experienced. Aside from this, there are some official positions that will be filled from within the choirs.

Choir Officers: As a co-curricular program, the choir is expected to have officers to represent them to the ASB. The officers will make up the Choir Council. In some respects, the officers will choose how much or how little they wish to do in a given year, but some of the basic expectations are listed below.

President (Chamber Choir) - this is the leader of the choir officers. Responsibilities include attending ASB meetings, setting a strong example of dedication and musicianship for other choir members, assisting Mr. Riggs with some of the details required in running a program of this magnitude, and setting the vision for the other officers.

Vice-President (Treble Choir) - assist the President in all of the duties listed above, and represent the choir to the ASB in the President's absence. Provide leadership within the Treble Choir.

Secretary (Concert Choir)

Treasurer (Jazz Choir) - sign off on all ASB expenditures for the choir program.

Choir Representative (Men's Choir/Women's Choirs)

Section Leaders: Each section in each choir will have a section leader. These students will be appointed by Mr. Riggs. Responsibilities include leading other students in sectional rehearsals, setting an example for others during rehearsal, and encouraging other students within their section.

Student Conductor: There will be days when Mr. Riggs is gone during the year. The student conductor may need to assist the substitute in leading the rehearsal.

Student Rehearsal Accompanist: This person has the piano skills to assist the Student Conductor.

## **OUTSIDE OPPORTUNITIES**

Solo & Ensemble Contest: our region holds a contests each March for soloists or small ensembles. Winners of the contest move on to the state contest in Ellensburg at the end of April.

Private Voice Lessons - there is a list of local voice teachers on the choir website. Private voice lessons are encouraged as a means of gaining some more individualized instruction.

## **CHOIR HANDBOOK/SYLLABUS VERIFICATION**

Please fill out the Information and Verification form found here:

<https://tahomachoir.weebly.com/student-info.html>

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

can be found here:

<https://tahomachoir.weebly.com/concert-dates.html>