

Department Handbook

2023-2024

September 2023

Welcome to Royal Oak Choirs!

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to Royal Oak High School Choir! I am so excited for this year and the wonderful music making that will take place! My name is Kirsten Williams, the choral director here at ROHS. This will be my seventh year here at ROHS, but sixteenth year of teaching, having taught nine years in the Dallas, TX area. I received my Bachelors degree from Michigan State University (Go Spartans!) in Music Education, and my Masters degree in Secondary Education at Texas A&M-Commerce. I come from a family of three daughters (I’m the middle) and both my parents are retired teachers of thirty-five years. I have been married thirteen years to my wonderful husband, Matthew; we have a daughter, Hannah, who is 8.5, and a son Hudson who is 5! Between two little ones and three cats, it’s certainly a busy house! I love spending time outdoors (particularly swimming, being on the water, and biking), camping, dancing (these days it’s mostly Zumba), and traveling.

Here is the 2023-2024 Vocal Music Handbook. I hope it contains all the information you need to make your participation in vocal music pleasant and rewarding. In this packet you will find a CALENDAR of vocal music events. In addition, you will find an explanation of our wonderful BOOSTER ORGANIZATION, classroom and event CONDUCT, the GRADING system in which students will be assessed, performance UNIFORMS, and forms that are to be signed and returned as soon as possible.

**Share the handbook with all who need to know this information and please read the handbook carefully!!!** This will prepare you for your work in choir. You will need to understand the responsibilities of being a part of the ROHS Choir Program. If a problem arises, consult the handbook first. If you do not find the answer there, please do not hesitate to ask!

Students in the vocal music program are challenged to grow musically and vocally to their greatest potential. Please respect your director, fellow musicians, the music performed, and the work each of us do to become the best choir(s) possible; I also expect you to show responsibility by trying your best at *all* rehearsals and performances. If you do these things, your reward will be an experience unlike any other you have in school, encompassing pride, joy, feelings of accomplishment, success, and fun!

I look forward to meeting and getting to know all of you. Let’s have a great year!

Sincerely,

Kirsten Williams

kirsten.williams@royaloakschools.org

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###### **CHOIRS & COURSE CONTENT**

There are four choir classes during the school day at Royal Oak High School, in addition to Music Theory: Raven Singers, Bel Canto, Vocalise, and A Cappella. Students are placed in Vocalise and A Cappella by audition only. In addition, Chamber Singers is a select ensemble that meets after school during the week.

RAVEN SINGERS/ BEL CANTO COURSE CONTENT: This is a primary-level choir that develops music reading skills, ear training & sight reading techniques, and vocal development; these skills are taught through a wide variety of primary to intermediate level literature from multiple time periods, cultures, and genres.

VOCALISE COURSE CONTENT: This is an intermediate choir which expands music reading skills, ear training techniques, and vocal development through a broad range of music from multiple time periods, cultures, and genres; content will contain medium to difficult musical repertoire, written work and vocal exercises. Sight reading drills are of major importance in this class.

A CAPPELLA COURSE CONTENT: This is an advanced level choir emphasizing a high level of choral skills and music fundamentals. The main thrust of this choir is refining the singer’s musicianship through the performance of an extensive and highly diversified repertoire of standard choral literature. This choir demands that each student be an *independent singer and sight reader.* Since this choir is frequently called on to represent Royal Oak High School on a local, state and national level, each participant is expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct to and from those performances. These choir members are also expected to be exemplary citizens in their other high school classes and at all Royal Oak High School functions.

**CALENDAR**

The choral department calendar is attached to this document. Please check your calendar and report any conflicts to the director. Attendance at all performances and rehearsals is curricular, therefore required. If an excused absence is anticipated, a written notification should be submitted at least two days in advance.

Occasionally, additional rehearsals or events are scheduled to enhance the choral experience. Adequate notification will be given in the event of an addition to the original calendar dates.

**CONCERT/PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS**

*See ROHS choir calendar for event location, date, and time. All performances listed below are required.*

*Spectrum Concert* – The choral department’s fall concert, which is perform in a collage-style. Each choir will perform 3+ pieces of music they have prepared since beginning the school year; in addition, students may audition to perform a solo or group act. Students will wear their formal choir uniform.

*All-City Choir Clinic* – Members of ROHS choir have the opportunity to spend half of a school day working with members of ROMS choir and a hired clinician. Music will be learned, rehearsed on this day, and later performed at All-City Vocal Music Festival. Students will wear choir-related shirts.

*All-City Vocal Music Festival* – This is a wonderful performance for singers across the district to sing under one roof! All choirs will perform a couple selections alongside ROMS and elementary singers. Students will wear formal choir uniform.

*Winter Concert* – All choir students will perform in this concert. Each choir will prepare 2-3 secular and sacred holiday selections separately, and combined.

*Pre-Festival Concert –*All choirs will perform in this concert as a preview and practice performance for festival (for details regarding this contest, see below). Students will wear their formal choir uniform. *Students must attend this event to participate in the actual MSVMA District Choral Festival.*

*MSVMA District Festival Concert and Sight-Reading Contest –* The Michigan State Vocal Music Association hosts various festivals throughout the year, culminating in District & State Choral Festival in the spring. Each choir will sing 2 pieces for a panel of judges, who will then give comments and ratings. In addition, each choir will sight-read musical excerpts for a judge’s comments and ratings. All students who meet standards during class rehearsals and participate in the Pre-Festival concert will participate in this event. If a student does not meet the behavioral and/or performance expectations required for Choral Festival, it is up to the director and administrators’ discretion whether or not a student attends the Festival itself. The specific performance times are TBA until 2-3 weeks before the contest, but students will miss some of the school day. Students will wear their formal choir uniform.

*ROX Concert –* All choir students will perform in this concert. The pop show features soloists, group acts and choir numbers with choreography. Information about dress for this concert will be sent home at a later date.

**ROHS CHOIR PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

Music is an expression of the human experience.

Through music study…

*students gain a picture of the world around them through language, history, and culture.*

Through participation in a performance ensemble…

*students hone people skills, problem solving skills, and creative thinking needed in today’s work force.*

Through performing, listening to, and creating music…

*students will learn who they are and what they are capable of becoming.*

**CHOIR CLASSROOM ENTRANCE PROCEDURES**

*Before* the bell rings, students will:

 Place backpacks side of choir room

 Cell phone on silent in backpack

Grab new materials

 Binder and pencil (sharpened) in hand

 Sit in assigned seat

**PENCIL POLICY**

Before the bell, students are expected to have a pencil in their folder. Students can always get a sharpened pencil from the pencil box located on top of the piano, BUT they must trade it for a phone or backpack and return the pencil they borrowed after class.

I will also sell mechanical pencils to students for $.25 if they want to buy one BEFORE the bell rings. These will be located in Mrs. Williams’ office.

**GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS**

All choir classes will follow school rules as listed in the ROHS general student handbook, in addition to the following choir class expectations:

* + - Respect yourself and others!
		- When we are ready to rehearse—you are quiet and ready.
		- Criticizing another persons’ voice or effort is not allowed.
		- No purses, books, gym bags, etc. will be allowed on the risers. Leave all supplies outside of the room as you enter and pick up your folder.
		- The choir office, the choir phone, the pianos, and the stereo are off limits to students during the school day, unless given permission.
		- This is a performance-based ensemble, and sharing the results of our work is a *curricular* part of the class. You will be expected to perform in concerts, most of which will be in the evening; these performances are the equivalent of a test grade.

**HIERARCHY OF RULES**

It’s a life thing.

It’s a school thing.

It’s a choir thing.

It’s a Mrs. Williams thing.

*As a member of the ROHS choir program, your student is held to a very high standard of excellence. When participating in out of school activities, choir members are serving as ambassadors of ROHS in our community. I, along with our administration, take this role very seriously; for this reason, participation in any performance and/or event is based on both grades and behavior. I will work with students, parents, and administrators to ensure that every student is given a fair opportunity to participate in all choral activities. Should concerns arise over the course of the year, I will do my best to communicate these and work to find solutions that will benefit the individual student and the choir program as a whole.*

**CONCERT ETIQUETTE EXPECTATIONS**

1: 5 minutes early is on time; on time is late; late is unacceptable.

2: When arriving at the concert, go to your designated seating area, find your seat and stay there until further instructed.  Once in your seat, stay there and not move around the room (even to go to the restroom).

3:  Do not speak while other choirs are performing.  Respect their efforts, and be a polite and attentive audience while they are singing.  (Whispering is the same as speaking.)

4: While performing on stage, keep hands relaxed at your side, eyes on Mrs. Williams, and sing with expression and excitement in your face!

5:  Express appreciation for each performance with enthusiastic applause. Only applaud when Mrs. Williams has lowered her arms.  Do not whistle, yell, or scream at any point during the concert.  Remember, this is a formal concert, not a basketball game.  Yelling is NOT acceptable.

6:  Turn off cell phones before the concert and place it in class’s designated ‘cell phone bin.’ You will NOT text during the concert because it will not be on your person.

7:  Stay for the ENTIRE concert!!  Understand the expectation for your performance grade is to stay for the entirety of the concert.

\*This is how students are graded for concerts/performances. If the concert etiquette expectations are met, they receive a 100 for their performance/test grade. Any expectations not met, points will be deducted.

**LEVELS 1-5**

\*In the event it is needed, the following steps are taken to ensure a student’s success in the music classroom.

1. Verbal warning
2. See Mrs. Williams after class
3. Phone call home
4. Detention with Mrs. Williams
5. Office Referral/ Involvement in Administration

**AUDITIONS**

* Students are required to audition for select performance ensembles.
* The director determines audition requirements.
* Director will notify students of audition dates, requirements, and results in a timely fashion.
* Director will serve as evaluator during auditions; adjudication panels of highly qualified individuals may also serve as evaluators when necessary.
* Audition material will reflect the director’s anticipated performance level for the students and will be based on prior learning.
* *Results from auditions will always be posted in a “post-and-run” fashion. It will be expected that students give at least 24 hours of ‘cool-off’ time before communicating any concerns with the director. It is also expected that students will communicate and advocate for themselves before involving parents.*

**TRAVEL**

The Royal Oak High School Choir will travel for various events. Students must submit given permission slips for each event; detailed information and/or schedule will always be available on the choir website.

All school rules and regulations apply to all field trips. All discipline procedures while on school-sponsored trips will be strictly enforced. Failure to comply with school rules while on a ROHS Choir field trip or event may result in an automatic referral to the Principal; additionally, a student may lose the privilege of attending ROHS Choir field trips in the future.

**Parents are expected to pick up their student on time after an event. If students are not picked up within 30 minutes of the scheduled end of an event, teachers & administrators reserve the right call Royal Oak police, who will escort your student to the police station for pick up. Students who are continually picked up late (more than 30 minutes) will not be allowed to participate in further activities.**

**GRADING POLICY**

Grading is broken down into 4 categories: Fundamentals, Skill Development, Participation, and Performance. (See below for details).

* Assignments, tests, projects, classroom activities, and other instructional activities must be designed so that the student’s performance indicates the level of mastery of the designated District and State objectives. The student’s mastery level of these objectives is a major factor in determining the grade for a subject or course.
* In accordance with ROSD policy, all “excused” absences will be honored with no grade penalty; however, a make-up assignment will be assigned, and failure to submit will result in a zero.
* A major part of the music curriculum is the development of performance skills; therefore, “unexcused” absences from a sectional, rehearsal or performance, which are integral to developing these performance skills, will negatively impact a student’s course grade.
* Performances are mandatory as a culmination of group course requirements and cannot be made up. Therefore, an “unexcused” absence from a scheduled performance will reflect a grade of “0” to be averaged into the student’s quarter performance grade.
* The director must be notified in writing of any unalterable conflicts prior to a scheduled rehearsal or performance. In an emergency, an explanatory phone call is appropriate. *In the event of a conflict with another scheduled school activity, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the sponsors of the activities. The sponsors will then determine the student’s obligation.*
* Other absences and tardiness, excused or unexcused, may be made up in accordance with District and school/teacher grading guidelines.

*Fundamentals (25%)*

* + - *The student will have music, pencil, and supplies, and arrive to class on time.*
		- *The student will be expected to improve performance fundamentals.*
		- *The student will be evaluated for improvement of music fundamentals through daily observation during each rehearsal and each sectional.*
		- *The student will be expected to demonstrate correct posture, air production, articulation and attentiveness as monitored during rehearsals.*

*Skill Development (25%)*

* + - *The student will be expected to improve individual music skills.*
		- *The student’s individual skill development will be evaluated through recorded music tests and written tests.*
		- *The student will be evaluated on improvement of ensemble skills during daily rehearsals.*

*Participation (25%)*

* + - *The student will receive a grade for each before and after school sectional and rehearsal during a grading period.*
		- *The student will be on task and focused during all rehearsals.*
		- *The student will be prepared to sing his/her part successfully.*
		- *The student will mark music and take notes as needed.*

*Performances/Assessments(25%)*

* + - *The student will receive a grade for each performance during a grading period.*
		- *Performances will be counted as major exams.*
		- *If no public performance occurs during a grading period, the performance grade will be based upon informal classroom performances determined by the director.*

**UNIFORM INFORMATION**





*\*\*\*If anything happens to your formal uniform throughout the year (button falls off, zipper breaks on dress, etc.), bring it back to Mrs. Williams immediately so we can get it repaired through your uniform fee before you need to wear it again.*

**CLASS OFFICERS**

Class officers are elected by their fellow choir members on the basis of leadership, service, and participation in the choir program. These students are expected to exhibit outstanding behavior and a positive attitude at all times. To run for office, students must fill out a petition form stating their reasons for running for an office and they must get 5 student signatures on their petition. Each choir will have 4 officers: President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Librarian. Section Leaders will be selected as needed by the director.

**ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS**

*All choir members are expected to attend all required rehearsals\*\* and performances.* As shown below as part of the MI content standards for HS music classes, performances are regarded as a curricular part of the course.



Rehearsals are just as important as the actual performance. You must participate at both required events. There will be a grade taken at each event for participation and demonstration of rehearsal and performance skills learned in the classroom. Just as a sports team needs all their athletes to play, the choir needs all of its members to function. Choir is a team activity.

Many students are involved in other activities that also demand their time. I understand that choir is not your only activity and that you may have to deal with conflicts throughout the year. Those students who have an excused absence from a required choir event will be given an opportunity to complete an alternate assignment (at the director’s discretion). *Excused absences must be communicated 7 calendar days in advance of the required event. The earlier your director is made aware of your conflict, the greater likelihood it will be excused.*  Excused absences may include, but are not limited to:

ROHS extracurricular events (athletics, clubs, etc.)

Last-minute health or family emergencies (at the director’s discretion)

Those students who have an unexcused absence will not be given the opportunity to complete an alternate assignment, and will receive a failing grade for that event.

Unexcused absences may include, but are not limited to:

 Social events

 Last-minute non-emergency conflicts

 Some non-ROHS extracurricular activities

Please understand that not all choir events are listed on the attached calendar. There are things that come up during the school year that may also be required. The same attendance and grading expectations apply so long as the choir informs you of these events as soon as they are made known.

If you have a conflict:

* Please send an email (kirsten.williams@royaloakschools.org) as soon as you are aware of the conflict;
* In case of a last minute emergency, call the school (248-435-8500) and leave a message or send an email the day after the event.

*\*\*Mrs. Williams understands there are transportation challenges from time to time. Please know I will do everything in my power to provide advance notice for these rehearsals and that I will take transportation issues into account when planning for these events.*

#### **ROYAL OAK HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL BOOSTERS MEMBERSHIP:**

The Royal Oak High School Choir Booster Club, made of ROHS Choral parents, are happy to support our children in all choirs of the organization.

We work together to support the efforts of our director Mrs. Kirsten Williams and our students for performances and competition events throughout the year. Our funding and volunteer efforts enhance the choral program. Funds raised by the Choral Boosters help cover operational costs, subsidize Solo & Ensemble fees, provide enrichment programs, and aid in purchasing vocal music, equipment, and supplies as needed.

\*Please see the Membership & Volunteer Form to help both your student & the program!

###### **Choral Booster Meetings**

Booster meetings are held throughout the year, and we encourage you to attend! All meetings will be held the 2nd Tuesday each month in the ROHS Choir room.

\*\*First Choir Boosters Meeting

September 13th @ 6:30pm

This is a meeting for *all* choir parents! Meet Mrs. Williams, volunteer for upcoming events, find out about fundraising opportunities, and have your questions and concerns heard.

**Choir Parent Volunteers**

All parents of students participating in any ensemble in the ROHS Choir Program are invited to volunteer at events throughout the year! These parent volunteers are needed to help with curricular trips during the school day, extracurricular trips, and tasks throughout the year. Without your help, the activities, concerts, trips, and festivals the choir students participate in *would not be possible*. Parents may sign up for volunteer opportunities through Choir Boosters!

STAY INFORMED

Along with periodic emails and flyers, here are 2 great ways to stay informed on what’s going on in the choir program:

1. Sign up for your ensemble’s Remind!
2. Check out our choir website- www.royaloakchoirs.weebly.com

**FORMS & FEES FAQ**

**Q: How do I submit payment?**

A: All payments are submitted in class in the tray for your student’s choir class period by the choir office door. Payments must be enclosed in a letter-size, envelope with your child’s name, class period, how much money is in the envelope, and description written on the outside.  **Any form that is associated with money must be in the envelope with the money.** This helps me keep our records straight. Envelopes are provided in the classroom if needed. ***Please make checks payable to Royal Oak Choirs.***

Example envelope:



**Q: How does my student turn in forms/permission slips?**

A. Any forms that do not have money turned in with them can be turned into the tray for your student’s choir class period by the choir office door (same place envelopes go).  ***Forms without money do not need to be in an envelope.***

**Q: What does the $25 class supply fee pay for, and how does it benefit my child?**

A: This provides each student with a 3-ring binder, pencil, classroom materials, and sheet music for each concert. This fee also *helps* cover costs that benefit the choir as a whole, such as accompanist concert fees, judge fees, contest entrance fees, etc.

**Q: What does the $20 uniform fee pay for?**

A: This fee covers the alterations done on the formal dresses, tux shirts issued, repairs, and dry cleaning services at the end of the year. Tux shirts will be fitted in class. All students will also receive a choir t-shirt with this fee. See the detailed uniform page for further details.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE**

We, both parent(s) and student, have read the ROHS Choir Handbook and agree to the following:

* Participation in curricular performances and rehearsals are a requirement of this course. Excused absences must be cleared with choir director 7 days prior to event, and must be made up with alternate assignment to receive full credit. Unexcused absences will negatively affect a student’s grade.
* I understand the uniform requirements for performances, including the uniform pieces I must provide myself.
* I have read the behavioral expectations, classroom rules, and consequences as outlined in the handbook.
* I understand the Concert Etiquette Expectations and the concerts outlined in the handbook.
* I have received a copy of the 2023-2024 Choir Calendar

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_