DENTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Strickland Middle School

♫ CHORAL HANDBOOK ♫

Amy Logan – Director
Kevin Rybowicz – Associate Director
Preface

• The SMS Choral Department enjoys a rich tradition of musical excellence based on high musical standards. As part of one of the strongest and most successful choral departments in the state of Texas, you can be proud to be a part of this wonderful tradition! Our commitment for the 2012-2013 school year should be that of team spirit, creating a working environment that is conducive to a positive learning environment, open minds, and a passion for the music. This investment of time, effort, and energy will create a basis for the rest of your lives!

• Participation in the SMS choirs provides students the opportunity to improve individual vocal technique, music theory, and sight reading skills. Students will learn challenging choral literature in a variety of musical styles, and are able to compete at choral contests both in and out of the Denton ISD.

• The SMS Choir Department is dedicated to providing each of its choral students with the highest quality music education available. The goal is to instill in each student the concepts of work ethic, time management, appropriate peer group socialization, and above all, a love and passion for the artistry of making music. Communication and cooperation between students, parents, and the choral directors is the key to our success.

• This handbook is designed to introduce you to the SMS choral tradition of excellence and to provide you with valuable information regarding grading policies, eligibility, private lessons, uniform fees, fundraising, trips, and calendars. As the year advances, any additions or changes will be provided to you via the student. **PLEASE READ THIS HANDBOOK CAREFULLY, and sign the appropriate page and return it to the choir office by SEPTEMBER 14th, 2012.** The signed page is for a grade.

• We are so excited about the opportunities that await us in the new school year! Thank you for your support of music education at SMS. It is a privilege to work with such wonderful students and parents!

**SMS CHORAL STAFF**

Amy Logan - Director of Choral Activities - alogan@dentonisd.org - 940-369-4261
Kevin Rybowicz - Associate Director of Choral Activities - krybowicz@dentonisd.org - 940-369-4264
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SMS CHORAL GROUPS

The SMS Choral Department is made up of 9 performing groups. The goal of each choir is to focus on the musical/vocal development of each student. The choral groups include:

6th grade Guys and 6th grade Ladies - These are beginning training choirs, singing in preparation for more advanced choirs. Areas of instruction include vocal health, proper tone production and diction, dealing with the challenges of the voice, vocal technique, and basic sight reading skills, basic music theory and rhythm skills, concert etiquette and acclimating to the middle school environment.

Non-Varsity Guys and Ladies - These are training choirs, singing in preparation for competition. Areas of instruction include vocal health, proper tone production and diction, dealing with the changing voice, vocal technique, sight reading skills, music theory and rhythm skills, concert etiquette and acclimating to the middle school environment. They also have the opportunity to participate in All-Region and UIL competitions.

Varsity Guys and Ladies - This choir is a culmination of two years of training. Students are expected to master a variety of skills. Areas of instruction include vocal health, proper tone production and diction, dealing with the challenges of the voice, vocal technique, sight reading skills, music theory and rhythm skills, concert etiquette and preparing for the high school choral experience. They also have the opportunity to participate in All-Region and UIL competitions.

SMS Show Choir - This is the mixed 7th & 8th grade show choir. Membership is by audition, and, while everyone is encouraged to audition, only students who have achieved basic skills in regular choir will be in show choir. **Show choir students are also expected to pass required State Assessments and maintain passing grades in all classes.**

8th grade Ladies Select Ensemble - Membership is by audition only. Members of this group are also expected to maintain a high level of musicianship, as well as pass all classes.

8th Men’s Select Ensemble - Membership is by audition only. Members of this group are also expected to maintain a high level of musicianship, as well as pass all classes.
STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT
Members of the SMS choir department are expected to adhere to the Denton ISD code of conduct as well as behave in an exemplary manner, both in public arenas and in the classroom. At every performance as a choir student, you represent yourself, your family, Strickland Middle School, Denton ISD, and Denton Texas. Your actions should reflect those of a CHAMPION in EVERY WAY!

SMS CHOIR REHEARSAL GUIDELINES
• 1) Be on the riser with music, folder, and pencil ready to follow instructions and begin class by the TARDY BELL.
• 2) You will be given a folder, music, and pencil - you are expected to keep all materials in good condition and MARK IN PENCIL ONLY ON YOUR MUSIC.
• 3) DO NOT chew gum, candy, or any other foreign object during choir. There is to be NO FOOD OR DRINK (aside from water) in the choir room during class. You will be given an automatic detention if you are caught doing so.
• 4) DON’T TALK when the director is instructing, DON’T TALK when another section is working - be respectful and follow along QUIETLY & RAISE YOUR HAND TO BE CALLED ON.
• 5) STAND LIKE CHAMPIONS!!! (good posture is a must!)
• 6) Put away your materials daily and clean up your own messes - keep the choir room clean!
• 7) Disorderly behavior and abusive language WILL NOT BE TOLERATED! Follow the “golden rule” and treat others as you would like to be treated.
• 8) DO NOT leave the risers without permission - this includes going to the water fountain, students are encouraged to bring a bottle of water to the risers for practices.
• 9) The practice rooms are ONLY to be entered with PERMISSION from the DIRECTOR.

PASS POLICY - Students are expected to be in class, ready to start when the tardy bell rings, and remain in class for the ENTIRE PERIOD. Students should visit the restroom/water fountain BEFORE or AFTER class. If a student has an emergency or a special need, they should see the director and/or bring a written notice from home.
Guidelines for each singer as a PERFORMER:
• Be on time for warm-up and performance, and be ready to listen to instructions
• Be dressed appropriately for each performance
• Be professional on and off stage
• Be enthusiastic, expressive, and entertaining
• Strive to perform at the highest level of their vocal and musical ability
• Strive to musically fulfill themselves as well as the listener
• Know the difference between competence and excellence in performance
• After the performance, return all props and costumes to the proper place

Guidelines for each singer as an AUDIENCE MEMBER:
• Respect others in the audience by refraining from talking during a performance
• Leave or enter the performance area BETWEEN musical selections - NOT while a group or individual is performing.
• Applaud at the appropriate time and to express enjoyment and appreciation to the performers
• NEVER call out or make noises directed at performers - THIS IS NOT A PEP RALLY
• Eliminate disruptions by reminding our guests to turn-off cell phones and remove restless children
• Observe the performance in its ENTIRETY. Students that follow you on stage had to sit through your performance; you need to show these students the same courtesy

Guidelines for each singer for OFF CAMPUS CONDUCT:
• Dress appropriately as a representative of yourself, your family, SMS choir, and Strickland Middle School
• Observe the rules and regulations of all venues (i.e. concert halls, restaurants, hotels, banks, etc...)
• Strictly adhere to the DISD Student Code of Conduct Handbook and the SMS Student Code of Conduct (behavior, dress, no tolerance policies, etc...)
• Abide by the regulations mandated by Texas State Laws (use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, etc...)

Due Process
Our goal as a staff is to make sure that all students are treated fairly. Please call 940-369-4264 or e-mail us at alogan@dentonisd.org and krybowicz@dentonisd.org if you have any questions, concerns, to resolve problems, and/or schedule an appointment. Make sure you understand both sides of the story before an assessment of the situation. We will work with you to resolve any problems. We are here to provide a quality music education for all of our students.
**SMS CHORAL GRADING POLICY**

**Eligibility** - The SMS Choir staff will enforce all eligibility rules and regulations. Students who are ineligible will continue to rehearse with their choir classes and participate in curricular (non-competitive) performances to earn their grade. Ineligible students MAY NOT travel with the choir to participate in performances, contests, UIL, extra-curricular trips, etc... during the school day. Ineligible students will remain at school to master the subject in which they are having trouble.

**Grading** - A choir member's 6 weeks grade will be based upon the district Fine Arts grading guidelines, consisting of 3 categories. The categories are made up as follows:

- **FUNDAMENTALS/PROCESSES/PARTICIPATION (50%)**
  - Daily Participation, Sight reading, warm-ups
- **SKILLS (20%)**
  - Sectionals, written worksheets, daily quizzes, singing tests
- **PERFORMANCE/PRODUCT (30%)**
  - Concerts, class projects/presentations, performances

Students will be expected to meet the responsibilities for each choir class as listed in the Choir Handbook and the grading policy. As choir is an ACADEMIC music class with both curricular and co-curricular activities (activities that are extensions of the classroom that relate directly to the essential elements which are taught in the class), the choir student's grade will reflect achievement and participation in both areas.

Under these grading categories, students are expected to perform to the best of their abilities in the classroom as well as the concert performance. The following guidelines apply to all grades...

- The student will receive a grade for their participation in classroom activities
- The student will be on task and focused during all practices
- The student will have all supplies for class each day
- The student will be prepared to sing his/her part successfully
- The student will be expected to improve their individual music skills
- The student will be expected to improve their fundamentals of sight reading and music theory
- The student will receive a grade for EACH AND EVERY performance in a grading period
- Evaluations will include singing as well as written evaluations
**Performance Policy** - Attendance at ALL performances is MANDATORY! Missing a performance will greatly affect the student's grade and ELIGIBILITY to attend extra-curricular field trips.

> EXCUSED ABSENCES - In accordance with DISD policy, all excused absences will be honored and given a make-up assignment to complete. These include:
  - Medical Emergency or illness
  - Death in the family
  - Religious Holiday
  - Family Emergency

  Circumstances may justify an excused absence for reasons other than those listed above. If an absence is anticipated a **WRITTEN NOTICE** should be submitted at least a week in advance. If an emergency arises, please send **WRITTEN NOTICE** upon the student's return to school.

**Written Notice** - This should be in either WRITTEN NOTE or PARENTAL E-MAIL form sent to the school with the student upon their return to school or before the absence. Also, a doctor's notice with the appropriate date may be submitted if needed. When written notice is received, the student will be given a make-up assignment.

**Make-up Work** – When a student is absent, they are responsible for obtaining the missed assignments. Students should see the director upon their return to school and should get their make-up work. **IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TURN IN THE MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENT IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE MAKE-UP GRADE.**

**Travel Release Forms** - Will be passed out before a planned trip. Students must have the appropriate form on file to travel with the choir to the given location. Failure to turn in the form for the given trip will result in the student not attending the trip.
PRIVATE LESSONS – Voluntary Music Enrichment Program (and fees)

The private voice lesson teachers in the Denton area are musicians who are dedicated to the musical and vocal education of our young students. Resumes for each teacher are available upon request. Mrs. Logan & Mr. Rybowicz will have the names of voice teachers of the 2012-2013 school year. Lessons will be taught DURING THE STUDENT’S CHOIR CLASS or before/after school. The time will be coordinated between the teacher and student. Students will be scheduled on a first come first serve basis.

Make up lessons and cancellations
The private lesson teacher should be notified as early as possible if a student is going to miss a lesson. Leaving a message at the school is NOT ACCEPTABLE. If the teacher is not notified, the student will be charged for the lesson. Private lesson teachers will make up any lesson that is missed due to an excused absence, such as illness, or absence from school – IF they have not been notified PRIOR to the scheduled lesson time. If a teacher is unable to make a scheduled lesson time, a makeup lesson will be scheduled or the fee for that lesson will be credited to the students account for the following month.

Private Lesson Fees
The cost of each lesson is set by Denton ISD, last year’s cost was $15 per half hour lesson per week – the fees should be comparable for this year as well. Students are required to pay for lessons by the month. Checks are due by the first lesson of the month. An additional accompanist fee may be charged for solo and ensemble contests. This fee includes rehearsal time and the actual contest. Students who do not meet financial obligations to private lesson teachers will be dropped from the program.

Student Responsibilities
- Prepare for every lesson
- Always bring all lesson material to the lesson
- It is recommended that you bring a cassette tape to record you lessons, or record your accompaniments
- Begin each lesson with an attitude conducive to learning and following directions
- Success comes through hard work, do not expect one or two lessons to make you a quality singer, it takes time, effort, and practice
$FUND RAISING & SPRING TRIPS$

The SMS choral program will be involved in fund raising throughout the year for a variety of purposes. Our proposed budget for the 2012-2013 year is approx. $30,000. The school district gives the choir only a portion of that money; therefore we must raise the rest. The fall fundraiser is designed to do just that. We expect EACH student to help in the fall fundraiser. Each student will have the goal to sell approx. $100 worth of merchandise for us to meet our goal. If we do not reach our goal then we must dip into other fundraisers to make up the difference. The fall fundraiser will be credited to the general choir fund, parents and students may apply PERSONAL funds towards the spring trip.

> SMS Choir Fund Raisers for the 2012-2013 school year<

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6th grade Trip
The spring trip will be to Hurricane Harbor Festival. The cost per student is $55. Chaperone cost will be $30. This cost includes competition fees, buses, a meal, and entrance into the water park. A Choir Trip Contract and more DETAILED INFO. will be sent home at a later date.

7th & 8th Grade Trip
The spring trip will be with director’s choice to San Antonio. The cost per student and chaperone will be $210. This cost includes the bus fee, all competition fees, 2 nights hotel accommodation, entrance into attractions, some meals, and a trip t-shirt. A Choir Trip Contract will be sent home at a later date. ALL 7th/8th GRADE TRIP $$ can be made in payments of $55 each on 9/21, 11/16, and $50 on 1/18, with the final payment due 3/22.

**Students and Parents should understand that ALL (6, 7, & 8) choir students have the opportunity to raise money to cover the expenses of their spring trip. Trip payments should be started at the beginning of the year. However, after March 22, Trip $$ is NON-REFUNDABLE, regardless of reason because the expenses must be pre-paid for contests, buses, hotels, theme-parks, etc.**

ALL STUDENTS MUST BE PASSING ALL CLASSES AND IN GOOD CONTRACT STANDING AT THE GIVEN DATE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SPRING TRIPS.
Choir Organizational Fees

Due September 14, 2012

6th Grade - $15
- Covers cost of SMS Choir t-shirt. (Shirts are sized large to allow for growth as the same shirt will be used for 6-8 grades.)

CONCERT DRESS UNIFORM – student provides the following:
  o Choir t-shirt
  o Khaki pants
  o Brown or black belt
  o Brown or black dress shoes

CASUAL DRESS UNIFORM – student provides the following:
  o Choir t-shirt
  o Blue jeans
  o Brown or black belt
  o Tennis shoes and socks
  o Blue jean CAPRIS/SHORTS – to be worn in the spring – MUST be up to dress code!

7th & 8th Grade Ladies - $80
- Choir t-shirt - $15 (may be deducted from total fee if student already has one.)
- Choir Dress - $65
- Ladies may purchase a USED dress from a former choir member – PLEASE SEE THOSE INDIVIDUALS.

CONCERT DRESS UNIFORM – student provides the following:
  o Choir Dress
  o Black Dress Shoes – NOT SANDALS
  o Skin tone Stockings

CASUAL DRESS UNIFORM – student provides the following:
  o Choir t-shirt
  o Blue jeans
  o Brown or black belt
  o Blue jean shorts – to be worn in the spring – MUST be up to dress code!
♫ 7th & 8th Grade Guys - $80

- Choir t-shirt - $15 (may be deducted from total fee if student already has one)
- Vest - $30
- Tuxedo Shirt - $25
- Bow Tie - $10
- Gentlemen may purchase a USED uniform form a former choir member – PLEASE SEE THOSE INDIVIDUALS.

CONCERT DRESS UNIFORM – student provides the following:

- Choir Vest
- Tuxedo Shirt
- Box Tie
- Black Dress Pants – MUST match choir vest
- Black Belt
- Black Dress Shoes and BLACK SOCKS

CASUAL DRESS UNIFORM – student must provide the following:

- Choir t-shirt
- Blue jeans
- Tennis shoes and socks
- Blue jean shorts/capris – to be worn in the spring – MUST be up to dress code!

*Please note that fee waivers and/or payment plans can be picked up in the choir office if the student/family qualifies.*
The information contained in the SMS choir handbook was discussed in class and is available on-line on the SMS choir web-site. All students and parents are responsible for understanding the expectations of the choir program and must return the signature page. Please request a HARD COPY of the handbook by checking the appropriate box below if you prefer.

In order for the SMS choir program to offer your students the highest level of music education, all teachers, parents, and students must understand the expectations that are contained in this handbook. The learning, application, and demonstration of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that a student is to gain in the choral classroom cannot be fully accomplished without everyone’s cooperation for a successful learning environment.

SMS Choir Discipline Management Plan
If a student is in violation of any of Strickland Middle School’s rules for proper behavior (as contained in the Student Code of Conduct) as well as the SMS Choral Guidelines (as contained in the ONLINE CHORAL handbook) then they will be dealt with in the following manner.

1\textsuperscript{st} offense - Student warning
2\textsuperscript{nd} offense – Teacher/Student Conference
3\textsuperscript{rd} offense -- Parent notification and assignment of detention
4\textsuperscript{th} offense – Office Referral
EXTREME CLAUSE – if a student is exhibiting disorderly behavior and abusive language, fighting, or otherwise behaving in a manner that is dangerous to themselves and/or others in the classroom, they will be immediately removed from the classroom and parents will be notified as soon as possible.

*Students are NOT to chew gum, candy, or any other foreign object during choir. There is to be NO FOOD OR DRINK (aside from water) in the choir room during class. You will be given an automatic detention if you are caught doing so.*

OUR GOAL is to CREATE THE BEST CHORAL EXPERIENCE for ALL STUDENTS! Thank you for all you do to support your student and nurture them in the Fine Arts.

☐ I have accessed the SMS choir handbook online and discussed the SMS choir expectations with my student.

☐ I would like a PAPER COPY of the SMS HAND BOOK to discuss choir expectations with my student.

______________________________________          ________________________
Parent/Guardian signature                        Date

______________________________________          ________________________
Student signature                               Date

This form is DUE by Friday, September 14\textsuperscript{th} – It can also be found online at the SMS CHOIR web-site