

John F. Kennedy High School
Bellmore, NY
Choral Music Department Student Handbook

The purpose of the choral handbook is to inform music students and their parents of the program's requirements, and to provide some consistency among the performing organizations in the JFK HS Music Department. The degree of success within an organization depends, in part, upon the development of standards and procedures.

The handbooks' contents are meant to serve as a guide through which the procedures, requirements, and obligations of our performing ensembles may be realized. It is anticipated that with the use of this handbook, students and parents will become more cognizant of our mutual musical goals. We sincerely hope that the music education experience gained through participation in our departmental performing groups will be of lasting value.

Jeanette Pincus

Choral Director

Materials

1. Students are required to purchase a few supplies at the beginning of the school year only.
 - A 1/2" binder. Black for Concert Choir and green for Mixed Chorus. Both should have a pencil slot, in the center preferably, and **NO SHINY PLASTIC ON THE OUTSIDE**.
 - Any folder with 3 wholes except thick paper folders. They should be laminated or plastic or sturdy enough to last the year.
 - A box of sharpened pencils.
 - A box of tissues.
2. Choral binders must be kept clean and neatly stored in the binder cases at all times. They will be assigned a slot in a music cabinet. Should the music rip, the students should use the reinforcements provided and should the binders become unsightly, the student must purchase a new one.
3. Robes and uniforms should be hung up properly after each use and handed in, in an orderly manner, for storage. Nothing should ever be left on the floors or lying about the music rooms.
4. Students will be charged for lost or mutilated octavos (original choral music).
5. The marking of music should be made **ONLY** by instruction from the director. **ALL MARKINGS MUST BE IN PENCIL**. When octavos are turned in after a performance, students will only be permitted to turn in music with proper markings as described above. If the music has been defaced in any way, students will be required to pay for that score/octavo.
6. Students may take music home to practice at any time, but may not take the binders home. A supply of separate folders will be provided to place music into so it may be protected traveling to and from school. Signing music out must be done through the class secretary.

Rehearsal Expectations

The success of a performing group is a reflection of what is accomplished in rehearsals. In order to ensure that optimum conditions exist to facilitate striving for musical perfection, the following rehearsal procedures will be observed:

1. Choir members must be ready to perform with their binder, folder and pencil as soon as the late bell rings and they hear the progression of chords prompting them to be seated. There will be random pencil checks, so please be sure to have a pencil each day.
2. No gum, food, candy, schoolbooks, pocket books, jackets, or personal belongings of any kind should be in the rehearsal area. All belongings are to be left at the side of the room.
3. Ensemble members are expected to rehearse with **TOTAL CONCENTRATION** and optimum effort at each rehearsal.
 - Eyes should be on the conductor as much as possible, especially at entrances and cutoffs.
 - Students should position themselves and their music to make this line of sight possible.
 - When making music there should be **NO TALKING** (even if the student has rests in the music).
4. Posture and position for students should be as follows:
 - Always sit up straight to facilitate breathing.
 - Keep feet on the floor, (no crossed legs).
 - When standing, stand tall without leaning on one hip and hold music up.

Choir Sectional Rehearsals (Rotations)

The music department schedules sectional rehearsals on a rotating basis. The rotating schedule was established to provide for the release of a music student from his/her academic class for extra music instruction. Skills covered in sectionals include warm-ups, technical studies, sight-reading, performance literature, and testing for grades. Performance tests of current literature are given on a regular basis before each concert.

Each student will have a sectional lesson approximately once every 10 days. However, since the lesson periods rotate, (s)he will only miss the same class about once or twice per marking period, (which is about 44 classes long).

Rotation Procedures

Students are expected to report to rotation rehearsals unless:

1. They have a full period unit exam in their subject classes
2. They are reviewing for a full period exam to be given the next day
3. They are scheduled for a lab period
4. They have a group presentation
5. They are LEGALLY absent from school
6. They have a quiz that takes longer than 15 minutes. If it is under 15 minutes the student should come to sectional late with a pass from the teacher.

Students will be required to make up any rehearsals missed.

Make-up Procedures

The student must fill out a SECTIONAL ABSENCE FORM as soon as it is known that he cannot attend a sectional. A make-up will then be scheduled. All make-ups are on Fridays from 2:15-2:55. You WILL eventually have a Friday make-up, as it is very common, therefore do not plan a work shift or anything social until AFTER 3:00 on Fridays. Each Friday alternates between Mixed Chorus and Concert Choir make-ups. The student will be informed as to which Friday is his make-up lesson. If this is missed, the full penalty is deducted, (see grading policy).

Some sectionals will be able to be made up by the student learning his part to an assigned song through mp3 files on our website: jfkchoir.com. In these cases the student should see Mrs. Pincus for an appointment to sing what he has learned within one week of the missed sectional.

Attendance Procedures

Students are responsible for making up any work they miss in their academic class, and are to get any necessary dittos or homework assignments from a classmate or by some other means. Therefore, there is no need for the students to go to class before coming to sectionals. The student must, however, get any due homework to his or her teacher on time and may not use sectionals as an excuse to not hand in homework.

When arriving at the lesson, each student must sign in. Their classroom teachers have the schedule well in advance and will know which requests are legitimate. However, this sign in sheet will be photocopied and sent to each applicable teacher as an extra assurance that the student DID, in fact, show up to the lesson.

If a sectional falls on the student's lunch period, (s)he can eat quickly in the chorus room at the beginning of the lesson, but please pack a lunch from home on this occasion, since the cafeteria lines will "eat" into our lesson. If the student has a lunch period, and the sectional falls on his/her FREE period, eating will not be permitted.

Performance and Dress Rehearsal Responsibilities

Attendance is required of all music students at scheduled school concerts. Attendance is important for the sake of the ensemble at all other group performances during the school year, and on overnight Music Festival Competitions. An unexcused absence from a winter or spring concert will result in a grade of zero on the student's evaluation average, making it nearly impossible to pass. An unexcused absence from a required weekend performance such as the Brotherhood or Celebration of the Arts concerts will result in a penalty of 10 points off of the overall average.

In the event of a student's anticipated absence from a required performance, parents shall notify Mrs. Pincus at 992-1440. **Absence from a required performance will be excused for the following reasons only:**

1. Severe sickness- corroborated with a note from the family doctor
2. Severe sickness or a death in the family
3. An act of God (car accident, severe sports injury, etc...)

There will be an assignment to replace the student's participation in the performance.

A list of performance dates will be issued at the beginning of the school year to each music student along with a performance commitment contract to be signed by the students and their parents. Please check these dates immediately and if there is a conflict, the student should see his guidance counselor right away to change his schedule.

Dress rehearsals are scheduled before every required performance. Attendance at these dress rehearsals is ABSOLUTELY MANDATORY for all students. Students who do not attend the dress rehearsal may not be permitted to perform at the concert, resulting in the corresponding penalty, (a zero evaluation average, which is about 33 points off of the overall average), or they will receive a 10 point deduction off of the overall average. This decision is at the teacher's discretion. Students may not be late to dress rehearsals. They must plan to attend extra help on alternate dates twice a year. **NO LATE PASSES WILL BE ACCEPTED** and a late penalty will be deducted from the student's dress rehearsal grade.

Attire

Proper attire is required to perform. If attire is inappropriate student will not be allowed on stage and the corresponding 33-point penalty will be applied. Please see next page for attire requirements.

MIXED CHORUS BOYS- White long sleeve button down shirt, a tie, black slacks, black socks, and black dress shoes.

MIXED CHORUS GIRLS- Solid black shirt with sleeves below elbows. Solid black pants or skirt falling below the knees. Black dress shoes.

CONCERT CHOIR BOYS- Same as Mixed Chorus boys, then robes

CONCERT CHOIR GIRLS- Shirts that don't show through tops of robes, and skirts that don't show through bottoms of robes, or black pants. Black dress shoes.

JFK HS Choral Department Grading System

Averages are broken down into 3 parts: CLASS WORK, SECTIONALS, and EVALUATION. You will receive a grade for each of these categories, and they will be averaged together to equal your quarterly report card grade. You truly do start with 100% in this class and simply must strive to keep it.

Class Work- How to earn a perfect grade:

- Be respectful toward your teacher
- Be respectful toward your peers
- Always raise your hand and wait to be called upon
- DO NOT TALK WHILE YOUR TEACHER IS SPEAKING
- DO NOT TALK WHILE OTHER VOICE PARTS ARE BEING REHEARSED
- Do not chew gum
- Have good posture in both the seated and the standing positions
- Be on time
- Be prepared (THERE WILL BE RANDOM PENCIL CHECKS!)
- Do not doodle in class
- Do not do assignments for other classes
- Do not keep things with your music binder/folder that are not from choir
- Do not get out of your seat without permission
- Always remain quiet and well behaved during quizzes
- Never have any belongings other than your folder at your seat
- Never Litter, respect the room's neat appearance, and help keep it that way
- Always be at your seats and ready to sing after the chords
- Never have a pen anywhere near your folders or seats
- Always keep your feet off of the chairs, and keep the chairs flat on the floor
- **BE POLITE AND SHOW EFFORT**

*** Each student will receive an overall classroom average based on the director's evaluation of the above guidelines. If the director sees that multiple and regular

infractions are threatening the student's classroom grade, she will have a conference with the student. If no improvement follows, a call home will be placed.

Sectionals- How to earn a perfect grade:

7. Behave
8. Be on time
9. Do not miss any, or make up the ones that you miss

10.TRY

Each sectional is worth 14 points on or off of your sectional average. If you do the above 4 things, you will receive a 100%. The only exception being: if you miss a sectional for a reason OTHER THAN the 5 "legal" ones stated on the "sectional guidelines" sheet, you **can and **should** still make it up, **however**, you can only earn back half of the points you lost, (7).

Evaluation- How to earn a perfect grade:

4. Make sure you understand any taught material so you ace all quizzes (These quizzes/tests are sometimes written, and sometimes sung)
5. If you are having some difficulty, schedule extra help
6. Know your music
7. SHOW PROGRESS
8. **Be on time and well behaved at all dress rehearsals and performances, and stay for the entire duration of both**
9. **Have the proper concert attire or you may not be permitted to perform, resulting in the 33 point penalty.**

Overall Average Deductions

- Too many bathroom trips (you are allowed 5 per quarter)
- Late with assignments (ex: Handing in a tape/CD)

Overall Average Additions

(Given at the director's discretion)

- Officer work
- Extra services (ex: volunteering time for any number of functions)
- Participation in NYSSMA
- Participation in extra-curricular performing ensembles

Disciplinary Procedures

If a student is being disruptive in class, he will be given a warning. If the disruption continues, a second warning will be issued. If it continues, separation from the class will be required. Depending on the severity of the disruption, he will either be asked to sit behind the back row, facing me, so that no students can see or be distracted by him without turning around, and he still hears and learns from the rehearsal but does not sing. At this point his classroom average has been adversely affected. He may be asked to wait for me in my office until after class, or he may be sent to the main office. If he gets sent out toward the beginning of class, he will receive a cut for the day.

- If this happens once, a detention and/or an after school conference between the student and teacher will be required.
- Twice, a referral will be filled out and an official school detention with the dean will be issued
- Three times, a call home
- Four times, a meeting with the director, the student, and the guidance counselor, and possibly the parent(s)

Director may call home at any stage if she wishes

Repeated incidents will jeopardize the student's ability to be in Concert Choir.
Remember, Concert Choir is a privilege earned through talent AND good behavior, and even longstanding members can be re-evaluated for re-admittance