Goals, Objectives, and Philosophy

The purpose of the Sycamore Middle School Choral Program is to nurture, foster, and develop learning through choral performance. With that in mind, membership in choir is open to any student in grades six, seven, or eight with a desire to be a part of a performance ensemble and to learn about music.

The Sycamore Middle School Choral Program is aligned to the Illinois State Board of Education Learning Standards and Goals for Fine Arts, the Common Core State Standards, and the National Standards for Music Education, as established by The National Association for Music Education. In choir, students will:

- **Perform** music from a variety of historical periods and cultures
- **Read** music using learned text, notes, rhythms, and terminology
- **Create** music using improvisation and sight-singing skills
- **Listen to** music and be able to **describe and evaluate** performances
- **Understand** music in a greater context and in relation to other art forms

Through participation in choir, students will also:

- Develop skills in working as part of a team
- Develop critical listening and critical thinking skills
- Develop an appreciation for all of the Fine Arts
- Promote citizenship and self-discipline
- Develop self-directed leadership skills
- Build positive self-esteem and self-expression
- Gain insight into how music can enrich life

We take great pride in the music program at Sycamore Middle School, and I welcome any questions you may have. We are looking forward to another wonderful year!

Mr. Brian Kowalski
Choral Director, Sycamore Middle School
815-899-8170, ext. 3148
bkowalski@yc427.org
In each year of choir, we build on the skills that were learned in previous years of general music and choir classes to sing choral music with increasing difficulty. We will use a variety of methods to learn about vocal health, voice building, musical terminology, music as an art form and its place in culture, music’s connection to other academic disciplines, and, of course singing in an ensemble. Some goals for the year include learning about the voice as an instrument, developing a strong choral sound, building group cohesiveness, and teamwork!

**Class Expectations**

**General Classroom Rules**
- Show respect to all people and property in the choir room
- Be on time to class
- Gum and food are not permitted in the choir room (water is OK)
- Please have your folder, music, and a pencil in class every day

**Qualities of Good Rehearsal Etiquette**
- Rehearsal starts when warm-ups/announcements begin
- Follow the director’s instructions
- Raise your hand and ask questions if something is unclear
- Respond to questions if you know the answer
- Limit talking during rehearsal
- Maintain a positive attitude about the music we are singing
- There are no penalties for wrong notes, only for poor effort!

**Concert Attire**

Why do we dress up for concerts? There are several reasons:
- Music is the focus of the concert, and since we always strive to maintain high standards for its performance, we must reflect that in the way we present ourselves on stage.
- As we have many visitors in our audiences, we would like to show them the pride that we have in our school and community here at SMS.
- Dressing nicely and in similar clothes also reflects the pride we have in being a member of choir, where we work together for common goals and every member’s participation is needed for success.

Guidelines for concert attire*:
- **Girls** – Black skirts (knee-length) or black pants, white top (not sleeveless or spaghetti-straps), and black dress shoes.
- **Boys** – Black dress pants, white dress shirt, and black dress shoes.

*Any student who comes to a concert and is dressed inappropriately may be asked not to perform and to complete an alternative assignment.*
**Concert Schedule**

Each choir performs at four concerts during the school year at which attendance is mandatory and the performance is calculated as part of each student's grade. Please mark your calendar with these important choral concert dates!!

- **Thursday, November 10, 2016**
  Fall Choral Concert (all Middle School Choirs)
  7:30 PM in the SHS Auditorium

- **Tuesday, December 20, 2016**
  Winter Choral Concert
  (Combined 6th & 7th Grade and Elementary School Choirs)
  7:00 PM in the SHS Auditorium

- **Monday, January 23, 2017**
  Winter Choral Concert
  (Combined 8th Grade and High School Choirs)
  7:30 PM in the SHS Auditorium

- **Thursday, February 23, 2017**
  Choral Concert (all Middle School Choirs)
  7:30 PM in the SHS Auditorium

- **Tuesday, May 16, 2017**
  Spring Choral Concert (all Middle School Choirs)
  7:30 PM in the SHS Auditorium

**ATTENDANCE AT ALL CONCERTS IS MANDATORY.** As an ensemble, the choir relies on the active participation of ALL of its members for success. If there is a major conflict with one of the dates listed above, please let Mr. Kowalski know as soon as possible. Excuses for missed concerts MUST be received AT LEAST two weeks prior to the event, unless there is a medical or personal/family emergency. If notification of an absence is given in advance, the student will have the opportunity to make up the missed points with an alternative assignment. However, if there is no notification for an absence, the student will lose all points for concert participation.

**Additional Optional Choral Events and Opportunities**

**ILMEA District 8 Junior Honors Festival:** Saturday, November 19, 2016 – This event is for 7th and 8th grade choir members who have demonstrated outstanding musicianship, leadership, and overall excellence in choir. The Honors Festival Chorus is a highly selective ensemble comprised of the best middle school singers in the area. Auditions for this ensemble will be held on Saturday, October 8, and students must notify Mr. Kowalski by September 15 if they intend on auditioning. More information will be distributed during the first week of September.
**Solo and Ensemble Contest: Saturday, March 18, 2017** – This contest is not a mandatory event, but it is an excellent opportunity for students to prepare and perform a solo or an ensemble song, to receive input on their voice and vocal technique, and to have fun! Participation is open to all choir students and is highly recommended to students who currently take private music lessons.

**NCJC Music Festival: Wednesday, May 3, 2017** - Directors of the middle school bands, choirs, and orchestras from the schools in the NCJC Conference nominate students to participate in this festival experience. Choir members will learn a set of repertoire on their own, rehearse with a guest director at NIU, and perform for friends and family in the Duke Ellington Ballroom.

**Grading**

Students receive a grade for choir each quarter which counts toward their grade point average and the honor roll. Since we will be expanding musical knowledge and using the voice as an instrument as well as developing life-long skills, students will be evaluated regularly. The grading system is as follows, and percentages for each category are approximate and may be adjusted.

60% - **Daily work** – Students may earn up to 5 points in rehearsal each day. These points are based on criteria such as rehearsal etiquette, effort (including proper vocal technique), and ensemble participation. **Point totals will be adjusted for those students in both Band/Orchestra and Chorus.**

10% - **Quizzes, Music Theory exercises, and Writing assignments** – Each quarter, students will complete occasional quizzes and writing assignments based on such items as general music knowledge, music theory, vocal health, musical terminology, and the choral literature we are working on in class.

20% - **Concerts** – There are four concerts scheduled for the school year. Dates for these performances are listed on the previous page and on the Calendar of Events at the end of the handbook. **ATTENDANCE AT ALL CONCERTS IS MANDATORY.** If notification of an absence is given in advance, the students will have the opportunity to make up the missed points with an alternative assignment. However, if there is no notification given for an absence, the student will lose all points for concert participation.

10% - **Self-Evaluation Assignment** – Each quarter, students will complete a reflective self-evaluation assignment to assess the development of their musical knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as their participation in the ensemble.

**Extra Credit** – Students may earn extra credit by attending a concert and submitting a program to Mr. Kowalski. These concerts can be a school or community performing group, recitals/concerts at NIU, a symphony orchestra concert, an amateur or professional musical, or other events approved by the director.
**Other Performing Arts Events and Opportunities**

**Spartan Singers:** Spartan Singers is an extracurricular, auditioned choral ensemble for select 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Choir members. They rehearse after school and sing a variety of advanced music, including standard choral repertoire, vocal jazz, show tunes, and pop. Auditions will take place later this fall and more information will be available as the audition dates approach.

**Spring Musical:** Sycamore Middle School will once again produce a Spring Musical this year (Performance Dates: April 28 & 29, 2017). Participation is open to any interested SMS student. If you have any questions, ask Mr. Kowalski.

**Private Voice Lessons**
Our daily choir rehearsals focus on vocal health, group voice building, using the voice as an instrument, and singing in an ensemble. Private voice lessons are recommended for any student wishing to develop their voice in an individualized setting and work further toward exploring their musical potential.

**The Community School of the Arts** is housed at the NIU School of Music and offers private voice lessons with a variety of excellent teachers. Spots in studios are always available. Call (815) 753-1450 or visit their website: www.niu.edu/extprograms

**Jovanovich Voice Studio** - Mrs. Cara Jovanovich teaches many middle school and high school students at her studio in Sycamore. Call (914) 907-3910 or visit Jovanovich Voice Studio on Facebook.

**Mattix Music Studio** - Private and group lessons on a variety of instruments, including voice and piano. Call their Sycamore studio at (815) 757-5284 or visit their website: mattixmusic.com

Other teachers in the area have openings periodically – please see Mr. Kowalski for more information or for other private instructor recommendations.

**Rehearsals**
Chorus meets every day of the week for the entire school year: It is possible for a student to be in both choir and band or orchestra. Those students will attend choir rehearsals on Mondays and Thursdays and alternate with instrumental rehearsals according to the posted rehearsal calendar.

**Supplies and Music**
The Sycamore Middle School Music Department will provide folders and music for each student, which are required for every rehearsal. Students have the option of keeping their music in their assigned space in the folder cabinet, and students with lost or damaged music may be charged to replace those items. All chorus members should also bring a pencil to mark their music and keep a couple of sheets of blank notebook paper in their folder for our occasional writing assignments.
**Important Communication**

In order for choir members and their parents to stay up to date with important information about concerts, events, and daily rehearsals, please include a current email address on the Handbook Acknowledgement Form and subscribe to the SMS Choir Remind system (instructions included below.) Both students and parents may sign up for this service, and please note that the number in the text message corresponds to the student grade level.
# Sycamore Middle School Choir 2016-2017 Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Who is involved?</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, September 10, 2016</td>
<td>8th Grade Tailgating/BBQ</td>
<td>8th Grade Choir and SHS Choir students</td>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>12:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, October 8, 2016</td>
<td>ILMEA District 8 Junior Choir Auditions</td>
<td>7th or 8th Grade students who choose to audition</td>
<td>Huntley MS</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday &amp; Saturday, October 28-29, 2016</td>
<td>Sycamore Pumpkin Festival</td>
<td>Anyone who would like to enjoy the festival or volunteer at the Craft Fair</td>
<td>Sycamore</td>
<td>All day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 10, 2016</td>
<td>Fall Choral Concert</td>
<td>ALL 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Choir members</td>
<td>SHS Auditorium</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, November 19, 2016</td>
<td>ILMEA District 8 Junior Festival</td>
<td>Students selected from the auditions</td>
<td>DeKalb HS</td>
<td>All day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, December 20, 2016</td>
<td>Winter Choral Concert and Sing-a-long</td>
<td>ALL 6th and 7th Grade Choir members (with Elementary Choirs)</td>
<td>SHS Auditorium</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, January 23, 2017</td>
<td>Winter Choral Concert</td>
<td>ALL 8th Grade Choir members (with SHS Choirs)</td>
<td>SHS Auditorium</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, February 23, 2017</td>
<td>Choral Concert</td>
<td>ALL 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade Choir members</td>
<td>SHS Auditorium</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 18, 2017</td>
<td>Solo &amp; Ensemble Festival</td>
<td>Any choir student who chooses to perform</td>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA ** TENTATIVE EVENT **</td>
<td>MS Talent Show</td>
<td>Spartan Singers</td>
<td>SHS Auditorium</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, April 10, 2017</td>
<td>Middle School Jazz Night</td>
<td>Spartan Singers, other selected performers</td>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday &amp; Saturday, April 28-29, 2017</td>
<td>SMS Spring Musical</td>
<td>Cast and crew of the Spring Musical</td>
<td>SHS Auditorium</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 3, 2017</td>
<td>NCJC Music Festival</td>
<td>Selected 7th and 8th Grade Choir members</td>
<td>NIU</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 16, 2017</td>
<td>Spring Choral Concert</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Events in **BOLD** are mandatory for all Choir Students. Students will receive more detailed information prior to each event, and updates will be sent through email and Remind.

Changes or additions to the Calendar of Events may occur, and will be communicated to the students and families as soon as possible.