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Morris Hills High School  
Vocal Music Department

2016 – 2017 Handbook

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http://morrishillschoirs.weebly.com

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Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

Welcome to the Vocal Music Department at Morris Hills High School! My name is Anna D’Achille and I am the Director of Choral Activities. I have a fun and exciting year planned, and I am so looking forward to working with each and every one of you!

Music is essential to a creative and productive childhood; it gives children a successful method of expression, helps with the development of coordination and motor skills, and can be used as an enjoyable aid to learn other academic material. In secondary-level students, music helps foster life skills such as dedication, discipline, perseverance, and time management, and provides meaningful opportunities for self-discovery and growth. However beneficial and true these reasons may be, they are not nearly as important as this final one: at all grades and ages, the study of music instills a creative curiosity, as well as yearning and appreciation for the aesthetic experience.  
  
Throughout this year, students will be able to craft and develop a coherent musical intellect, improving upon their vocal abilities, music literacy, listening skills, and performance techniques. They will participate, create, and respond to music in a variety of contexts and methods. They will also discover and discuss the qualities of an excellent choir, and consequently learn how to exemplify those qualities. Ultimately, I want to foster an appreciation and love for music in parents and students alike, and there are few ways better than through a choral performing ensemble.   
  
The purpose of the Morris Hills Vocal Department Handbook is to provide you with an awareness and understanding of philosophies, expectations, procedures, organizational structure, and general functioning of the department. Please use this as a resource throughout the school year. **Parents and students should carefully read the handbook in its entirety and return the attached contract and forms with the appropriate signatures by the dates indicated.**  If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me via email (adachille@mhrd.org) or via phone (973.664.2335). I look forward to meeting you on **Wednesday, September 21 at Back to School Night.**

Sincerely,

Ms. Anna D’Achille, Director of Choral Activities  
Morris Hills High School

**Meet The Choirs**

**Curricular Ensembles (School Day, 5 credits per year-long course)**

There are currently two curricular choirs offered during the school day at Morris Hills. **Concert Choir** is divided into two separate sections offered Blocks 2 and 3(BC). **Treble Choir**is one class designed for freshman girls and is offered during Block 5. There is no audition required to participate in these ensembles. Each year-long course is worth 5 credits and fulfills the Fine Arts class required for graduation. Both of these ensembles perform 3 concerts per year (Holiday, Spring, and Pops). For those looking for additional singing opportunities, Morris Hills offers many co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to further enhance the vocal music experience.

**Co-Curricular Ensembles (After School)**

Morris Hills offers three co-curricular choirs for students that are looking for additional singing opportunities: **Knights Templar, Madrigal Choir, Women’s Chorale**. These ensembles perform in the Holiday and Spring Concerts, and are often asked to represent Morris Hills in additional performance capacities, such as awards ceremonies and sports events. Auditions **are required** for participation in these ensembles. **NEW THIS YEAR - MEMBERSHIP IN CONCERT CHOIR IS REQUIRED TO BE A PART OF THESE ENSEMBLES.**

* **Knights Templar** consists of fifty to sixty members and their repertoire includes advanced selections from varying genres (classical, contemporary, gospel, jazz, etc.). The group is often asked to sing at community events. **AUDITIONS FOR WILL BE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 AND FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 FROM 3:15 – 7:00 PM. FIRST REHEARSAL IS MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH FROM 6 – 8 PM.**
* **Madrigal Choir** is selected from members of Knights Templar and consists of twenty to thirty members and their repertoire includes a cappella selections from the Baroque, Renaissance, Classical, and contemporary periods. **FIRST REHEARSAL IS WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH FROM 6 – 7 PM.**
* **Women’s Chorale** consists of forty to fifty women. Their repertoire includes selections from a variety of genres (Classical, Contemporary, Gospel, Jazz, etc.). Membership in this ensemble does not require membership in Knights Templar or Madrigal Choir. **FIRST REHEARSAL IS MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH FROM 8:00 – 9:00 PM.**

Morris Hills also presents a Spring Musical Theater production. This year’s production is **IN THE HEIGHTS.** All vocal music students are encouraged to audition and participate. Audition material and information will be provided at a later date.

**Extra-Curricular Ensembles**

There are several extra-curricular ensembles that are offered during the year by various music education organizations throughout the county, state, and nation:

* Morris Area Honor Choir
* NJSMA Region I Chorus
* NJMEA All-State Mixed and Women’s Choirs
* All-Eastern Chorus
* National Honor Choir

Participation in these ensembles is a prestigious and highly sought-after achievement. Audition preparation is essential, and if admitted to the ensemble, the student is responsible for individual practice time and group rehearsals outside of the school day. All ensembles have an audition fee to be paid by the student. You must be a vocal music department member in good standing to audition.

**Social Media/Communication**

There are several ways to receive information about happenings in the Vocal Music Department. Your e-mail will be added to a mass e-mail list for various reminders throughout the year. The following resources are also very helpful with staying up-to-date:

**MORRIS HILLS VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT WEBSITE**[**http://morrishillschoirs.weebly.com**](http://morrishillschoirs.weebly.com)

**MORRIS HILLS CHOIR DEPARTMENT & MORRIS HILLS CHOIR BOOSTERS on Facebook  
Follow @MHCHOIR on Twitter!   
Check out photos of recent events on our Flickr account – link on our website!**

**Tri-M Music Honor Society**

Morris Hills has an active chapter of MENC’s Tri-M Music Honor Society, an international organization dedicated to the regonition of exceptional music students in grades 6-12 that meet the music, academic, and character criteria asked of every Tri-M member.

Eligibility includes, but is not limited to:

* Students must be active in a music performance class for the year.
* Students must be a sophomore, junior, or senior.
* Students must maintain at least an 90 average in their music performance classes, and at least an 85 average in their other subjects.
* Students must exhibit leader ship, service, and character in their activities and classes while at Morris Hills.

**Both new and returning members must participate in the Induction Ceremony Dress Rehearsal on Wednesday, April 12th, 2017 at 3:15 PM and the Induction Ceremony on Thursday, April 13th, 2017 at 4:00 PM in order to remain in good standing and receive cords for graduation.** Members must also fulfill acts of music service and attend monthly meetings. The meeting schedule for the year will be handed out at our first meeting on **Tuesday, September 20 from 3:15 – 3:45 PM in the Choir Room.**  
  
**Statement of Philosophy**

People have a unique ability to share the meaning of emotions and feelings. No other life form can do such a thing. It is our emotions and feelings, and the need to share them that makes us who we are. This has given rise to a uniquely human form of transport or way in which to communicate; we call it art. The art of music affects our emotions in a most direct, powerful, and untranslatable fashion. Music transcends language; it goes beyond the limit of words. Music can affect us in ways that nothing else present on earth can. Countless non-musical benefits from membership in vocal music exist. Attention to discipline, stage presence, manners, self-confidence, work ethic, cooperation, sense of community, and responsibility are but a few.

***The mission of the Morris Hills Vocal Music Department is***

***life education through music education.***

**General Goals**

**1.** To develop each student’s aesthetic potential;

**2.** To develop knowledge, understanding, habits, and attitudes concerning the basic elements of music: rhythm, pitch, texture, form, tone color, dynamics and tempo;

**3.** To promote musical literacy by developing the skills necessary for musical performance;

**4.** To promote understanding of the value of choral music as an art;

**5.** To satisfy each student’s need for self expression;

**6.** The develop and foster the desire and the potential to extend and continue the student’s music experiences in his or her social and cultural life, as well as in high school;

**7.** To develop independence and initiative in areas such as solo and small ensemble performance.

**Classroom Guidelines & Expectations of Conduct**

**Required Materials**

Students are expected to provide the following materials:

* One notebook (style of your choosing; must fit in folder holder)
* Pencils
* Concert attire

**Student Leadership**

The director will choose four individuals from each Chorus class to serve in the following positions:

* **Section Leaders** - Duties include helping individuals within the section with music, as well as working with the director regarding problems with music.  Additionally, Section Leaders will help with behavior issues and work with individuals who miss rehearsal to make certain that they are at par with the rest of the section. Qualifications include superior musicianship, leadership abilities, and membership in the Morris Hills Vocal Music Department for at least one year. **These students will be chosen the week of September 26th.**

The Executive Board is elected by the student body. Officers for the 2016 - 2017 year will be elected in September and serve a 1 year term.

**Expectations & Procedures**

Each student is expected to show respect for self, teacher, and fellow students. This includes being able to listen quietly to instructions and being able to carry out those instructions in a responsible manner, whether in a classroom, concert, or field trip setting. This type of discipline must come from the student him or herself. Students who are interested in singing are expected to remain committed to representing themselves, their families, and their school in this manner.

Students are expected to:

1. Upon entering the room, place all belongings in the designated area, and remove all items when exiting.
2. Be seated quietly in their assigned seats when the bell rings, with only choral folders and pencil in hand.
3. Be on time – tardiness is unacceptable and will result in deduction of daily participation points. Consequences for consistent tardiness issues will be per Morris Hills regulations.
4. Show respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers, their environment, and their art at all times. This includes not chewing gum, eating, or drinking in class, as well as staying on task, demonstrating correct singing posture while both sitting and standing, and contributing positively to the class environment.
5. Maintain their own vocal music folder. Students will be assigned a numbered folder and matching slot in the folder cabinet. All worksheets and handouts should be kept in their folder. Students should also store their one-subject notebook in their folder slot. Marking in the music should be made often, lightly and only in pencil. In the event that a student causes irreversible damage to, or losses, music, that student is responsible for providing the replacement cost of the piece(s). Students are welcome to take music home to study; however, folders must be signed out with teacher approval and students are responsible for returning to class with music in an acceptable condition. If any damage is caused to a student’s folder for any reason, the student is financially responsible and will be required to pay $25.00 to the vocal music department for a replacement.
6. Ask permission to leave the room for any reason. Only one student may leave the room at a time, and a pass is required.
7. Return all materials and equipment to the correct position before leaving class. This includes, but is not limited to, the placement of chairs and music stands.
8. **Not enter the director’s office without permission.**

**Lessons**

Lessons are provided during lunch blocks on B days to students to allow for small group or individual instruction in repertoire, vocal technique, and musicianship. Students are required to attend 5 lessons per quarter as part of their grade. The lesson schedule and policies will be discussed in class beginning the first week of October.

**Grading Policy**

Grades for the quarter are based on the following criteria:

* Class Participation (50%)
  + 5-point daily participation grade based on Preparation (2 points - materials, punctuality, etc.) and Participation (3 points - effort, attitude, engagement, adherence to expectations and policies)
* Lessons (10%)
  + Based upon fulfillment of lessons requirement for the quarter
* Assignments, Quizzes, Short Projects (10%)
  + Short, in-class written or singing quizzes
  + Reflective writing assignments
  + Binder/folder checks
  + Other projects as assigned
* Performances/Additional Rehearsals (30%)
  + Attendance
  + Mastery of repertoire and quality of performance; attitude and behavior
  + Adherence to concert attire

**Additional Rehearsals/Concert Attendance Policy**

**Additional Rehearsals**

Occasionally, there will be rehearsals outside of the schedulesd class period, which you will be notified of well in advance. These rehearsals will count towards your academic grade. With limited in-school rehearsal time as a cohesive ensemble, these rehearsals are extremely important for the success of the Choir. Consequently, these rehearsals are **mandatory**. Your time is greatly appreciated by your director, as well as your ensemble!

**Concert Attendance Policy**

Attendance at curricular concerts is **mandatory**. Performances are tantamount to final exams; however there is no possibility of truly making them up if you miss them. Any absence will result in a concert grade of 0. Unexcused absences will remain a 0 and severely affect the student’s grade. If the absence is excused, the student may do the following to earn half credit:

* If you do not perform at a concert, you will need to sing selections from the concert music for the director once you are well enough to sing.  This must happen before the end of the quarter.
* If you can be at the concert but have lost your voice and cannot sing, you can complete a concert review sheet for each choir.  Make sure you check in with your choir attendance-taker, and let your director know before the concert that this is what you are doing.
* If you are not able to be at the concert, you must write a six-page paper about one of the composers being performed.  Provide a biography of this composer, and any background about the song, lyricist or arranger.  You should also provide a description of the piece:  What makes it challenging?  Be specific.  Make sure you provide citations within the body of the paper, and provide a Works Cited page at the end.

A student’s absence will be considered excused if it falls into any of the following categories:

* Student illness (documentation must be provided in the form of a note from a parent or doctor)
* Death in the family
* Family emergencies
* Religious holidays (director must be notified 3 weeks in advance, in writing)
* Curricular excursions (director must be notified 3 weeks in advance, in writing)

 Unexcused absences can include, but are not limited to:

* Study or private lessons
* Family vacations or trips
* Work
* Routine doctor’s appointments

Extra-curricular activities conflicting with curricular concerts must be notified of student absences in advance. It is the responsibility of the student to inform coaches or sponsors of impending absence at the beginning of the season, rather than the week before. Students are expected to work out these conflicts even if an extra-curricular event has been recently rescheduled. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in an unexcused absence.

**Required Concerts and Rehearsals**

The following dates are subject to change. Dates may be added at the discretion of the director.

Holiday Concert Dress Rehearsal Monday, November 28, 2016 3:15 – 5:30 PM  
 Monday, December 5, 2016 3:15 – 5:30 PM

Holiday Concert Wednesday, December 7, 2017 5:30 PM/7:00 PM

Spring Concert Dress Rehearsal Tuesday, March 21, 2017 3:15 – 5:30 PM  
 Monday, March 27, 2017 3:15 – 5:30 PM

Spring Concert Wednesday, March 29, 2017 5:30 PM/7:00 PM

Pops Concert Dress Rehearsal Tuesday, May 30, 2017 3:15 – 5:30 PM

Pops Concert Friday, June 2, 2017 5:30 PM/7:00 PM

**Concert Attire (Curricular Choir)**

Men   
(black and white attire)

* Long sleeve white dress shirt with dark tie
* Black dress slacks
* Black dress shoes
* Black dress socks

Women   
(all black attire)

* Solid black dress (knee length) OR
* Black dress slacks or black skirt (knee length) AND
* Black dress shirt or blouse
* Black dress heels (no higher than 2 inches) or flats. All shoes must have backs.

Gym shoes, sandals, flip flops, shoes with a height exceeding two inches, strongly scented perfurmes, and hair that is covering the eyes and face is prohibited as concert attire.

**Choir Boosters**

Supportive vocal music parents are integral to a successful program. The Morris Hills Choir Boosters assistance at various events and performances, as well as help plan and run fundraisers and other department functions. They also provide several scholarships for seniors. Seniors are only eligible for these scholarships if their families are due-paying booster club members. If interested in joining, please contact Mrs. Laura Kaufman, President (jerzygirl1@aol.com) for more information.