

CONESTOGA JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR HANDBOOK 2020-2021

Cassi Vallis, Director

Welcome to vocal music at Conestoga! It's a pleasure to have you as part of this organization!

This handbook outlines procedures and activities that make up the choral experience at Conestoga. It is provided to each choir student so that they and their parents/guardians are aware of the expectations and goals of the choir classes. This handbook is a guide to reasonable expectations of behavior, conduct, and contribution. This should answer any questions you might have about your vocal music experience. All students and parents/guardians should fully read this handbook.

If you have any further questions or concerns about vocal music policies, please do not hesitate to contact me at (402) 235-2271 or by email at cvallis@conestogacougars.org

I. COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

This year is unlike any other we've experienced. All performances, rehearsals, can come to a halt at any moment depending on the decisions made by the National Association for Music Education and Conestoga Jr/Sr High School. In order to keep students, instructors, and families safe and healthy, necessary changes have been made to the structure and set-up of the music program:

1. The music department will follow the stated COVID-19 Protocols provided by Conestoga Jr/Sr High School.
2. Class and rehearsals will be held outside whenever possible to provide fresh air and more space to social distance.
3. The music room is a mask mandated room. Choir students will wear masks while large group singing for a maximum of 30 minutes. All small group and individual singing will be done while socially distancing without a mask when possible.
4. Students will be expected to sanitize their area at the conclusion of each rehearsal with school provided materials.
5. If at any time a student or parent has questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to Mrs. Vallis

II. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

Students in choir receive fine arts credit toward graduation. The choir grade is included in the grade point average. Students who treat the choral program as a "study hall" or "Easy A" are NOT working toward our common goal of excellence. These attitudes are inappropriate and unacceptable. Our goal is to create beautiful music, explore creativity, encourage self-expression, and promote teamwork. This will require consistent effort, participation and a positive attitude on the part of every choir member.

1. Follow all given instructions. Whether they involve musical ideas or behavior, all instructions should be followed immediately and to the best of your ability.

2. Maintain respect for the choir room, the instruments, and the equipment. This includes your music and folder. If they are damaged beyond normal wear, **you will be required to pay for their replacement.** All class materials must be stored at the end of each period. Keep the room clean and orderly.
3. Treat teachers, accompanists, substitute teachers, and other students with respect. Talking during class distracts others from concentrating on the rehearsal. When the instructor is talking, no one else should be.
4. Be on time to all rehearsals and performances and be prepared to give your best.
5. Be a responsible member – bring your pencil, keep your music in order, know your music.

III. REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS AND PROCEDURES

The only way to succeed at anything is through repetition and constant practice. This is true in all academic core classes, athletics and MUSIC! Fine-tuning your voice takes time and focused practice. Be patient, attentive, careful, and cooperative in observing these rehearsal expectations and procedures. As in any other class, students' work habits will greatly affect his/her grade.

1. Be ON TIME to class and performances. You are to be in your place with your music. Attendance is taken **at the bell.**
2. Choir folders will be the responsibility of each student (or student pair). When you enter the room, place your iPads and Macbooks in your assigned slots and take your folder. You will also be responsible for putting your folder away correctly.
3. Warm-ups will take place at the beginning of each class. Proper singing is a physical activity requiring the use of many muscle groups and focused energy. It is NOT optional and failure to participate fully will result in a lower daily contribution grade.
4. Gum, food, and drink are not allowed in the classroom. Other non-related materials are also not permitted during class time. Only water is permitted.
5. **Cell phones are not allowed in class.**
6. ALWAYS have your music, folder, and pencil.
7. Listen to the conductor at all times. Talking while the conductor is rehearsing or giving instructions is NEVER appropriate.
8. Take a mature attitude toward correction. Drama and bad attitudes will not be tolerated.
9. Rehearsals are not over until the director dismisses the choir. Do not begin to put materials away until instructed to do so.

IV. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Students who are unable or unwilling to follow classroom rules and procedures or persist in disruptive behavior will be subject to the following disciplinary sequence:

1. For most episodes of disruptive behavior or breach of rules, the student will receive a verbal warning.

2. Upon further disruptive behavior, the student will schedule a conference with Mrs. Vallis to review the expected behaviors listed in the handbook. Parents/guardians will be contacted.
3. After three instances of disruptive behavior, a conference will be held with Mrs. Vallis, Mr. Geise, said student, and parents/guardians. Together we will come to an understanding of expected behavior in the Choir classroom.

****Severe Clause:** A student who is constantly disrupting class, insubordinate, uses inappropriate language, is abusive or is in any way violent will be immediately referred to the office. Parents/guardians will be contacted. In extreme cases, whether the student's involvement in the instrumental program will continue, will be evaluated between Mrs. Vallis, Mr. Geise, and Dr. Johnsen.**

V. CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION

Open, honest, and respectful communication is essential to the success and positive experience for our students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and staff. The following list are examples of the types of appropriate communication:

1. Email: cvalis@conestogacougars.org. I will respond to emails within 24 hours of the received message and within the hours of 7am-7pm.
2. Phone #: The Conestoga Jr./Sr. High School phone number is (402) 235-2271. My personal cell phone number is (402) 269-0304. This number should only be used in the case of emergencies and within the hours of 7am-7pm.
3. TeamApp and ParentSquare: All handouts of information will be sent out through these electronic forms of communication. Join TeamApp by searching "Conestoga Choir" to receive notifications. All parents should be enrolled in ParentSquare through the school.

I encourage everyone to reach out with questions, comments, and/or concerns throughout the school year. When there is an incident of concern, the chain of communication is as follows:

- First conference: Parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student conference with Mrs. Vallis. This can be done in person by scheduled meeting, or over email to discuss the incident of concern.
- Second conference: Parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student conference with Mrs. Vallis and the Secondary Principal, Mr. Geise. This conference will be conducted in person at a previously scheduled meeting to discuss the incident of concert.
- Third conference: Parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student conference with Mrs. Vallis, Mr. Geise, and Conestoga Superintendent, Dr. Beth Johnsen. This conference will be conducted in person at a previously scheduled meeting to discuss the incident of concert.

VI. GRADING

Grading in choir is different than in other subjects. Students will be graded in 4 areas:

1. Performances. 40% of total grade. School concerts, individual assessments, and uploaded recordings.

2. Projects. 25% of total grade. Compositions, music technology collaborations, created art.
3. Worksheets. 20% of total grade. Assessments over notation, rhythm, history, and vocabulary.
4. Rehearsals. 15% of total grade. This is your daily contribution to the class. 5 points are given per rehearsal, and a point will be taken away for each instance of lack of effort, disruptive behavior, loss of materials, failure to follow instructions, and removal from class.

VII. PERFORMANCES

STUDENTS MUST ATTEND ALL CONCERTS IN THAT THEY ARE TO PERFORM AND REMAIN UNTIL THE END OF THE CONCERT. WORK IS NOT AN EXCUSED ABSENCE. Please take a copy of our schedule and hand it to your employer to avoid scheduling conflicts. If they have questions, they may contact me at the school. *A schedule of all concert/contest performances can be found on the Conestoga activities calendar.* https://www.nebraskacapitolconference.org/g5-bin/client.cgi?cwellOnly=1&G5statusflag=view&schoolname=&school_id=4875&G5button=13&G5genie=475&vw_schoolyear=1&vw_agl=20479-1-0,&manual_access=1

Definition of an “EXCUSED ABSENCE” - Illness, family-related emergencies, and planned family trips. A note or phone call from the parent/guardian must be submitted to the director well in advance for review and consultation with the student. In the case of sudden illness, a note, phone call, or email from the parent/guardian should accompany the student’s return.

Definition of an “UNEXCUSED ABSENCE” – Work, social activities, and non-school related activities.

Concert Performance Alternative Assessment

If students are unable to attend a concert for whatever reason, students will complete an individual performance assessment. Students will sign up for one of the following times, and individually perform the music repertoire they would have performed at the concert. This policy gives students the opportunity to express their knowledge of the content matter and receive direct instruction and immediate feedback from the director. **Failure to complete an individual performance assessment will result in a zero percent.** Listed below are the individual performance assessment dates and times for each concert.

VIII. FEES

Students do not have any fees to enroll and participate in the choral program. However, if students so choose to audition for honor choirs, all-state choir, and conference choirs there **will be** regarding audition, enrollment, and purchase of music. Each fee is unique to each opportunity. Students and parents will be notified of these fees.

XV. CONCERT DRESS

JH Concert Choir: All members will wear the Conestoga Music Department polo. Men must have black dress pants, black shoes (not tennis shoes) and black dress socks. Women must have black closed-toed shoes (no sandals or tennis shoes), black knee-length skirt or pant, and a black blouse, and minimal jewelry.

HS Concert Choir: All members will wear choral robes. Underneath these robes, men must wear a black t-shirt, black dress pants, black shoes (not tennis shoes) and black dress socks. Women must wear a black t-shirt, black closed-toed shoes (no sandals or tennis shoes), black knee-length skirt or pant, black blouse, and minimal jewelry.

Winter Concert and May Concert

For the Winter Concert, students will be able to wear clothing that is Red, Green, Black, White, or an APPROPRIATE ugly festive sweater. For the May Concert, students are simply to wear nice dress clothes. Knee length dresses/shirts, dress blouses, sweaters, polos, shirt and tie, black dress pants, khaki pants, and dress shoes are a few of the examples. Students are encouraged to ask Mrs. Vallis if their concert attire is appropriate before the night of the concert.

All Members

Please avoid using perfume, cologne, and heavy hair products before concerts, as these can cause severe allergic reactions in a concert setting. Students who are not able to provide concert dress will need to visit with Mrs. Vallis prior to the performance. **Failure to abide by the concert dress policy will result in a percentage loss of grade.**

IX. HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC LETTERS

A student must go above and beyond what is expected in class to earn a letter. At the beginning of the year, students will receive a list of all opportunities and point values toward achieving a letter for choir. Mrs. Vallis is not responsible if you forget to submit a lettering opportunity. Absence from a concert will affect your ability to letter.

CONCLUSION

The performing arts have always been a vital part of our society. YOU have been given a very special talent. You now have the obligation and responsibility to use that talent for the betterment of our community, and for the development of yourself as an individual. The accomplishments of the Conestoga Choir depend on each member of the organization. Even if just a few members do not cooperate fully, the choir becomes an inefficient organization. It is our hope that each member of the choir will assume an immediate obligation to do his or her part in making our year in the Conestoga Choir family a memorable one for all.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Cassi Vallis
Music Director
Conestoga Jr./Sr. High School

CHOIR CONTRACT 2020-2021

DUE August 25, 2020

Student Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

STUDENT:

I have read and understand the Conestoga Choir Handbook governing my participation in the Conestoga Choral Program. I accept my personal responsibility and obligation to the Choral Program and I pledge my support to other members of this group in meeting their responsibilities.

PARENT/GUARDIAN:

I accept my responsibility in supporting and assisting my son/daughter in living up to the responsibilities and obligations as outlined. I understand that any questions about department procedures can be found in the Choir Handbook and any further questions should be directed to Mrs. Vallis.

1. _____ I have read the following handbook, I understand all of its policies and expectations for this ensemble, and will follow its rules and regulations.

2. _____ I realize the importance of this group, and will follow all of the expectations and guidelines presented in this handbook.

3. _____ I understand the repercussions, responsibilities, and “make-up work” that follow an excused **AND** unexcused absence from a performance.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Please check the lines for the following statements, sign both student and parent/guardian and **return this page only** to Mrs. Vallis.