

Armstrong High School Choir Handbook

Curricular Assessment

Students earn their grade in choir based upon the following criteria:

Rehearsal participation 50%

Individual shows focus, effort, and a positive attitude in rehearsal, exhibits good posture, marks music with a pencil, and participates in class discussions.

Students are assigned points weekly on the following scale:

2 points/day [2=full participation; 1=marginal participation; 0=no participation/absence]

To make up and absence, students are encouraged to schedule an after-school time to work in a practice room on the material covered in class during the missed day, or to turn in a tape of the practice done at home to make up a missed rehearsal. This make-up opportunity does not apply to unexcused absences.

Skill Testing/Exams 20%

Students are graded on sight-reading, part testing, vocal exams, ear training, and written work. Assessment may be based upon the objective areas of rhythmic, dynamic and pitch accuracy, breath control, support and sound placement.

Performance Participation 30%

Attendance at all scheduled performance events is mandatory.

Make-up assignments are available only for excused absences prior to the event with director approval or emergency situations.

Extra Credit

Students may complete no more than two extra credit assignments per quarter. Extra credit projects may include concert reviews or composer/topical/historical music research studies. Extra Credit Assignments are available in the choir office at any time.

Grades are NOT derived from or enhanced by any of the following:

- **Co-curricular/extra curricular/auditioned activities**
- **Positions of leadership/responsibility within the ensemble**
- **Private voice lessons**
- **Parental activity within the school or the program**

Percentile breakdown:

A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	NC	0-59%

Attendance Policy

We adhere to the School-wide attendance policy in place at Armstrong High School in regard to tardy arrival and absences. Please reference the AHS Student Handbook for details.

Performance Participation

Armstrong Choirs perform in several concerts per year. Each of these performances are considered **CURRICULAR** events, therefore attendance is mandatory to receive a grade in choir. (See District 281 Music Attendance Policy)

Performance of the music is considered the final exam for a music course, even if the performance does not coincide with the term's grading deadlines. Due to the fact that each performance is unique, and cannot be recreated, there is no opportunity to "make-up" such an experience.

Performance grades include, but are not limited to vocal performance, performance etiquette, quality, behavior, active listening throughout the entire concert, off stage behavior, and the care of performance attire.

For students involved in other Armstrong activities, every effort is made between the directors/coaches to avoid conflict with performance dates. When this is not possible, the coaches and directors work out a compromise based upon the students' responsibilities to the performing organization and position on the team. We will not put the student "in the middle", but work for a compromise in these cases remembering that performance requirements for choir are curricular and receive a grade.

Performance Attire

Each choir student must own an Armstrong Choir shirt. Singers wear these choir shirts with the Armstrong Choir logo throughout their years in the Armstrong Choral Program. This is not a recurring cost as the shirts are the same for every choir. Additional Armstrong Choir items are available on the Choir Shirt order form and in the classroom throughout the year.

Concert dress for each ensemble is as follows:

Freshmen: Choir shirt, black pants, black shoes (closed toe/closed heel/**no tennis shoes**)

Varsity/Cantori/Concert Choir: Men - choir robe, black pants, socks and shoes

Women - choir robe, black hose/black pants, black concert shoes
(closed toe/closed heel)

Music and Folders

Music and folders are provided for student use and will remain the property of Armstrong High School. Students are responsible for the materials they use during and outside of the choir rehearsal. If items are lost, misplaced or damaged, the student(s) responsible will be held financially accountable for the loss.

Minnesota State High School League and AHS Policy

The nature of many performance ensembles is both curricular and co-curricular. Due to this fact, choir members are subject to AHS and MSHSL rules governing illegal substance use. See the AHS Student Handbook for a detailed explanation of the policy. It is to be understood that an infraction may result in the student missing NWSC Conference and Region performing events with their ensemble or as an individual. In these cases, students are responsible for making up points so as not to affect

their grade. Students must also be aware of the repercussions of their absence upon the entire ensemble.

Students must demonstrate academic eligibility for Region and NWSC Conference events in accordance with the MSHSL Rules as well. Students may not be failing more than 2 courses/term in a full course load to be eligible to participate. Academic eligibility is determined each semester. Reinstatement occurs quarterly in accordance with the Armstrong High School academic rules.

Performance Tours

The Armstrong Concert Choir and Cantori participate in an annual performance tour. Destinations in years past include Duluth, Boston, New York, Kansas City, Chicago, St. Louis, Orlando, and Central Europe. Choir tour can be one of the highlights of each student's participation in the Armstrong Choral Program. The level of musicianship and ensemble while on tour is raised significantly. These experiences give students the opportunity to travel with their friends for a pointed academic purpose, in the safety of their school environment. The cost of these trips is the responsibility of the individual choir student. **However, every student in the ensemble is expected to tour with the choir.** The cost of any trip can be offset with the various fund raising opportunities provided by the Armstrong Choir Boosters. In some cases, scholarship monies are available for students/families in need through the Armstrong Choir Boosters. Each participating student must have the enclosed commitment form on file.

Performance Recording

Most performances in the Armstrong Vocal Music Department are professionally recorded. When CD's are available, CD Order Forms will be available in the concert programs.

Performance Admission

There is no ticket admission for Armstrong Choir Concerts. We accept donations for each performance at a suggested rate of \$3.00/student and \$5.00/adult. Donations are collected by the Armstrong Choir Boosters and are deposited directly into the Armstrong Choir Gift Account. All donations collected benefit the AHS Choral Program and its students.

Co-Curricular Opportunities

Armstrong Choir Letter

Students may earn a letter in choir. All points toward a letter are earned in out of school activities and the requirements are clearly stated in the lettering form. Points are carried over from year to year. This cumulative system rewards those who steadily accumulate points. Following is a summary of co-curricular activities that contribute to the points for a letter. Letter points are calculated and choir letters are awarded in the spring of each year. (PDF copy on website under "forms..." tab)

Madrigal/Chamber Ensembles

Membership in these groups is highly selective and the commitment is demanding. Auditions for each group are adjudicated by an experienced voice professional who is selected by the directors. The scores from this audition are the primary factor used to determine group selection.

Many AHS coaches, directors and advisors of other co-curricular/athletic groups have been supportive of a student's membership in Chamber Groups and have been willing to negotiate practice/meeting times. It is expected that any potential conflicts with schedules will be worked out prior to a student's audition for chamber groups. It is unacceptable for a student to audition, be

accepted and then decline membership or modify requirements after, or prior to determining that other conflicts exist.

Minnesota State High School League Vocal Solo and Ensemble Contest

All AHS Choir students are invited to perform in the Local Solo and Ensemble contest held at AHS each year. This Local Contest is for Armstrong singers only. Students perform one memorized solo which meets the MSHSL performance requirements. Accompanists are hired by the choral program at a minimal cost to the student. Each student performs his/her solo for an adjudicator who offers verbal comments and a numerical rating. The top students in each site are expected to represent AHS at MSHSL Region Solo/Ensemble Contest with singers from each of the schools in our Region. Freshman students are invited to participate in Local Solo and Ensemble contest, but may not advance to Regionals per MSHSL participation rules.

Voice Lessons

Private voice lessons at AHS are available to all. Private voice teachers at AHS have a minimum of an undergraduate degree in Vocal Performance and are auditioned, interviewed and given a background check. In our program of 500 singers, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of all AHS choir students currently study voice. Private lessons are not a requirement for membership in any choral or co-curricular group at AHS. There is no grade or credit given to students who take private lessons however; students may earn points toward an annual choir letter and individual private study is an integral part of a student's vocal success. Information and Registration Forms are always available in the choir room and our website under Private Voice Lessons.

Honor Choirs

Several professional music organizations offer honors choir experiences for high school students. Armstrong traditionally participates in the Minnesota All-State Choirs and ACDA Honor Choirs. The selection of students for each of these events depends upon audition results. Students are informed in class of such audition opportunities. Students selected must sign a statement of commitment prior to participating in these performance opportunities and meet the requirements of the audition.

Choir Officers

Each of the Armstrong Choirs offer elected leadership positions within the ensemble. The demands on the leadership vary significantly in each choir. Varsity, Cantori and Concert Choirs elect a full board of officers for a variety of duties. Serving as a choir officer grants students letter points, encourages quality leadership skills, and aids in the college application process by demonstrating leadership throughout one's high school years.

Musical Leadership

Each year, section leaders are selected in Concert Choir and Cantori. Section Leaders are responsible for musical leadership of their section, creating community, and maintaining accountability. The director chooses section leaders based on musicianship and leadership skills.