



2020-2021 Chorus Information



Dear Chorus Students and Families,

We hope everyone has enjoyed a safe and happy summer. The 2020-2021 school year will begin in just a couple weeks, and we are eager to begin making music with our singers! We recognize singing plays a vital role in supporting students' social-emotional health. With the current environment surrounding our return to school, we are even *more* committed to maintaining successful vocal music education in Washington Township. We've received several questions regarding what Chorus will look like upon our return and wanted to take this opportunity to communicate our plans.

Our overall goal is to approach this year with as close to a "business as usual" mindset as possible. We may adjust *how* we accomplish our events and activities, but *what we do* and *what we learn* remains intact! Regardless of whether you are a hybrid or remote student, our mission remains the same: to provide all students with opportunities to engage in a variety of aesthetic and academic experiences that encourage creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Please review the information contained in the following pages. This document will serve as our collective "Grade 6-12 Chorus Handbook" this year instead of our traditional packets. When WTPS returns to full, in-person learning, we would then pivot back to traditional approach. As always, if you have any questions, please contact your Chorus director.

Respectfully,

Joseph Zachowski, WTHS Chorus Director
Nancy Dickinson, BHMS Chorus Director
Katie Kershaw, CRMS Chorus Director
Alyssa Campanini, OVMS Chorus Director



WTPS Return-To-School Plan

Our district's Return to School plan can be found [HERE](#). Please review if you're unfamiliar with the hybrid cohort model. Keep in mind, all schools in New Jersey must also be prepared to pivot to an "all remote" model at a moment's notice if necessary. In addition, please note that our "remote learning" days will look **very different** this year as compared to this past Spring. We've used this summer as an opportunity to reflect upon what worked, what didn't, and to come up with strategies and policies that will improve the overall experience for everyone.

Is it SAFE for choirs to sing?

If we all follow specific mitigation strategies, YES we can safely engage in vocal activities upon our return. We have received guidance from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS.org) that helped organize the "International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study" at the University of Colorado-Boulder. This study was sponsored by dozens of local, state, national, and international arts organizations all seeking safe ways for performing arts to return. Researchers tested aerosol dispersion of wind instruments, singing, theatre, and dance. Their preliminary guidelines are summarized in the infographic below released by ArtsEdNJ:



Source: International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study 8/6/2020 <http://bit.ly/33r1EmK>

<https://www.artsednj.org/covid19>

ARTS ED NJ

For more information on the aerosol study, [CLICK HERE](#)

What specific strategies will TWP Chorus classes follow to adhere to these guidelines?

- Students will sit or stand 6 ft apart, all facing the same direction (no arcs or circles)
- Students will keep their mask ON while singing
- The singing portion of each 60-minute class will be NO LONGER than 30 minutes.
- Classes will rehearse outside if weather permits
- When rehearsing inside, students will sing at a moderate to low volume
- Students will keep their music folder with them, no sharing music or other materials
- Classrooms will be cleaned, and HVAC maintained as per the district re-opening protocol.

Is a specific mask required for Chorus class?

We are not asking our families to purchase a special singing mask. However, recent studies have shown some masks to be better than others. We simply ask our students to wear a multi-layer (at least 2) mask that fits snugly to cover the entire nose and around the mouth. Common blue surgical masks or 2-layer cloth masks, when worn properly, are just fine! Gator-style coverings, however, would not provide a fit adequate for singing. For more information on the effectiveness of different masks [CLICK HERE](#). If you're interested in purchasing a mask designed for singers, [CLICK HERE](#).

What will Chorus class look like? How will the LIVE class differ from the REMOTE experiences?

Students in Cohorts A, B, and C will attend 60-minute periods once a week (twice for Cohort C) in the hybrid model. When we're together in class, we will sing as an ensemble while also diving deeper into other curricular concepts. Students' remote assignments will be a combination of individual singing, theory, and more to further develop musicianship skills. We anticipate approximately one "concept-based" and one "performance-based" learning activity per week while on remote. Students in Cohort R will complete all the same assignments as Cohorts A, B, and C. Teachers will work to schedule synchronous opportunities for Cohort R students to review the instruction covered during the live cohorts. For example, we may hold WebEx rehearsals for Cohort R on Wednesdays as part of our "Office Hours".

How will small group lessons work? Will we still have to leave another class?

We will maintain vocal lessons as an integral part of your music education. But, you will NOT be pulled out of another class to attend lessons. Instead, students will be scheduled for a live, synchronous lesson during your REMOTE days. For example, let's say 2nd period is a lesson period for a given teacher. On Monday 2nd period, while Cohort A is in school, Cohort B will receive their lesson via WebEx at home. On Thursday 2nd period, while Cohort B is in school, Cohort A will receive their lesson via WebEx at home. Cohort R students will be integrated into these lesson groups. Yes, this means students will be responsible for logging in and participating in lessons on one of the days their cohort is working remotely from home. With the number of students in our programs, each student would have a lesson once every 2-3 weeks with make-up opportunities available if you are unable to attend at the scheduled time.

Will we still have concerts & festivals?

We ARE planning to provide performance opportunities for our students, just in different formats. Based on current restrictions, we are not permitted to hold live, indoor concerts with large audiences. Instead, we will work to record our efforts and present them in virtual formats until live audiences are permitted. Instead of following a Winter and Spring Concert model, we will focus on one or two pieces as a time. After each piece is performance-ready, we plan to record and stream them for community enjoyment. We are hopeful that as we transition to Spring 2021 that restrictions will allow for some form of live performance. This could include outdoor venues or indoor with reduced audiences. We would use that opportunity to "refresh" the pieces we've been working on all year and present them live if allowed.

The hope for lifted restrictions in the Spring also applies to our annual Festival performances. If conditions allow, we would work towards providing these performance opportunities for our students. All-South Jersey Chorus will also be all-virtual this year, more information to follow.

How will we be graded for Chorus this year?

As stated above, each week will have a live experience plus a remote experience. These learning activities will be sorted into the following categories:

15% Supportive Assignments: Theory/vocab/written assignments, all “formative” learning activities

35% Minor Assessments: Vocal lessons, minor vocal skill assessments, performance evaluations and critiques, quizzes

50% Major Assessments: Vocal assessments, final recordings for virtual performances, tests

What can students do to be ready when school starts?

1. Continue to stay informed about our district’s plans. Reach out to your child’s director with questions about Chorus and refer to official communications from the Superintendent or building principals. Please don’t assume what you hear from a friend or neighbor is accurate!
2. Start practicing singing while wearing a mask. It’s not easy but is doable with patience and practice.
3. Once you have access to your schedule, become as familiar as you can with **Schoology**. This will be the default site all teachers will use to deliver instruction and post assignments. Class Pages on Unified Classroom is going away, but PowerSchool will still be used for student data and grades.
4. Prepare a space in your house for singing and recording. We recognize every home situation is unique, and we want you to be as comfortable singing as possible. You can try your bedroom, basement, anywhere free from distractions. Families should discuss the importance of having a quiet, comfortable space for music-making.
5. Continue to stay positive and flexible about all of this. As we’ve seen, this situation is constantly changing.
6. Remember, our goal this year is to keep you all as musically engaged as possible for your academic and social-emotional well-being. Our sense of community is paramount. We’ll get through this, together!