

**SPARKMAN HIGH SCHOOL  
CHORAL DEPARTMENT**



**2013-2014  
HANDBOOK**

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This Handbook is intended as a supplement to, not a replacement for, the SHS Student Handbook and Course Syllabus.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction.....3  
Course Fees and Payments.....4  
Course Materials .....4  
Performance Attire.....4  
Auditions.....4  
Field Trips.....5  
Fundraising .....6  
Student Leadership Opportunities.....7  
Alabama ACDA Choral Music Honor Society.....8  
Alabama ACDA Choral Music Honor Society.....9  
Choir Boosters Club.....10

**SHS Choir Department Website**

[www.sparkmanhschoirs.weebly.com](http://www.sparkmanhschoirs.weebly.com)



## INTRODUCTION

Dear Students (and Parents):

Welcome to Sparkman High School Choirs. This handbook is intended to provide important information regarding participation in this choral program as well as a reference throughout the school year. Please read the information carefully, and if necessary, contact me for additional information and clarification.

Sparkman High School has long been recognized among the strongest choral programs in the district and the state. We have received numerous superior ratings at state and regional festivals and contests, and our choirs have performed in Charleston, SC, Atlanta, Orlando, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and at Carnegie Hall in New York. Students who participate in the SHS Choral Program are routinely selected to participate in honor choirs and the Alabama All-State Festival.

Choir members receive instruction in sight-singing (learning to sing music at sight), ear training (learning to recognize and identify musical intervals by ear), music theory (learning to read and notate music), and vocal training. In addition, students also learn valuable life skills such as patience, perseverance, cooperation, teamwork, tolerance, and leadership as they work in community toward common goals.

My ultimate goal as Director is to provide you with as many opportunities as possible to learn, grow, perform, and excel, and, ultimately, to empower you to continue singing in whatever capacity you choose. Whether that be in a community choir, a college choral ensemble, or as a music major at university, I want you child to leave this program with the skills you need to be successful.

I encourage you to read this handbook with your parent and discuss the information contained herein. After reading this Handbook and the Course Syllabus, please complete and sign the Choir Participation Agreement and return it with your course fee by **Friday, August 30, 2013**.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me directly. I look forward to meeting and getting to know each of you as the school year progresses.

Sincerely,

*Mary Beth Taylor*

## COURSE FEES, BOOSTER DUES, AND PAYMENTS

Course fees (mandated by Madison County BOE) are used to pay ongoing expenses for purchasing and maintaining music, providing instructional materials, and securing accompanists for concerts and other performances.

Choral Boosters dues are collected each semester to help support the program by providing substitute teachers, buses for travel, registration fees, and performances space rental for concerts. The fee entitles up to two (2) parents/guardians to vote in Choral Boosters meetings (see additional information under Choral Boosters Club).

Every student enrolled in a vocal music class is required to pay a course fee each semester *unless* this is the first high school-level Fine Art course the student has taken (counts toward graduation requirements). Students who qualify for a fee waiver may obtain a form from the main office. Fee payments may be made by cash or check. Cash payments must be *correct change* submitted to the Director in a sealed envelope with the student's name and type of fee written on the outside. Check payments must be made payable to SHS with the student's first and last name written in the memo section, and it must also have a phone numbers (or one phone number and a driver's license number) and a physical address on the front.

**All course fees and Boosters dues must be paid before payment will be received for field trips.**

## COURSE MATERIALS

See Course Syllabus for a list of required materials.

Additionally, each student will be issued a copy of all concert music for the specified choir. Just like a textbook, students are expected to take care of the music, keep it in the required black folder, and **ONLY** mark it in PENCIL. Music that is lost, damaged, or marked inappropriately with ink will be charged to the student just as a lost or damaged textbook might be. Replacement fees for lost or damaged music must be paid before the student will be allowed to graduate.

## AUDITIONS

Auditions for Concert and Chamber Choirs will be held in February, prior to registration for the following school year. However, due to the changeable nature of adolescent voices, auditions will also be held for ALL SINGERS in August to insure correct placement within the designated choir. The primary goal of auditions is to place students in a choir/section for which they are developmentally and vocally ready in order to provide the best possible choral experience.

## FIELD TRIPS

Not only are field trips FUN, but they afford students opportunities to expand their choral experience and education. Below are descriptions of field trips that will be available to students this year. All information and permission forms are available for download from the website. Additional field trips may be added as the year progresses.

Costs of field trips are the responsibility of the student/parent. For 'required' trips, fee waivers may be available for eligible students (with the exception of the Spring Competition Trip). Fundraising opportunities are available for the Spring Trip, and students are encouraged to take advantage of these.

Students must be academically eligible and in good standing in order to participate in a field trip. Fees paid toward a field trip for a student who becomes ineligible or is not in good standing at the time of the trip will NOT be refunded. However, should the student regain eligibility, the fee paid MAY be applied toward another trip (some exclusions apply).

**All course fees and Booster dues must be paid before payment will be received for field trips.**

**All-State Festival auditions (Chamber Choir students STRONGLY encouraged to participate; open to Concert Choir students)**

Students in grades 10-12 may audition to participate in one of three high school choirs comprised of the top choral students from around the state. Students selected are members of a highly prestigious group. However, ability is only part of the selection process; this honor is achieved primarily through hard work and time spent learning the selected music. Students who are interested in participating in this event must return the completed, signed permission form and the non-refundable field trip fee by the deadline.

**Madison County Honor Choir (Chamber and Concert Choir students are STRONGLY encouraged to participate)**

Selected participants will join forces with other students from Madison County schools in one of two choirs for a day and half of hard work and fun with regionally renowned clinicians, culminating in an evening performance. Students who are interested in participating in this event must return the completed, signed permission form and the non refundable field trip fee by the deadline.

**Alabama Honor Choir auditions (selected students from Chamber Choir)**

Selected participants will audition to participate in the Alabama State Honor Choir which rehearses and performs at the annual AMEA Conference in January. Students must return the completed, signed permission form by the deadline.

**Nursing Home/Senior Center Performances (REQUIRED for all Concert and Chamber Choir students)**

Students will travel to three area nursing/assisted living facilities (Fall) and the Huntsville-Madison County Senior Center (Spring) to perform. Students must return the completed, signed permission form by the deadline.

**Real Men Sing! (open to all male singers)**

Sponsored by UAH Department of Music. Participants will attend a day-long workshop with a male conductor/teacher, sing music composed specifically for men, and participate in an evening concert. While this is not technically a field trip, participants may request an 'excused absence' for this educational activity. See Dr. Taylor for additional information.

**State Choral Performance Assessment (REQUIRED for Chamber and Concert Choirs)**

Students travel to an area high school to be assessed by four judges on two concert songs, sung from memory, and sight-singing. All students must return the completed, signed permission form by the deadline.

**All-State Choral Festival (REQUIRED for selected students)**

Students selected by audition will travel to Samford University in Birmingham to rehearse and perform with one of three choirs conducted by a nationally recognized master clinician. Selected students must return the completed, signed permission form and the non refundable field trip fee by the deadline.

**Spring Performance/Competition Trip (REQUIRED for Chamber Choir; STRONGLY encouraged for Concert Choir)**

Students in the Chamber and Concert Choirs will travel out-of-state to learn, perform, compete, and have fun. Students may earn money toward the cost of the trip through fundraising opportunities throughout the fall semester. See additional information about this year's trip to Orlando on the website. Students must return all forms and the non-refundable deposit by the deposit deadline. Students who do not participate in fundraising must also pay the first payment.

## FUNDRAISING

Fundraising projects support the choir's general fund for purchasing equipment, music, and other instructional materials. Students in Chamber and Concert Choirs may earn money toward the cost of their individual trips on *some* fundraisers. All students in Concert and Chamber Choirs are *expected* to participate in all fundraisers.

Spirit Wear (80%) and Choir T-shirts

Program Ads (80%)

Poinsettia Sales (80%)

Coffee and Cake (80%)

For fundraisers designated as “80%”, students receive 80% of the *profit* of their individual sales toward the cost of the Spring Trip (20% goes to the general choir fund for equipment purchases and other projects). As an example, for an item that sells for \$10 and renders 50% profit, the student may apply \$4 toward their trip. Students who earn an amount above the cost of their trip may request to have the balance applied to another student’s trip or have it go to the general fund.

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Student leadership is an important part of any student organization. A student leader’s primary role is to help the students they serve to be successful through maintaining a positive attitude, encouraging risk-taking, and offering support. As a student in Concert and Chamber Choirs, EVERY student is expected to exemplify these qualities in relationship to others.

Applications/references for officers must be submitted to the director by the end of the SECOND week of school. The Director will screen applicants and submit a list of eligible candidates to the choir for vote during the THIRD week of school.

All officers:

- Must submit an application and two letters (may be in the form of an email) of reference
- Assist with motivation, maintaining a positive attitude and encouraging all students to participate fully
- Lead recruiting efforts
- Serve on the Choir Council
- Assist and support Section Leaders

President (must have been a member of the choir the previous year)

- Leader of Choir Council, leads meetings
- Assists substitute teacher when teacher is absent
- With other officers, coordinates setup and clean up at all events and concerts

Vice-President (must have been a member of the choir the previous year)

- Assumes duties of the President in his/her absence
- Assists substitute teacher (in the absence of the President)
- Keeps track of student birthdays and other student recognition

Secretary

- Records class attendance
- Assists Director rehearsal/concert attendance
- Responsible for writing invitations and thank you notes

Treasurer

- Receives money for water
- Keeps water stocked in fridge and notifies Director when water needs to be purchased
- Assist Director with collecting permission forms and money for uniforms, field trips, and fundraising

**Librarian**

- Distributes, collects, and files all music
- Submits a detailed list to Director of all students who have not returned music
- Oversees cataloging of music as needed

**Choir Council**

- Will meet with Director as needed before OR after school
- Will assist with organizing events (i.e., Coffee and Cake, recruiting efforts)
- Will assist with auditions as needed
- Will assist Director with administrative tasks as needed

**Section Leaders**

- Appointed by the Director with input from Choir Council
- Lead all sectional sight-singing using hand signs at all times
- Lead physical warm-ups and solfege exercises at the request of the Director
- Have all music marked correctly
- Responsible for periodic folder checks of section

Any officer or section leader who fails to fulfill his/her duties may be asked to step down by a simple majority vote of the Choir Council, only AFTER the issue has been addressed with the individual and an opportunity to correct the problem has been offered.

## **ALABAMA ACDA CHORAL MUSIC HONOR SOCIETY**

This is a new program at SHS. Any student may join as long as he/she meets the following requirements:

- Must be enrolled in Chamber or Concert Choir
- Must have a 4.0 GPA in choir
- Must have an overall 3.0 GPA

Additionally, students must maintain the following standards for a minimum of two consecutive years prior to graduation:

- Must maintain a 4.0 GPA in choir and a 3.0 GPA overall; may not have any FINAL grades of D or F in any class
- Must participate in at least two years of choir (grades 10-12)
- Must maintain good citizenship and exhibit leadership, service, and good character in their activities, both in and outside of Sparkman High School
- Must earn 20 total points while participating in choral music activities at SHS (graduating seniors for 2013-2014 must earn 10 points only)

Students are prospective members that are in the process of earning points toward induction. No one is tapped into the ACDA Choral Music Honor Society until all of the requirements have been met and maintained. Membership in the Alabama ACDA Choral Music Honor Society will be granted to all students who have met the eligibility requirements. No students will be elected into the honor society, and no student who has met the requirements will be denied membership.



**POINT SYSTEM**

<b>Participation</b>	<b>Event/Activity</b>	<b>Points</b>
Attendance in club meetings.	Club meetings will take place before/after school	.5 per club meeting
Performing Ensemble at SHS for credit	Chamber or Concert Choir	1 point per semester
Performing Ensemble at SHS not for credit	An ensemble that meets at a scheduled time throughout the school year and is directed by one of the music staff (show choir, jazz choir, etc.)	1 point per semester
Performing Ensemble not involved with school.	Church choirs/ensembles, community ensembles	1 point per semester
Performance in a musical.	This can be sponsored by the school or the community.	1 point per musical
All-State preparation or Honor Choir preparation. Honor Choirs that have no auditions are not eligible.	Preparation for an All-State event or any Honor Choir approved by the music faculty.	.5 point per event
Participation in Honor Choir	Madison Co. Honor Choir, AVA Honor Choir, etc.	.5 point per event
Participation in All-State Choir	All-State Choir, All-State Show Choir.	1 point per event
Student leadership in a music ensemble.	Officer or Section Leader of a performing ensemble.	.5 point per leadership role
Music Service Hours	Three service hours specifically done in music (Nursing Home and Senior Center performances; other as approved by music faculty in advance).	1 point
Service hours/year (REQUIRED for continued membership)	Service hours cannot be counted toward credit for any other club or honor society.	1 point
Written Critique	Live choral music performance (outside of the school day). Two-page double-spaced typed critique.	1 point each (limit 3 per year)

## CHORAL BOOSTERS CLUB

SHS Choir Program is funded ENTIRELY by student fees, CBC membership dues, and fundraising. There is a \$50 CBC dues per year for each student. The dues may be paid at the beginning of the fall semester or in two payments due at the beginning of each semester. Payment of CBC fees entitles you to up to two voting memberships (must be a parents/guardians of the student).

Some of our ongoing expenses include:

- purchasing and maintaining music
- renting a facility for two formal concerts each year
- securing accompanists for concerts and other performances
- paying for substitute teachers when the Director accompanies students to performances and on field trips
- transporting students to and from performances and contests
- paying registration fees for auditions, assessments, and competitions

In addition to these, our expanding program requires that we plan for the future by raising funds to purchase additional classroom equipment, replace or restore existing equipment, and update classroom technology.

Members of the Choral Boosters Club further support the choir by selling tickets at our Winter and Spring concerts and through CD/DVD sales of performances. They also supply chaperones for concerts and field trips and assist the Director with various administrative aspects of running the choral program.

Please complete the Choral Boosters Club Membership Form and return it with your dues by the deadline of **Friday, August 30, 2013.**