



2025 - 2026

Choir Handbook



River Valley Choir Singers and Families,

Welcome to the River Valley Middle School Choir program! We are so glad that you have chosen to be a part of these ensembles this year, and look forward to working with you as singers and as individuals throughout your time in middle school. With each singer, we strive everyday to engage in a holistic approach to singing and music, build strong relationships through collaboration and teamwork, and grow as individuals in respect, responsibility, and readiness.

The pages of this handbook are set to outline the following:

- 1. RVMS Choir Events**
- 2. RVMS Choir Expectations & Policies**
- 3. Any necessary student material or dues associated with participation in the RVMS choir program.**
- 4. Additional details about classroom practices, grading, and communication that are necessary to provide singers with a successful experience.**
- 5. Additional events, practices and communication for RVMS Choir.**

All singers and their families are responsible for understanding and abiding by each of the expectations offered through this handbook. If there are any questions, concerns, or needs for additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us!

It's going to be a fantastic year!

Christopher Orr, Head Director

Lauren Escalante, Associate Director

RVMS Choir Expectations

All students participating in the River Valley Choir program are expected to abide by the standards set forth by Midway Independent School District and the River Valley Middle School Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, students are expected to acknowledge and abide by the following choir classroom, performance, and rehearsal standards listed below.

Rehearsal and Classroom Expectations

The choral classroom provides each student an opportunity to grow in the musical knowledge and skills, cooperative performance, and collaboration necessary to be successful as a musician and choir member. Within the choral classroom, students are expected to maintain and promote a positive, engaging, and encouraging environment by following these individual expectations:

- Be in an assigned place when the bell rings with all daily materials.
- Listen and follow all directors' instructions.
- Use positive and appropriate actions and language.
- Show respect to all classmates and directors.
- Only water will be permitted in rehearsals.
- Technology must be in backpacks unless requested for class.

All classroom rehearsals are graded according to the Rehearsal Rubric. Students receive a weekly cumulative grade based on meeting the standards set in the "proficient" category as well as meeting the expectations listed above. Any actions or non-actions that would result in a reduced grade will be communicated prior to the weekly grade being entered.

Extra-Curricular Rehearsals

While we strive to primarily accomplish our concert, contest, and other musical preparations during our class time, it is occasionally necessary to hold additional rehearsals both in and outside of the school day.

Students are expected to be at all called rehearsals unless an absence is communicated and approved according to our [Conflict and Absence Policy](#). To the best of our ability, all student dates have been included on the River Valley Choir calendar for the school year. Any additional necessary rehearsals will be communicated in advanced notice through email.



Dress Rehearsal

For each anticipated concert, all performing ensembles will have a dress rehearsal. While not graded, dress rehearsals are considered mandatory for students, and any student with an unexcused absence from these rehearsals will be removed from the performance and expected to complete the [Performance Make-Up Assignment](#).

Performance Expectations

Concerts are the culmination of many weeks of preparation and classwork, and give students an opportunity to display their work and growth as musicians. Concerts are considered a part of the River Valley Choir curriculum, and attendance and participation in all concerts is mandatory and part of the student's grade. Grades are assessed through demonstration of the expectations outlined in the [River Valley Choir Performance Rubric](#). A concert is a unique experience associated with the choral classroom and cannot be replicated in the event of a student absence. With this in mind, any absence from a performance, approved or non-approved, must complete the [Performance Make-Up Assignment](#).

UIL Concert and Sight-Reading

The University Interscholastic League, UIL, organizes and hosts an adjudicated Concert and Sight-Reading event in the Spring semester. All students are expected to prepare for and participate in this event. This provides a wonderful opportunity for our students to showcase their skill set as ensemble members and receive feedback from highly recognized musicians on their concert performance and sight-reading abilities. Learn more about [UIL Concert & Sight-Reading](#) and our expectations of this event.

Showtime

Showtime is our final concert performance of the school year! This performance is full of singing, dancing, solos, and small groups. This themed concert is an opportunity for our students to show a different side of their musical talent and truly perform. This concert performance is a *ticketed event and a fundraiser for our choir program. To find out more about this year's Showtime performance, auditions, and more, read through our [Showtime Concert & Audition Information](#).

*Our showtime performance falls under the "No Pass No Play" guidelines of UIL. Students that are academically ineligible (maintaining a failing or incomplete grade in the previous 6 week period), are not permitted to perform in this event. For more information, read our [Academic Eligibility Expectations](#).



RVMS Choir Procedures

All RVMS Choir procedures have been considered and approved by River Valley Middle School administration and meet the goals and expectations of Midway ISD and River Valley. These procedures are in place to encourage success for all students and their choral ensembles as well as offering clarity and consistency in director's expectations and communication.

Conflict and Absence Policy

We are privileged to work with students who are gifted at and maintain commitments to several activities. We work to create an efficient and effective schedule to honor those commitments while maintaining excellence in our program. As our schedule of events is given well in advance of the events, students are expected to be at all scheduled rehearsals, events, and concert performances for their duration. Students needing to request a partial or whole absence for these dates must complete the [RVMS Choir Conflict Form](#). Student absences will be *approved or denied via email within one business day of submission. **Absences will only be approved if submitted through the Conflict Form.** Students with any absence must complete the [Rehearsal](#) or [Performance Make-Up Assignment](#) as appropriate.

**Absences will be approved in the following instances:*

- **Illness** - with an approved doctor's note
- **Emergency** - please communicate with the director via email or phone as soon as necessary absence is known.
- **School sponsored/UIIL events**
 - *This does not include practices. Often, we can make accommodations for students to attend multiple events when advance notice is given.*
- **Religious Observances**

Academic Eligibility

We believe that a student's priority is to maintain positive standing in all academic classes and activities. As a UIL organization, we are committed to following the "No Pass No Play" guidelines set forth by UIL, and students who do not maintain these standards may have extra-curricular performances, travel, and other opportunities withheld. Students in varsity level ensembles who are unable to maintain positive academic standing over consecutive grading periods risk removal from the ensemble.

**Directors have absolutely no discretion over students deemed academically ineligible.*



Grading Policy

We believe grades are a marker of student achievement and effort and should reflect a student's persistence and growth throughout the school year. RVMS Choir will strictly adhere to the [Grading Policy](#) adopted by Midway ISD. Please be familiar with these policies and read the following RVMS Choir Grading System to better understand how we align with and enact these expectations in our classroom.

Grades are assessed in the following categories and percentages:

- **Practice** | 30%
 - Weekly Rehearsal Grades - assigned according to [Rehearsal Rubric](#)
 - Ensemble Informal Assessment
- **Application** | 30%
 - Individual Performance Assessments: sight reading, rhythm reading, etc.
 - Solfege and Rhythmic Identification
 - Musical Terminology Assessment and Utilization
- **Evaluation** | 40%
 - Concert Performance
 - Vocal Evaluations

Make-Up Assignments

While there is no substitution for a choral performance or rehearsal, learners with absences from concerts and rehearsals will be required to complete a make-up assignment with similar requirements, determined by the content of the missed event. *Students with unexcused absences will be graded under the reassessment criteria in the Midway ISD grading policy.*

[Rehearsal Make - Up Assignment](#)

[Concert Make - Up Assignment](#)

Conferences

Our goal is to support and encourage all students who choose to be a part of our program. In order to do this for students who may struggle to meet class expectations, we will respond in the following manner:

First Conference - Student/Teacher conference and guardian notification

Second Conference - Student/Teacher/Guardian conference

Third Conference - Student/Teacher/Guardian/Administrator conference

Future disciplinary action will be handled by administration according to RVMS and Midway ISD policy.



RVMS Choir Operations

The following items are considered necessary for the success of the River Valley Choir Program. We have carefully considered each of the following criteria, and have had each procedure approved by the River Valley administration.

Choir Dues

All RVMS Choir Members will have a one-time choir due at the beginning of the school year with the amount dependent upon the student's ensemble placement:

- Chorale (7/8 Varsity) | \$35
- Combined Choirs (7/8 Non-Varsity) | \$35
- Beginning Choirs (6th Grade) | \$20
- Required Choir T-Shirt (all grades) | \$10

Dues must be submitted by/at Get Fit Day through [online payment](#). Choir uniforms will not be distributed to students until payment is received. We never want finances to limit student opportunities for participation in any choral ensemble or event. If a payment plan or financial aid is necessary for student participation, please contact Megan Gackle.

*See our [Choir Dues Breakdown](#) for more information on what these dues support.

Fundraising

All RVMS Choir Members are asked to participate in fundraising events during the school year. These fundraisers are completed to create musical and travel opportunities for all students and create a scholarship fund for students in need of financial aid for choir events and dues. For more information about these fundraising opportunities, please see our [Fundraiser Information](#) for this school year.

Additional Expenses

Throughout the school year, there are optional events for all singers that may require additional expense for participation. These events are often externally sponsored and may have multiple or fluctuating costs.

To the best of our ability, these are included with the information about these events.



Uniforms

As a display of unity, togetherness, and professionalism, River Valley choral ensembles are expected to perform in a consistent and simple uniform. We strive to address uniforms in a manner that is neat, accessible, and appropriate for the performance occasion and student experience. Students will be expected to follow all following uniform guidelines, formal and informal, for performances.

Uniform requirements differ between performing ensembles. Please see the appropriate checklist for you/your singer's ensemble for the full uniform requirements, both formal and informal:

Treble Singers:

- [Chorale Treble Choir Uniform](#) -
- [Combined Choir Treble Uniform](#) -
- [6th Grade Choir Treble Uniform](#) -

Tenor/Bass Singers:

- [Chorale Tenor/Bass Choir Uniform](#) -
- [Combined Choir Tenor/Bass Uniform](#) -
- [6th Grade Choir Tenor/Bass Uniform](#) -

**Any uniform or uniform piece returned at the end of the year with damages must be replaced at the expense of the student and/or their guardian(s). Please follow all instructions to appropriately care for these uniforms while in your possession.*

Travel

Each RVMS Choir ensemble will participate in performances, rehearsals, and activities that will require student travel via school provided transportation. Student travel is considered an extension of the RVMS Campus and all MISD, RVMS, and RVMS Choir student expectations will be strictly enforced while traveling. All travel dates have been indicated on the [RVMS Choir Calendar](#), and communication regarding each trip will be sent to the necessary ensemble members and their families prior to the trip date. Should a family prefer an alternate method of transportation to or returning from any event where school transportation is provided, they must provide an [Alternate Transportation Form](#) for the necessary event.

**In order to travel on school provided transportation, each student must have a [Field Trip Permission form](#) on file with the RVMS Choir directors.*

Forms

All necessary forms for participation in the RVMS Choir program must be returned to the directors by Get Fit Day. These forms are available in the [RVMS Choir Handbook Forms](#) folder or can be retrieved from the choir room in paper format. All forms are expected to be signed and returned in digital format.

