

## Introduction

**Materials** include school owned musical scores/octavos. Also each NHS Choir student will be provided with a three-ring binder. The binder and musical scores/octavos will remain the property of the Portage Northern High School Choir Department. Bringing a pencil, choir binder and student planner to each class/rehearsal will be the responsibility of the choir student. All other materials will be provided.

**Binders and Music:** Our binders of music are the equivalent to other classes' textbooks. We must take care of them so that generations to come may use them also. Music is not consumable. The School has provided each student with original copies of their vocal music. If the student loses or damages choir music, the student's family will reimburse the school \$2.00 per original copy of music. The student must have these materials with them each day. Each day without their binder and music will cause a loss of a portion of the days active engagement points (see below).

**Objective:** Special emphasis is placed on the promotion of healthy singing, excellence in performance, music literacy, sight singing including the use of solfège and Curwen hand signs, introductory knowledge of the piano keyboard, music composition, critical music listening skills, music mapping, and written expression. Teaching strategies and media will include vocal modeling, instructor and student lead instruction, small group cooperative learning, kinesthetics, student composition of word and music, keyboard modeling, audio recordings, video recordings, two and three dimensional works of art, live performances, the appearance of guest musicians/artists, guest clinicians, attendance of Portage North Middle School choir performances and rehearsals when possible.

**Technology:** There will be significant emphasis on the incorporation of technology including web based music literacy software, Voiceprint™ Software, Google Voice, digital piano with MIDI Interface and USB capability, audio and video recording technology, and internet based sight reading software/generators. Estill Voice International says, "Voiceprint™ is a real-time spectral analysis program that can record, analyze, and play back the voice. Highlights include real-time pitch tracking, dual screen option for matching voice models, and spectrogram or power spectrum analyses. Voiceprint™ provides spectacular and meaningful feedback about pitch and voice quality to the singer, teacher, clinician, and voice patient that is sure to enhance the learning and rehabilitation process."

**Teaching strategies and media** will include vocal modeling, student centered inquiry, instructor and student lead discussion, small and large group cooperative learning, written and verbal reflection, kinesthetics, student composition of word and music, keyboard modeling, audio recordings, video recordings, two and three dimensional works of art, live performances, the appearance of guest musicians/artists, guest clinicians, and attendance of Portage North Middle School performances and rehearsals when possible.

**Safe Environment:** The lessons and projects in this class will be presented in a safe environment. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated, and the students and teachers will work hard to provide a welcoming environment for this performance class. Because this class presents skills and knowledge of a performance medium, vocal music, individuals will participate alone and in groups to practice the skills specific to this kind of work. Safety and respect will also extend to our facilities and equipment. Great care will be taken to care for and preserve the wonderful learning and performance spaces, instruments and technology that we have been allowed to use.

**Bathroom and Hall Passes:** please see the Student Handbook for policies concerning passes.

**Dismissal:** The instructor, not the bell, will dismiss the students from their seats.

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## **Assessment and Grading**

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed in many ways. Students will be asked to present constructive critiques and praises of others performances as well as their own. The instructor will also provide helpful guidance and demonstrate the skills discussed in class. Students may have little or much knowledge of the subject area; it is important for each student to put forth their best effort and advance their skills at a reasonable rate.

**Grading:** In a class such as this, the final grade will be an average of active engagement points, Focus Correction Areas assessed weekly, assessment of individual or small group vocal performance which could include sight singing, completion of class projects, verbal or written responses to performances, recordings, samples of visual art, or other appropriate stimuli. Assessments will also include participation in NHS Choir Concerts and Choral Festivals, worksheets or other projects related to vocal performance, music literacy assessments, sight singing or any other subject important to the study of music and the creation of well-rounded individuals. Each assignment will have a predetermined number of points possible or other grading device assigned (rubric). The total points earned by the student divided by the total number of possible points will determine the student's final grade in this class.

**Active Engagement:** (3 points per week) Each student will need to participate actively in class each day to the satisfaction of the instructor. Each week each student has the opportunity to earn three points.

- active participation in singing, moving, answering questions, etc.
- following instructor's directions willingly; efficient use of class time
- respectful behavior of classmates, instructor, facilities, and equipment
- bringing music and binder to class/rehearsal
- bringing a pencil and student planner to class/rehearsal

If a student is asked to leave the classroom after a warning, the student forfeits that day's active engagement points. The student will report to their grade level office for consequences.

**Weekly Focus Correction Area:** (3 points per week) Each student will be assessed once a week on a weekly focus correction area which will include but not be limited to posture, breathing, diction, tone, mouth shape, rhythmic accuracy/steady beat, or pitch accuracy.

**Concerts and after school rehearsals:** Concerts and after school rehearsals are a mandatory part of each student's experience in choir and an important measurement of the student's understanding and growth. Each student's understanding of the material taught in class is assessed (graded) during the evening concerts much like a major exam in another class. Each student will stay for the entire after school rehearsal as well as the concert and the warm-up period before it. When a student misses a concert or rehearsal, these missed points will not be able to be made up unless the student's absence was caused by an illness or emergency. The student must bring a parent note describing the illness or emergency. Mr. Jordan will then decide if the absence is excused or unexcused. If it is excused, the student can make arrangements with Mr. Jordan to complete a research project and written essay of two typed pages in length. This project will focus on a musical topic determined by Mr. Jordan with input from the student and will make up for the points lost by the student's absence. If a concert or festival performance is missed, in addition to the written essay the student will record

all of their vocal parts from that concert or festival performance and send to Mr. Jordan via email. Mr. Jordan can provide a digital recorder for the student to use at school during choir class for this purpose. If the make-up project is not completed by the end of the nine week marking period during which the absence occurred, the student will lose these points.

An effort will be made to keep concerts running smoothly and as briefly as possible. See the Choir Calendar for more information on choir concerts dates and times. In the highly unlikely event that any performances are added to the choir calendar, the students involved will need to obtain parent permission in order to attend, and their inability to attend one of these added concerts will not harm the student's grade. Once a student has committed to participate in one of these added performances with their parent's written consent, the student should see the commitment to its completion and participate to the fullest of their ability. Thank you in advance for your help in promoting safe and orderly concerts.

**Concert Etiquette:** Please follow this link to learn more about how members of the audience should behave at concerts. [http://www.neenah.k12.wi.us/cms\\_files/resources/Concert%20Etiquette.pdf](http://www.neenah.k12.wi.us/cms_files/resources/Concert%20Etiquette.pdf)

**Arranging Project:** Students will arrange a pop song for a Capella voices one or two times during the school year. Please see my Google Site for more information on this exciting project. <http://rjordan.site.portageps.org/>

**Grading Scale:** refer to the Student Handbook for the grading scale.

Homework Policy: care will be taken to not overburden a student's homework load. Most assignments will be completed in class, but occasionally work will need to be completed at home.

**Late and Missing Homework Policies:** Please refer to the section on "Concerts" for the make-up policy concerning performance and rehearsal attendance. All other homework or projects given during the year will have a due date.

**Extra Credit:** There will be opportunities throughout the year for students to earn extra credit. They may take on many forms, but one that will always be in effect is this. Students will receive extra credit (point total to be determined by the instructor) for attending art shows, plays, musicals, concerts, dance recitals or other activities where an artistic form of expression is the main event. Extra credit assignments are due by the end of the Marking Period during which the performance was attended. The points from these efforts will be assigned to the same Marking Period during which the performance was attended. No extra credit will be given for performances attended during the Summer break. If the student is a participant in the event, they may receive extra credit for one of the performances of the same work of art. The sponsors of these events include but are not limited to the following: any of the area high schools or middle schools, community or professional theatres, musicians in concert or recital, visual artisans presenting exhibits of their work, dancers in concert or recital or similar artistic organizations or artists. This does not include the shortened performances that the students enjoy during the school day a.k.a. "teasers." This extra effort to experience art outside of the school day is worthy of extra credit and can help offset low grades with the exception of unexcused absences from performance assessments at concerts and choral festivals. These will not be able to be made up. Extra credit will not be applied to missing an AE performance assessment. See the section on Aesthetic Education for more information.

The student must turn-in a program, flyer, or other documentation from the event plus a written reflection of the experience (minimum of 100 words) to Mr. Jordan for credit. Sometimes the amount of this credit will be determined ahead of time, or Mr. Jordan will assign an amount of extra points for the activity at his discretion.

Mr. Jordan will determine if the event attended constitutes an event where art is the main focus, e.g. seeing the Marching Band at a football game does not constitute an event where art is the main focus.

Students can earn make up credit for a maximum of two rehearsal performance assessments each nine weeks. Again, students cannot earn make up credit for missing concert performance assessments.

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## **Aesthetic Education**

**Education for the Arts - Aesthetic Education:** The NHS Choirs actively integrate Aesthetic Education into their curriculum. Aesthetic Education is an educational philosophy and practice in which students further develop their capacities for observation, analysis, questioning, and meaning making through hands-on workshops designed around professional works of art that the students will experience. Through Aesthetic Education students will be able to deeply engage with and experience works of art while also making connections to their personal lived experiences, the outside world, and beyond. <http://www.efa-rep.org/ae>

There are performances by professional performing artists that culminate the 2-3 AE Units of Study each year. These performances are required for NHS Choir students to attend and are scheduled during the school day. Students will complete a performance assessment following the performance which will include group discussion and written reflection. School bus transportation and tickets will be supplied to the students free of charge. Make up assignments for students who miss these performances will only be given if a student misses the performance due to illness or IB, SAT or MSTEP testing that cannot be rescheduled. If Mr. Jordan excuses a student from attending an AE performance, they will be granted an opportunity to make up the missed points. They may choose to either attend an evening performance of the same group if one is offered at the student's own expense, or complete a research project of the performer in question including a 1000 word research paper and an oral presentation to the class summarizing their research. This make up assignment must be completed by the end of the nine weeks during which the performance was scheduled. These assignments will be graded by Mr. Jordan and applied to the missing performance assessment grade.

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## **Michigan School Vocal Music Association**

**MSVMA Activities:** Portage Northern High School is a member of the Michigan School Vocal Music Association and participates in many of the activities sponsored by this organization.

**Honors Choir:** The format of the Michigan High School Honors Choir requires that students prepare and perform (without accompaniment) a selected piece via an online audition. Information regarding how to submit your audition is available in the choir classroom. The fee to submit an online audition for Honor's Choir is \$25.00, payable via credit card online at the time of the submission. This year's Honors Choir audition piece is available from Mr. Jordan in the choir room. Students are assigned a point score and the names of those who are selected are e-mailed to the directors one week after the online submission deadline. If selected for membership in one of four Regional Honors Choirs, students prepare several additional pieces and gather for a clinic/performance in December at Western Michigan University. Each student is again tested for preparation on this day, and following the performance, those who qualify for State Honors Choir are announced. Selected students at the four regional sites will be placed in an SATB, SSAA, or TTBB State Honors Choir which will perform at the Michigan Music Conference in Grand Rapids in January. Selected students from the State Honors Choirs will advance to the All-State Honors Choir. All State Honors Choir performs in May at the Michigan Youth Arts Festival at Western Michigan University.

Responsibility for learning honors choir music rests with the student. At least two hour long private lessons with Sara Emerson, the PNHS Choirs' preferred voice teacher, are required of all students wishing to audition for Honors Choir. If a student is already studying with another private voice teacher, only one hour with Ms. Emerson is required. Students are responsible for the cost of these lessons. Costs for participation in Honors

Choir activities are the responsibility of the student. In most cases, overnight stay in a hotel is required for participation in some Honors Choir events. Each student participating must have a parent willing to pay for the cost of the hotel and stay with them in the hotel as Mr. Jordan is unable to chaperone. Further details can be found on a separate Honors Choir Information document available in the choir room.

**Solo and Ensemble Festivals** is for soloists and choirs totaling 20 members or less. Students prepare two approved pieces in contrasting style for a rating or may sing for comments only. No sight singing is required at the district level. Students who wish to participate in Solo and Ensemble Festivals must complete at least four hours of private study prior to each festival with a voice teacher, preferably Sara Emerson, the PNHS Choirs' preferred voice teacher. Any student receiving a first division rating qualifies for participation in State Solo and Ensemble Festival in April. Mr. Jordan is not able to attend State S and E due to the NMS Musical and therefore unable to chaperone. Sight reading is required at State Festival. Soloists are responsible for entry fees, hiring an accompanist, and possibly transportation to festivals. In most cases, each student is responsible for paying the entry/accompanist fees for ensembles. Soloist and small ensemble participants who earn a first or second division rating may purchase a medal for \$4.00 at the event.

**Choral Festival** is for choirs of 17 or more members. District Festival will be held in March. Choirs prepare two selections of contrasting nature and will be required to sight read as a group.

**District Choral Festival Attendance:** Each year the NHS Choir students will participate in District Choral Festival. This is a chance for the choirs and instructor to receive helpful guidance and praise concerning vocal performance from leading conductors and teachers in the field. It is required for each NHS Choir student to be at this performance like any other concert. Details concerning this performance will be sent home in February. See the Choir Calendar for this event date. It may occur during the school day or after. The school will provide bus transportation to District Choral Festival.

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## Uniforms

**Uniforms:** a uniform will be provided by the School for PNHS Choir students to use during performances. If a choir student is also involved in band or orchestra, the music department will coordinate who is responsible for providing the student's uniform. Each student is also responsible for providing part of their uniform.

The school will provide the following:

Women: Full length dress, garment bag

Men: Black tuxedo jacket, trousers, bow tie, cummerbund, white tux shirt, garment bag

Students are required to provide the following:

Women: Closed-toe, black dress shoes with a heel of 1" or less and black stockings

Men: Black shoes and black socks

A uniform fee of \$25.00 will be collected at the beginning of the year. This will help offset the department's cost of end of year cleaning and replacing worn uniforms. Uniforms are to be kept in the garment bag at the student's home. 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> grade students will return their uniform and garment bag for cleaning after their performance at graduation. 12<sup>th</sup> grade students will return their uniform and garment bag for cleaning following the Spring Concert.

If the uniform requires cleaning during the year, it is the student's responsibility to launder or have it dry cleaned according to the instructions on the label. All trousers and dresses are to be appropriately hemmed. Never cut off any fabric. No safety pins, staples, or hem tape are to be used. If you need help with hemming, please ask Mr. Jordan for names of tailors.

Men's shirts should be machine laundered after each performance.

**Remember**, students must wear hair pulled back from the face and refrain from wearing necklaces, bracelets, hair accessories or large earrings when in uniform. Small earrings and small watches may be worn with the uniform. Please refrain from wearing cologne, perfume or other scents. Students are responsible for lost or damaged uniforms while in their possession. Students in an incomplete, soiled, or wrinkled uniform may not be allowed to perform.

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## **Choral Ensembles and Auditions**

**Ensembles:** Concert Choir is a non-auditioned mixed ensemble. Women's Ensemble and Songleader's Chorale are both auditioned ensembles of 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. There will be an afterschool choir for men that will meet once a week after school beginning during in the Fall on a date to be announced. More information on this after school choir can be found below.

**Final exam/Audition for upper level ensembles:** the final exam for Semester 1 will serve as the audition for the upper level ensembles for the following school year. This a Capella exam will include the following: students will

- perform alone an intermediate sight reading example provided by Mr. Jordan preferably on Solfege
- natural, harmonic and melodic minor scales (one octave each)
- a one octave chromatic scale on solfege,
- a song from one of that semester's choir concert as chosen by Mr. Jordan

The results of these auditions will be posted in Semester II. Changes to these lists could still happen before the beginning of the next school year at the discretion of Mr. Jordan and could involve considerations such as the students hard working attitude, behavior in their choir classes, vocal health, vocal skills, balance between voices in the choirs, etc.

**Remember**, a student may be demoted to a lower choir the following semester if they miss a concert performance.

**Men's Ensemble:** Mr. Jordan will be forming one extra-curricular choral ensemble this year for PNHS students depending on interest and best educational practices. Men's Ensemble will meet on Wednesdays after school. The students who audition for this ensemble must be able to attend a 60 - 90 minute rehearsal once a week beginning at 3 PM that school is in session beginning in the Fall. There is not a set size for this group and admittance to the group will be determined by a hard working attitude, behavior in their regular classes, vocal health, vocal skill, and a vocal audition. Once a student has joined the group, attendance is mandatory. Poor behavior or poor attendance (two unexcused absences) will result in a parent/teacher meeting or phone call, and if the problems do not improve the student will be removed from the group for the rest of the school year. For attendance policies, please see the "Concerts" section of this document. This ensemble will perform on regularly scheduled choir concerts when appropriate. Attendance and performance in these evening concerts is required of these students. Please see the attendance policies for concerts above.

**Remember**, Songleader Men may be demoted to Concert Choir if they have two or more unexcused absences from Men's Ensemble rehearsals or performances.

### **Songleader's Chorale and their responsibility to tutor our younger singers:**

**"Those who know, do. Those who understand, teach." - Aristotle**

**"Of those to whom much is given, much is required." - John F. Kennedy**

Songleader's Chorale men must participate in the after school Men's Ensemble, and their performance and attendance at these rehearsals and performances will be assessed and part of their choir grade. During these rehearsals they will help educate the men in skills of performance, solfege, sight reading, the music currently being studied, choreography, etc.

The Songleader's Chorale women will work with one or more women from Concert Choir or Women's Ensemble each nine weeks to help them grow as performing artists. This may take on many forms, but could include tutoring them in skills of performance, solfege, sight reading, the music currently being studied, choreography, etc. Working on choreography or other performance skills with the choir students in the musical, straight play, forensics or Cabaret can also be applied here. Each group formed must meet a minimum of three hours each nine weeks and will be graded as a rehearsal performance assessment. Extra hours can be banked earlier in the year to apply to later nine weeks requirements.

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## Other Items

**Private Lessons:** All choir students are highly encouraged to take private voice lessons. This is a requirement for students wishing to participate as a soloist at Solo and Ensemble Festival. For those students wishing to audition for Honors Choir, a minimum of two hours of private lessons with Sara Emerson, the PNHS Choirs preferred voice teacher, are required, and students are responsible for this cost. Information on area private voice teachers is available by request to Mr. Jordan.

**Choir Parent Volunteers:** Parent involvement is essential to the success of the Choral Program. You will be notified via email and Sign Up Genius® in advance of volunteer opportunities. Parents are encouraged help out in a variety of ways.

**Fundraising:** Raising money is an essential part of maintaining an excellent program. Funds raised in the past have been used to purchase choir uniforms, equipment, recordings, conference fees, and help defer the costs of choir trips. It is understood that a student's' primary responsibility is to sing, not fundraise, and they will be kept to a minimum.

**Choir Patron:** If you are interested in making a contribution to the Portage Northern Choirs, please make checks payable to Portage Public Schools. All donations, no matter their size, are greatly appreciated!

**Contact:** You may contact Mr. Jordan preferably via e-mail at [rjordan@portageps.org](mailto:rjordan@portageps.org) with any questions, concerns or praises. Thank you for your involvement in your child's education!

**Google Site:** more information and regular updates can be found on my Google Site at this link.

<http://rjordan.site.portageps.org/>