

**2025-2026**  
**R.J. Murray Middle School**  
**Choir Handbook**  
***“One Team, No Limits”***



## **Introduction:**

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the R.J. Murray Middle School Chorus program!

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you information regarding the chorus program at R.J. Murray Middle School. In this handbook you will find information regarding:

- Grading & Performance Expectations
- Required Rehearsals & Additional Performance Opportunities
- Concert Attire
- Fair Share & Fundraising

I look forward to having a wonderful year working with all of you and continuing to build the R.J. Murray Middle School Choral Program. One Team, No Limits!

Sincerely,

## **Christina Shore**

Christina.Shore@stjohns.k12.fl.us

SJCCA Choral Music Director

R.J. Murray Middle School

## **General Information:**

SJCCA Chorus is a **performance-based** singing class at Murray MS. The chorus program is designed to allow the students an opportunity to sing a vast array of different styles of music in a variety of genres and languages. The content is meant to challenge the students' skill levels and promote the development of musicianship.

“One Team, No Limits!” Chorus is the best example of student's individual parts coming together to create beautiful harmonies! We are all part of the same team, working toward the goal of becoming better musicians. Every student matters! As the saying goes “you are only as great as your weakest link” so here in the Murray Choral Program we push everyone up to be the best they can be!

Chorus is a privilege. We are representing R.J. Murray MS both at school and in the community. Students are held to high standards and must follow the school's code of conduct. Failure to follow the code of conduct will result in disciplinary actions and can lead to expulsion from the SJCCA Chorus program.

**\*\* Learning goals are derived from the Florida Standards for Middle School Chorus as well as the St. Johns County curriculum maps for MS Chorus and CPALMS.\*\***

## **Why Chorus?**

I could give a dissertation on this topic, but to spare you the time, here are some of the top reasons why chorus is a great choice for any student!

- To build and expand upon one's creative capacity. The study of music entails the acquisition of skills followed by their application in many different styles/genres. This develops creative problem-solving skills which are applicable in many different subjects/situations. Children who study music are proven to have better test scores/grades in ALL subject areas!
- Music is a universal language! Music is part of what makes us human. Music communicates ideas, feelings, and emotions where words fail. Students will learn how to understand and converse using this language by listening and singing a vast array of different styles and genres during their years in chorus.
- The pursuit of any craft/vocation develops vital character virtues. To progress in the study of music, one must learn perseverance and to be disciplined, coachable, patient, and genuine.
- Chorus is a group effort! The values of cooperation, communication, accountability, and time management are present during every practice, rehearsal, and performance. These are valuable life skills for any career!
- It's just downright fun! You will make lifelong friends and create memories you will never forget!

## **Does My Child Need to Know How to Read Music to Join?**

Not at all! All music literacy skills will be taught in beginning and advanced chorus throughout the year. Students will be learning how to read and sing both rhythmic and melodic phrases using solfege. Students will also learn how to navigate sheet music as they become familiar with learning the musical language.

## **Sheet Music & Folder:**

Chorus has no required books for the year. Here at Murray, we have a vast music library with many vocal pieces that I will use throughout the year. Fair share monies will also be used to purchase more sheet music to grow our library with fresh literature. **You child will be required to bring in 1 black 3 ring binder to hold their music. This folder must be exactly 1 inch and may not have a clear cover. Your child will also need a pencil pouch and pencils to keep in this folder. The pouch will be necessary to hold bathroom passes and see to it that your child is prepared with a writing utensil while in class.** Uniformity is very important in case we need to use our music notebooks for a concert. Please be prepared to provide a black binder for your child no later than August 16<sup>th</sup>. If you have financial difficulties providing this folder, please make me aware and I will be able to assist you.

## **Concert Attire/Uniforms:**

**Beginning Chorus** – You will need to provide your child black dress pants, black closed-toe dress shoes, flats, or heels (no higher than 1 inch) and black socks or hose. Students will be provided with a green polo shirt that will be required to be tucked into their pants. Green polo shirts will be distributed before each concert. After each concert, please launder your child's shirt and return it back to school for inventory. No flashy jewelry is to be worn during concerts; however, students may wear small, studded earrings if they have piercings that cannot be taken out of their ears. Certain exceptions are made for special circumstances, so please do not hesitate to ask me if you have any concerns about our uniform. Hair should be pulled back off your child's face so we can see them sing.

**Advanced Chorus** – Students will be provided a black dress or tuxedo pants, shirt, bowtie, and cummerbund if they are a member of advanced chorus. Uniforms will be kept, in house, until the day before the concert. After each concert, you may launder your child's uniform and have them bring it back to school for inventory. You will need to provide your child black closed-toe dress shoes, flats or heels (no higher than 1 inch) and black socks or hose. No flashy jewelry is to be worn during concerts; however, students may wear small, studded earrings if they have piercings that cannot be taken out of their ears. Certain exceptions are made for special circumstances, so please do not hesitate to ask me if you have any concerns about our uniform. Hair should be pulled back off your child's face so we can see them sing.

**\*\*Please follow the R.J. Murray School Dress code for hair & makeup. Keep in mind these guidelines are in place to ensure you can play your sing in an ensemble without being a distraction to the overall performance. \*\***

## **Fair Share:**

Our SJCCA Chorus program operates almost entirely on a budget which is supported by the Chorus "Fair Share" Fee. This Fair Share fee helps cover the costs of purchasing new sheet music, uniform items, awards, transportation, equipment, and staff/student professional development beyond what funds are provided by the school/district.

**The Fair Share fee is \$50 for each child in chorus.**

*No student will be denied the opportunity to participate in Chorus due to inability to pay the fair share fee. Please do not hesitate to contact Mrs. Shore if you need to make a payment plan or are unable to pay. Please try to provide your payments by September 2nd. You may pay by cash, check or QR code, provided below. Please make sure you provide your child's full name when paying so that I can keep track of payments.*

## **Grading Overview:**

- 80% - Summative Assessments
  - Required Rehearsals (Make-up assignment for emergency cases)
  - Required Performances (Make-up assignment for emergency cases)
- 20%
  - Informal Assessments of Student Understanding
  - Performing in Daily Class Rehearsals (This includes behavior).

**\*Please note that rehearsals and performances are mandatory. Look at the calendar in advance and save those dates. SJCCA Chorus is a performance-based class. If you are unable to attend performances, please consider changing your class. Make-up assignments will be given if your child gets sick or an emergency arises.**

## **Class Behavior:**

At the beginning of each semester, students will be given 5 bathroom passes that will be housed in their black folder pencil pouches. These are their bathroom passes for each nine weeks. If your child needs to use the restroom during class, they may hand in one of their cards that has their name on it and proceed to the restroom in the A hallway. Once their 5 passes are utilized, they may no longer be excused during class time.

At the beginning of each week, students will have 5 performance cards in their black folders. Students will be required to turn in a card if they are:

- Disrupting the learning environment
- Not participating in classroom activities
- Chewing gum or eating in class (this is a safety issue)
- Have their cell phones out during class (Cell phones will be turned into the office)
- Not following classroom rituals and routines; example: not getting music folders at the beginning of class or not putting away music folders after class
- Not being respectful to their classmates
- Not adhering to teacher attention getting signals and cues
- Talking over teacher instruction (I am one voice over classes as big as 50 students. Active listening is crucial to my vocal health).

Every Friday, I will be putting a performance etiquette grade in the gradebook. For every performance card that your child turns into me, 5 performance points will be deducted from their weekly grade. If a student refuses to turn in a red card when asked, an e-mail will be sent home to notify the parents of this behavior. A history of poor etiquette grades can result in referrals, parent/teacher conference and possible dismissal from the SJCCA Choral Program.

Positive behavior interventions will also be in place in the choral classroom. Students will be rewarded with DOJO points to use for the school store for exemplary behavior and kindness.

## **Performances:**

Chorus is a performance-based class. Students are required to attend and participate in concerts and dress rehearsals throughout the year. These concerts are graded as a Summative Assessment. Students should arrive no later than call time and are required to stay through the entire concert (even if they are done singing).

Mrs. Shore will provide advance notice of any concert coming up with multiple reminders. If for any reason a student/family has an emergency and will not be able to attend, a make-up assignment will be provided. It will be due 1 week after the concert date. Please give Mrs. Shore advance notice if you know you will not be able to attend. Also, please take time to look at the SJCCA calendar. If you already know that your child will not be able to fulfill these requirements, a schedule change for your child.

Please invite your friends and family to performances, these are meant to show off your talented student's hard work! Let's pack the house and show them how proud we are of them!!

## **Rehearsals:**

There will be 3 mandatory after school rehearsals that are part of the Summative Performance Concert grade. These will take place before a semester concert (Winter, MPA, & Spring Concerts). Mrs. Shore will provide advance notice of when they will take place and will provide multiple reminders. They are also listed on the SJCCA calendar and on Schoology, so save those dates and times. These after school rehearsals are integral to the success of our concerts. Riser placements and logistics are worked out during this time.

**\*\*Students in Beginning Choir will not perform at MPA, but will perform at the Pre-MPA concert. \*\***

## **Homework:**

Due to this being a performance class, written assignments are seldom assigned and are often not used in this class as homework. This DOES NOT mean that there is no homework!

Practice outside of normal band class is essential for the growth and development of all musicians (even the biggest of superstars still practice). Please help your child understand that practicing at home is equivalent to doing homework in any other subject. Parents, please allow your student to practice at home! You will be amazed at what a difference even 10 minutes a night can make! I will post practice tracks on Schoology for your child to sing along with.

## **Classwork:**

In the event a substitute teacher is required, students will be asked to do a written assignment. Failure to complete the assignment will result in a 0% in the gradebook, as well as an e-mail home.

## **Fundraising:**

Students will be participating in a fundraising event in the Fall. **Participation is highly encouraged but not required.** If your child is intending on auditioning for All-State, More information will be sent home to notify you of when fundraising begins. Thank you, in advance, for helping me to grow our choral music program here at Murray.

## **Schoology:**

Each week, I will post our weekly class agenda on Schoology. I will also add important dates and rehearsals to the calendar for easy access. Schoology will also be a place where students can access practice tracks to rehearse at home. Be sure to check in once a week so that you can keep in the loop of choir news.

## **Acknowledgement Forms:**

Please sign and return the next 2 pages of this document at return to Mrs. Shore by August 29<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I cannot wait to showcase your child's talents this year as a member of SJCCA's Murray Middle School Chorus.

## **Chorus Handbook Acknowledgement Form:**

Please complete this form and pay the Fair Share contribution Mrs. Shore by August 29, 2025.

Families with more than one student in Chorus must complete and submit a SEPARATE form for each student.

**We have read the R.J. Murray Middle School Chorus Handbook and understand the requirements and responsibilities of participating in the program.**

**We understand that it is the parent's responsibility to provide their student with a 1 inch black folder without the clear cover as well as a pencil pouch and pencil.**

**We understand that there are a handful of performances outside the school day, and attendance at these performances and rehearsals will be required and are a Summative Assessment grade.**

Parent/Guardian Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Student/Parent/Guardian Information:**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian #2 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number #1 \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number #2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Social Media** – SJCCA uses social media to share some of the happenings in our programs with the parents and community. Please check here if you DO NOT want your child in SJCCA posts: \_\_\_\_\_