



**STERLING CHOIR HANDBOOK**  
**2022-2023**

Mr. Dylan Fornshell | Director

Welcome to the 2022-2023 season of the Sterling Choir Department at Ross S. Sterling High School! We are excited to provide a platform of performance, challenge, and growth. This handbook is established to inform and further advocate for the continued success of all singers.

Please join us at the Fall Open House when we will further discuss this handbook following the initial activities. This document may be viewed on our website; you may also request a paper copy.

#### Director Information

Dylan Fornshell, Head Director  
Dylan.Fornshell@gccisd.net  
281-420-2500 ext. 84425

Person Two, Associate Director  
Email will go here  
281.420.2500 ext. 84525

Conference  
8th Period: 2:30pm-3:15pm

## Mission Statement

Sterling Choir strives to produce young artists of high-level musicianship and citizenship.

## Vision Statement

Singers in Sterling Choir will impact their world as compassionate, critical, and creative influencers through choral music. Through participation and performance, these individuals will foster life-long appreciation and support for the arts.

### I. Choir Goals

- A. Establish a healthy vocal tone and consistency of vocal technique
- B. Develop musicianship through singing, theory, artistic interpretation, and expression
- C. Demonstrate high-level art in a variety of settings and performances
- D. Cultivate community, compassion, and critical thought in our interactions and responses to others

### II. Student Expectations

- A. Choir is equivalent to the function of athletic teams. Active and consistent participation by every member is required in rehearsals and at performances at all times. In addition, the majority of grades taken in choir reflect a student's active participation in combination with a positive attitude toward the task at hand.
- B. Stay attentive to communication of choir announcements and events
- C. Be in compliance with all GCCISD and Sterling HS policies regarding student conduct and dress code. **These Policies remain in effect as we travel.**
- D. Remain academically eligible throughout the school year.
- E. Meet all deadlines for turn-ins and call times.

## **Sterling Choirs**

### **Tenor-Bass Choir**

**Prerequisite:** Open to all tenor-bass students, Grades 9-12

Students in this ensemble focus primarily on the development of healthy singing tone, music fundamentals, sight singing skills, musicianship, and artistic singing. Singers will perform at all concerts and at the UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Assessment. Attention to rehearsal etiquette and performance standards will daily be enforced.

### **Concert Treble**

**Prerequisite:** By audition and director discretion, Grades 9-12

Students in this ensemble presently possess a healthy vocal tone. Intermediate skills of music fundamentals, sight singing, musicianship, and artistic singing are developing. This ensemble will explore more advanced literature and musicianship skills. Singers will perform at all concerts and at the UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Assessment. Students should be accustomed to the Sterling Choir rehearsal etiquette and performance standard.

### **Reverb**

**Prerequisite:** By audition and director discretion; must be a member of another ensemble as well; Grades 9-12

This ensemble is designed for singers with marked proficiency in a developed vocal tone and sight singing skills. Students will sing and dance at various performances. This ensemble is expected to demonstrate flexibility in scheduling as they are often called upon to perform at area events. The highest level of commitment to the study of choral music and performances is expected. Members of Reverb are automatically members of the Sterling Chorale.

## **Meistersingers**

**Prerequisite:** By audition and director discretion; Grades 9-12

Students in this ensemble presently possess a strong and healthy vocal tone in addition to refined skills of music literacy, sight singing, and artistry. Singers in this ensemble are required to perform at all concerts and at UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Assessment. The highest level of commitment to the study of choral music and performances is expected. The performance schedule for this group is subject to change, in which the director will notify parents and students in advance.

## **Cantus**

**Prerequisite:** Open to all treble students, Grades 9-12

Students in this ensemble focus primarily on the development of healthy singing tone, music fundamentals, sight singing skills, musicianship, and artistic singing. Singers will perform at all concerts and at the UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Assessment. Attention to rehearsal etiquette and performance standards will daily be enforced.

## **Sterling Chorale**

**Prerequisite:** By audition and director discretion, Grades 9-12

This ensemble is the competition ensemble of the Sterling Choirs. This ensemble is designed for singers with marked proficiency in developed vocal tone and sight-singing skills. The highest level of commitment to the study of choral music and performances is expected. This ensemble meets once a week after school. As such, much of the learning process occurs on the students own. Dismissal from this ensemble may happen at any time and is up to the complete discretion of the directors.

## **Choir Placement**

Every Day is Audition Day!

Formal auditions for choirs occur each spring semester. Classes are available for any student at a variety of skill levels. Placement by directors reflects the student's current behavior and attitude, attendance, sight-singing ability, and tone quality. Students seeking to enter choir before the new school year will be placed appropriately after scheduling a vocal hearing with directors. Audition policies are included in the appendix of the handbook.

## **Voice Lessons**

Throughout the year, students can help improve their own skills towards a successful audition by checking out sight-singing materials and actively participating in voice lessons. Voice lessons are designed to individually instruct students towards a more defined vocal tone and proficient music reading skills.

## **Classroom Expectations**

- Students should be prompt for every rehearsal. When the final bell rings, students will stand on the risers with their choir binder and pencil ready to sing.
- Food and drinks are not permitted in the choir room. As a safety precaution, students are not permitted to consume gum or candy during rehearsal. Students are allowed and encouraged to have a CLEAR container of water on the risers.
- Respect as demonstrated in speech, attitude, and behavior should be reflected at all times towards directors and classroom peers.
- Students are expected to participate at all times. Active participation in choir is defined and engaged and effortful singing.
- Signers should ask for permission to use any choir equipment.
- The use of any personal electronic device is not allowed in the choir room unless advised. Items should be on silent mode and off the risers.

## **Consequences**

- Warning
- Student Conference
- Parent Contact
- Office Referral
- Dismissal from the Choir Program

\*Serious infractions will be dealt with in accordance with the policies and procedures of the GCCISD Student Code of Conduct.

## **Daily Procedures/Expectations**

- Dispose of any gum or foreign objects out of your mouth upon entering the room.
- Place personal belongings in your cubby. Backpacks go on the floor in front of the cubbies.
- Put all money in an envelope and drop in the choir safe before the tardy bell or at the end of class.
- Bring your binder and pencil to your assigned seat before the tardy bell
- Stand up, ready to warm-up, when the director begins
- Be positive, supportive, and respectful of others during rehearsal
- Wait to be dismissed by a director at the end of the class. Do not line up by the door.

- Ask permission to use the practice rooms;
- At the end of the period, put your binder in its cubby and dispose of empty water bottles
- Absolutely no eating or drinking on the choir risers
- Restroom breaks are permissible when the class is not actively in vocal technique or sight-singing.

### **Travel Expectations**

- Students are expected to adhere to all GCCISD policies as reflected in the student code of conduct.
- At no time will singers of the opposite gender be allowed to be in each other's room of lodging.
- Unlawful acts will warrant an immediate call to administration and the student's parent or representative. In addition, the student may be removed from upcoming performances or the Sterling Choir program at large upon director discretion.
- Trip expectation guides must be signed before participating in choir trips.

### **Attendance**

Attendance for scheduled classes and performances are critical to the success of the program. Unlike some activities, it is not always possible to make-up a rehearsal and/or a performance. Please be aware that unexcused absences will have a negative impact on the student's grade and may result in suspension from future activities or performances.

Tardies in choir will be handled in accordance with the policies and procedures of Sterling HS. Students should quietly enter the room upon arrival, scan the tardy QR code, place their belongings away, grab their binder, and proceed to the risers.

Absences from required after school rehearsals will negatively impact a student's grade. In addition, they can be asked to not participate in the upcoming performance due to lack of promptness and preparation. Tardies from required rehearsals will result in grade penalties and the student possibly being asked not to participate in performances.

## Concert Expectations

Students are expected to be present and on-time for the call time of all performances. In most cases, the student should already be fully dressed in the choir attire and ready to sing.

Students are expected to practice professionalism during the performance time by:

- Following the instructions of choir directors and other adults on duty
- Refraining from the use of any electronic device. Phones, watches, and other devices should be FULLY off and never visible to the audience. Singers can lock their phones in the choir office.
- Only applauding after song selections. Loud and boisterous chants, cheers, calls, and more are deemed inappropriate in this setting.
- Performing with integrity both in their singing and audience behavior.
- Remaining in the concert setting during the **entirety** of the performance. Students who leave before the concert is done will receive a grade penalty for their concert grade.

## Grades

Learning objectives in the fine arts are based on performance skills, responsibility, as well as active and effortful participation. Therefore, students are expected to fulfill individual as well as group learning tasks.

Sterling Choir Grades		
Category	Weight	Assignments
Major Grades	60%	All Performances Score Markings Memory Checks After School Rehearsals
Non-Major Grades	40%	Music Theory Quizzes Ear Training Exercises Part Checks Daily Skills Solfege Checks Materials Participation Weekly Rehearsal Grade

Quizzes involving mastery of content will be allowed for retake as needed within a grading period to all for student growth.



All performances, including required concerts, UIL, and special events, are not subject to be missed due to work. Students should prioritize their schedules to be in attendance.

Performances cannot be recreated in their live fashion. Students who miss a performance will be subject to a written assignment over the literature and placed into probation if in an upper-level choir.

- A student must take initiative to speak to a director about making up the missed performance. Directors will not self-schedule the make up for a student without prior contact.
- A student may only make up a missed performance grade up to a 70%
- The alternate assignment must be turned in on time or not at all.

### Uniforms

Each choir student will be issued a formal uniform to use throughout the year. Uniforms are to be kept in good care at home. If the uniforms are lost or damaged, students/families must pay for replacement cost/repairs. All students are required to purchase the in-formal uniform, choir t-shirt, as they will be worn for performance events throughout the year. Formal uniforms are the property of GCCISD. They are considered equipment and are only to be worn in performances.

Uniform Specifics by Choir

Choir	Uniform provided by Choir Dept.	Items Provided by Student
TenorBass	Tux Jacket Tux Pants Cummerbund Tie Black Tux Shirt (new students)	Black closed toed shoes (preferably dress shoes) Black Socks, Long BlackTux Shirt (returning)
Concert Treble and Cantus	Formal Dress	Black closed toed shoes (Preferably formal flats)
Reverb	See Reverb info page	
Meistersingers	TenorBass: Tux Jacket Tux Pants Cummerbund Tie  Treble: Formal Dress w/pearls	Black closed toed shoes (preferably dress shoes) Black Socks, Long BlackTux Shirt (returning)

Alterations: Alterations to any issued uniform items must be approved by the directors.

Turn in: At the end of the school year, all uniforms should be turned in with proper care. Please consider dry cleaning the garments so that the choir department may save money on this expense. Fees will be assessed for any missing or damaged garments.

#### Formal Uniform Expectations

- When wearing the uniform, students may wear small stud earrings. No necklaces, watches, or bracelets will be permitted. (Unless otherwise noted)
- Hair shall be clean, well-groomed, and out of the eyes. Hair must be put half-way back or in an up-do. No bows or ornaments shall be worn in hair during performances.
- Students may not wear cologne or perfume of any kind. Hair spray, nail polish, etc., should not be applied around other people. This is a courtesy to the many people who have allergies.

### Ranger Choir Fees

Fine Arts performances courses incur fees that provide for students to experience courses at a high-level of performance, travel, and collaboration. Please read the information below.

#### Required Fees of All-Singers:

\$35.00	Operational fee - supports expenses regarding music, supplies, some snacks/meals, choir socials, one uniform cleaning, some contest entry fees
\$15.00	T-Shirt Fee - Uniform B for informal performances and travel
\$50.00	Total Choir Fee

\*All checks can be made out of Sterling HS Choir\*

#### Optional Fees

\$20.00	Booster Club Membership
---------	-------------------------

The Booster Club exists as its own entity supporting the extracurricular needs and expenses of the RSS Choir program. All parents are encouraged to join this growing and active organization. Involvement with the booster club will be a rewarding and positive experience, and gives parents an opportunity to be involved with their child's school life. Calendars and/or newsletters will be emailed or sent home to keep you informed about upcoming events, general information, and meeting times and dates.

### **Voice Lessons**

Prices are set by teachers. Limited scholarships are available via the Booster Club.

Voice lessons are provided by two contracted and accomplished voice teachers. This platform provides for optimal enhancement of a student's vocal technique, sight-reading, and musicianship skills on an individual level. Lessons are once a week for thirty minutes after school. Voice lessons are **HIGHLY** recommended for students who are passionate about refining their craft.

## Letterman Points in Choir

Students who are participating members in the Ranger Choir program are eligible to earn points toward the purchase of a Letterman Jacket and/or approved choir related patches/letters. Points are cumulative and a student may earn points at any time during their participation in the choir program. However, the actual jacket or letters will only be awarded to students once they have completed a full year in the Varsity Ensemble - Meistersingers.

Students must have a total of 15 points by participation in approved activities and events to be full awarded a letterman jacket along with the choir patch. The initial 15 earned points awards a letterman jacket along with the choir patch. If a student has previously earned a jacket, or will receive one from another organization, they may be eligible for approved choir patches at the discretion of the Booster Club.

As an aside: Choir Directors do not determine the timeline for this process.

### Approved Activities and Events

Activity/Event	Points
Earned seat and successful participation in Region Choir	2
Advancement to and successful participation in Area Audition	3
Placement in and successful participation in All-State Choir	5
Division 1 rating at Region Solo and Ensemble - per entry, any grade piece	1
Division 1 rating at State Solo and Ensemble - per entry	3
Participation and performance in an Ensemble that earns Sweepstakes at UIL	1
Satisfactory completion of a year in choir with no period of academic ineligibility - awarded annually at completion of year	2
Special Performances in choir program and/or school related events (at director discretion)	1

## **Appendix A: Sterling Choir Auditions**

Auditions are based on the year-long participation of a student in choir. Factors that will be considered in his/her placement include: attendance, behavior, participation at UIL and TMEA events, integrity, sight-reading ability, and musicianship.

All current students will be auditioned by directors at the end of the school year. Auditions can include but are not limited to the assessment of:

- Tonal Memory
- Key Identification
- Sight-Reading
- Vocalization and Tone-Production

Incoming students of any grade level will need to schedule a vocal hearing audition with directors ASAP. Students will be assessed by the same measures as current choir students.

All students will be placed appropriately in their skill level class. Appeals, questions, comments, and concerns require a 48 hour wait from the time of the audition BEFORE contacting a director. The initial contact must take place with a director and the student first. If needed, then a family representative may intervene as well.

## **Appendix B: Sterling Choir Voice Lessons**

Voice lessons serve as individual enrichment of vocal skills for choir students. This opportunity affords growth in technique, production, and music reading ability.

It is the policy of Sterling Choir that students taking voice lessons:

- Take a once a week lesson after school hours in accordance with district policy
- Commit to a FULL year of of study with their teacher. It is not provided to just take lessons a la carte.
- Pay for their lessons in full at the beginning of each month
- Participate in the UIL Solo and Ensemble contest
- Make all checks out DIRECTLY to the voice faculty member-not Sterling Choir

## **Appendix C: Reverb Choir**

Reverb is an auditioned choir serving as ambassadors in our community.

Reverb members are expected to:

- Pay all associated fees as needed for uniform and travel
- Be a member of another choir
- Prepare their personal calendars in advance to ensure participation at all performances
- Be an advocate of all the overall Sterling Choir department
- Responsibly handle all equipment and materials of the department
- Adhere to all travel guidelines including classroom rules while away traveling

## **Appendix D: Removal from Choir Program**

Every opportunity will be provided to allow students to succeed in choir. Serious infractions including, but not limited to, are provided below regarding the guidelines for removal from the choir program.

- Inappropriate use of social media towards self or others
- Illegal and unlawful behavior while on travel
- Theft of any kind
- Harm (physical, verbal, and emotional) inflicted on anyone

## **Appendix E: Payments and Fundraisers**

By district and UIL policies, choirs are not permitted to treat funds received as personal student accounts. We will ensure accurate record keeping but in lieu of these procedures please note the following:

- Choir directors are not permitted to issue refunds for monies left at the end of the year
- Students will always receive a receipt for items \$20 and over in accordance with District policy
- Fundraisers are optional entities but can be applied to a student's ledger for choir fees and trips. Monies from fundraisers will FIRST be applied to a student's choir fees BEFORE being applied to a trip if they are not currently up to date.
- We are not allowed to receive card or online payments for Student Activity deposits. Some fundraisers provided by the Booster Club will permit this.
- All checks should be made out to Sterling HS Choir.