

*Claremont High School &
El Roble Middle School
Choir Handbook*

2025 - 2026



Dear Choir Families,

Welcome to the Claremont High School and El Roble Middle School Choir Department! I am thrilled that your child has chosen to be a part of our choirs, and I am personally excited to be returning to CUSD after graduating from CHS in 2015. This year and for many years to come, will be a unique and rewarding experience for both your student and you as a parent.

This year, I plan to set clear expectations as we work together to keep our choir family strong. Our new department tagline is: "Building Musicians, Building Minds, Building Cultural Understanding." These three pillars reflect my core beliefs about how the choir program serves your students. Discipline, endurance, hard work, generosity, appreciation, and friendship are at the heart of these values. You will see these qualities demonstrated by me as the choir director, as well as by the students who dedicate their time and effort to uphold the high standards of this program.

I know the start of the school year can feel overwhelming for parents, so please take time to review this handbook with your family and your student. Inside, you will find a calendar with important dates, classroom expectations, concert dress code, and more. I encourage you to add these dates to your personal calendars right away and to be mindful of any potential conflicts.

Once again, welcome to the choir family! I am confident that your student will have a fantastic experience in this program and will make you proud.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "W".

Kyle Ward

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Course Description

Students in this course will build their musicianship through the study, rehearsal, and performance of diverse choral repertoire. Students will refine vocal technique, ensemble skills, and overall musical literacy. The course emphasizes discipline, collaboration, and creativity, while also encouraging generosity, appreciation, and friendship within our choir family. In addition, students will develop strategies for effective individual practice, fostering growth as both musicians and community members.

Department Goal

The goal of the Claremont Choir Department is to provide an inclusive and supportive environment where students can grow as musicians, thinkers, and community members. Guided by the vision of Building Musicians, Building Minds, Building Cultural Understanding, the department strives to cultivate excellence in choral performance while fostering creativity, discipline, generosity, and friendship. Through meaningful musical experiences, students are empowered to express themselves, appreciate diverse cultures, and contribute positively to both the ensemble and the wider community.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn to read sheet music.
- Learn and refine music theory and aural skills.
- Improve their sight singing and sight reading.
- Perform with expression, utilizing skills in interpretation and technical accuracy.
- Work collaboratively as an ensemble to perform music and learn together.
- Ensure their performance is culturally responsive to the background of the music they perform.

Classroom Materials

This year, students will have the option to use paper sheet music instead of reading off their iPad. Students will request paper sheet music at the beginning of the learning cycle. Sheet music and folders provided from the school is property of the choral department. **Any sheet music that is lost or damaged will need to be replaced at the students expense.** Students choosing to utilize tactile learning tools are still expected to bring their iPad to class in the case that the classroom will be utilizing a digital lesson.

Everyday Materials

- CHS
 - Digital Learning Option
 - School Issued iPad
 - Stylus (Class set offered)
 - Headphones (either wired or wireless to connect to iPads.)
 - **When not in use, these devices should be kept in backpacks.**
 - Water Bottle
 - Tactile Learning Option
 - Choir Folder - **Provided** (School Issued Sheet Music)
 - Pencil (Class set offered)

Classroom Expectations

- Students are expected to participate and apply themselves during every class day.
- Please be aware of and follow all school rules and policies.
- Students should be in their seats with required materials and ready to begin **by the time the tardy bell rings.**

- All personal items will be stored at the back or sides of the classroom during the period (Backpack, other class materials, etc.).
 - **Phones are expected to be silenced and in backpacks during classroom instruction.**
- Respect other students' and communal property.
- Food and drinks are not to be consumed during class time.
 - **Water bottles with sealed tops are acceptable.**
- Gum is not allowed in the classroom.
 - Note: you should never sing with a cough drop because it will numb your throat and you won't be able to tell if you are doing damage to your voice.
- Only one person at a time may leave the room to go to the restroom, locker, etc. Please use the restroom before class time begins.

Consequences

If students do not adhere to the expectations listed above, they should expect to 1. Be given an informal reminder/explanation/warning from the teacher; 2. Be given a formal verbal warning; 3. Have parent/guardian contact to discuss further options; 4. Referral to school administrators to discuss further options.

Class Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend choir daily and give their best effort. In-class participation includes being ready to sing, performing with responsiveness to instruction, and contributing to class discussion and assignments. Rehearsal and performance skills must be demonstrated in the classroom to be fairly assessed. Missing many classes without prior arrangements may result in a zero on the student's rehearsal/performance skills grade as their participation and contribution to each rehearsal is graded weekly.

Concert Attendance and Participation

All choir members are expected to attend scheduled performances and other events outside of class time as part of the choir academic curriculum. Excused absences for choir concerts may include illness, religious observations, and/or family obligations of which Mr. Ward has advance notice. If a student is unable to attend, written notice (letter or email) from the guardian must be given to Mr. Ward no later than three weeks prior to the concert (emergencies excepted) in order to be considered an excused absence. Excused absences may be made up at the discretion of the teacher. Unexcused absences will result in a zero grade for the concert and cannot be made up.

In case of emergency, please make a reasonable effort to contact Mr. Ward and inform him of your situation. A signed note or email from a parent explaining the absence is required in order for an absence due to emergency to be changed from “unexcused” to “excused”.

Uniforms

A unity of appearance should be attained when appearing with a high quality-performing ensemble. It is not to dictate to choir members what to wear on their own personal time: rather, this policy is to guarantee a sense of professionalism and team spirit when appearing in public as members of that particular choir. It is the sole responsibility of each member to appear in proper performance attire for each occasion that is deemed necessary to the Director.

Note - NO student will be excluded from a choir because of financial reasons. If you cannot afford the appropriate attire please talk to the director immediately.

General Uniform Etiquette

- Performance attire is complete, clean, pressed, and in good repair.
- Each person is neatly groomed.

- Appropriate make-up may be worn for stage lighting.
- Jewelry that is not a part of your performance attire is not appropriate.
- Sunglasses, hats, hoods, and/or large hair ornaments are not appropriate (Religious coverings exempt).
- Colognes and Perfumes should not be worn, but deodorant is HIGHLY encouraged!

Choral Uniforms

ALL CHOIRS

- Black dress shoes (Heels are acceptable as long as student can easily walk in them for long periods of time).
- Black socks, tights, etc.
- Black Bottoms (slacks, appropriate dress pants, skirt/dress. No Jeans.)
- Black based shirt. Type of shirt does not matter as long as no logos can be seen on the neck of the shirt outside of the robe.
- Choir Robe (provided)

Preparation and Home Practice

It is recommended that students practice individually at home for the improvement of the choir. It is recommended that students take their music home and practice 15 minutes a day. Mr. Ward will occasionally require at home practice tests on specific content in the music for students to complete. Although home practice is not required, practice tests will be required and graded.

Sectionals (Chamber Singers Only)

Students are required to attend lunch sectionals for more individual help. Section leaders will determine when these sectionals are and there will be excused weeks by choir director. These sectionals can be made up using at home practice at the discretion of the section leaders and choir director and will be graded weekly.

Concert Etiquette

For the Parents:

- Please no flash photography as this may distract the performers.
- Please do not shout out students names during the performance.
- Please do not enter or exit the auditorium during a performance.
- Please silence all cell phones and other noise-making devices.
- No food or drink in the auditorium (this includes chewing gum, water is allowed in sealed container).

For the Performers (Students):

- Please show up early to all rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and concerts. 5 minutes early is already 10 minutes late!
- Always bring your music just in case!
- Make sure your concert attire is clean and wrinkle free.
- Only whispers or quiet conversations allowed in the green rooms during the performance.
- Once the concert is over, you may not leave until everything is cleaned and put away; more hands = less work!

Grading Policy

Grading will be based on participation, concert performance, and rehearsal techniques and exercises. Points in class are weighted based on category:

- Class Participation (50%)
 - Assessed in daily rehearsals
 - Students must follow the list of classroom expectations
 - Be on-task
 - Includes in-class assignments
- Performance (30%)
 - Assessed in concerts and dress/tech rehearsals
- Written Assignments (20%)

- Theory Work/Sight Reading Materials
- Concert write ups/reflections
- End of the Year Project

Points for Assignments

- Class participation - 10 points each week
- Concert Attendance - 50 points each concert 25 points per rehearsal
- Final Project - 30 points
- Home Practice Assignments (Sectionals) - 10 points each
- Written tests/quizzes - 20 points each
- In-class written assignments - 10 points each

Extra Credit / Make-up Work

Extra credit assignments may be arranged with Mr. Ward in order to make up missing class time due to absences or *excused* concert absences. The student is responsible for meeting with the teacher to arrange extra credit work. Examples of make-up work include additional home-practice assignments, attending and critiquing extra concerts or writing a report on a subject pertaining to choir. Students must clear a project with the teacher before beginning.

Extra Credit will be offered to students who attend other choral concerts, whether its other local schools, community choirs, etc. Students may also receive extra credit for attending CHS/EI Roble Band/Orchestra concerts and/or Theatre shows. Please bring programs to Mr. Ward for extra credit.

Volunteering

There are many events hosted by the choral department that require extra help. Each family is strongly encouraged to assist with these events. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Mr. Ward and the CHS Choral Boosters to be added to the

volunteer list. **Volunteers must be background checked by the district in order to attend school-sponsored events.**

Student/Family Communication

This year, CUSD will be discontinuing its subscription with “Remind”, our previous notification service. With this change, Claremont Choirs will be switching over to “Class Dojo”. This service was originally created for lower grade classrooms and many students and families may have already used this service before. This service will be used to send out reminders, update calendars, ask for volunteer sign ups, and message individually in a quicker SMS like style. Students will be setting up their accounts in class and instructions will be brought home for families to create theirs. I am asking that ALL students have an account and at least one family account be made so that all choir families can stay up to date on any changes or reminders for upcoming choir activities.

Calendar of Events

The following is a calendar of important choir events. Please keep in mind that these dates are subject to change and more opportunities/events may be added. More information on these dates will be made available as the date is approached.

Date of Event:	Name of Event:	Location:	Call Time/ Concert Time:	Groups Involved:
Aug. 27th	First Day of School!	EI Roble/CHS	N/A	N/A
Oct. 10th***	Hoco Rally Performance	CHS Band Stage	TBD	CS
Oct. 23rd & Oct. 27th	CHS Choral Pops Show - Tech	CHS Theatre	4:30pm-8pm	CC, CN, CS
Oct. 28th & Oct. 29th	CHS Choral Pops Show - Show	CHS Theatre	6pm/7pm	CC, CN, CS
Oct. 31st	Halloween Caroling	EI Roble	During Class	PC
December***	Various Caroling Gigs	TBD	During Class and Evening Events	CS
Dec. 11th	Kiwanis Club Gig	St. Ambrose Episcopal Church	During Class	CS
Dec. 15th & Dec. 16th	Claremont Choirs Winter Concert - Show	Claremont United Church of Christ	4:30pm/7pm	PC, CC, CN, CS
Feb. 10th & 11th	Choir Concert Musical - Tech	CHS Theatre	4:30pm-8pm	CC, CN, CS
Feb. 12th & 13th	Choir Concert Musical - Show	CHS Theatre	6pm/7pm	CC, CN, CS
March 13th	Sing-a-thon	CHS Choir Room	4pm-12am	CC, CN, CS

March 12th***	El Roble Choral Cabaret	El Roble MPR	5pm/5:30pm	PC
March 26th-29th	Advanced Choir Festival - New Orleans	New Orleans	TBD	CS
April 24th-25th***	Heritage Choir Festival	Anaheim	Weekend Field Trip	CN
May 9th***	Music in the Parks Festival	Buena Park (Knotts)	All Day	CC
May 18th & May 19th***	CHS Choral Spring Concert - Show***	Bridges Hall of Music (Little Bridges)	4:30pm/7pm	CC, CN, CS
June 4th***	El Roble Spring Choir Concert	El Roble MPR	5:00/5:30pm	PC

***** = Date/Location Unconfirmed**

Please Note: Dates and times are subject to change. Extra dates may be added to this calendar including extra opportunities for students. Please be assured that parents will be notified about these changes as early as possible!

Agreement Contract

In order for students to participate in any choir at El Roble or CHS, all students and their families must agree to the rules, procedures, and details laid out in this handbook. Students will receive a paper contract along with their handbook at the beginning of the year that must be signed by the students themselves as well as one parent/guardian. These agreements MUST be turned in by **Wednesday, September 3rd** to continue in the course. Failure to submit the contract could result in being dropped from the class.