

Willie I. Kocurek Elementary School

KOALA CHOIR HANDBOOK

2026-2027



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Email: brian.vandewalle@austinisd.org • Website: www.mrvansclass.com

Facebook Choir Group: www.facebook.com/groups/koalachoir

KOALA CHOIR HANDBOOK

Congratulations on your selection to join the Kocurek Koala Choir! We're excited to embark on this musical journey together. The information presented below is aimed at fostering a collaborative environment to achieve success in our program. We kindly ask you to review it attentively along with your family.

REHEARSALS

Our rehearsals are set for Wednesdays directly after school, concluding at 4:15 p.m. It's important to carefully observe the rehearsal schedule. Occasionally, we might extend rehearsals during the concert week, with advanced notice of such changes.

After dismissal, all students should proceed directly to the Music Room. Choir students are kindly reminded not to exit the building unless they are part of our School Safety Patrol. Designated seating areas will be arranged outside the music room for all students. Timely pickup by 4:25 p.m. is expected. Please be aware that students picked up after 4:30 p.m. could potentially face removal from the choir program.

ATTENDANCE / TARDY POLICY

It is essential that every member participates in ALL rehearsals. If possible, please try to avoid scheduling appointments (doctor, dentist, etc.) on Wednesdays. We understand that this might not always be feasible, and sometimes appointments will clash with our rehearsal times.

If you anticipate an absence or an early departure, kindly inform Mr. VandeWalle in advance by providing a note. If you're unwell and unable to attend school, you are excused from choir rehearsal—your health comes first. If rehearsals are missed, please submit a note to Mr. VandeWalle indicating the reason for the absence. This note is in addition to any documentation provided to the school office. You can also share this information via email at brian.vandewalle@austinisd.org.

It's important to note that excessive absences or repeated lateness might lead to potential removal from the choir. Decisions regarding such removals will be made solely at the discretion of Mr. VandeWalle.

PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS

We all recognize that progress and success stem from concerted effort. This principle holds true for students as well, and it stands as one of the most crucial lessons to grasp, shaping their lifelong journey. Teaching choir students the importance of consistent practice at home not only nurtures their musical growth but also cultivates valuable life skills.

Regular practice calls for discipline and commitment, and it's a concept that warrants ongoing encouragement. As parents, you can assist your child in establishing a routine practice time and space that fits into your family's schedule. Acknowledge their advancements and improvements, helping them recognize their own progress. Practicing demands dedication, and motivating students to engage in regular practice requires effort. Nevertheless, practice remains a fundamental aspect of learning, fostering strong work habits that extend into various aspects of life.

To encourage the development of positive practice habits, we'll be employing practice cards that record the time spent on choir music. These cards will be available in the music room at any time. Following practice sessions, please complete the cards each day and initial to validate the time spent. The recommended weekly practice time (outside of rehearsal) is 45-60 minutes, which can be divided as your student finds suitable—whether it's four days at 10-15 minutes each, or five days at 9-12 minutes each, etc. It's advisable for students not to exceed 20 minutes of practice at one time to prevent fatigue and frustration.

It is an expectation that every choir student turn in a practice card at each rehearsal. This practice routine not only enhances their musical journey but also instills valuable life skills.

GRADES

Choir participants are required to uphold their academic performance across all subjects. Students engaged in the choir are expected to maintain satisfactory grades in their academic courses, along with achieving ratings of 3's and 4's in all personal growth assessments. Falling below these established standards might result in the need to attend tutoring sessions, potentially leading to temporary removal from the choir program. In such instances, students must complete the tutoring sessions before rejoining choir rehearsals. Persistent subpar grades could ultimately lead to exclusion from the choir. The final decision regarding student removal rests solely with Mr. VandeWalle.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Choir members are expected to demonstrate good citizenship at all times; during the school day, during rehearsals and during performances.

Rehearsal Expectations

1. Be respectful of others.
2. No talking during rehearsal.
3. Come to rehearsal prepared and with your materials.
4. Do your best.

Consequences

1. Warning
2. Removal from risers until approval to return from Mr. VandeWalle.
3. Removal from rehearsal (note sent home).
4. Removal from rehearsal (phone call home).
5. Removal from choir.

While the choir operates as an extracurricular ensemble with rehearsals held after regular school hours, it serves as a prominent and visible representation of Kocurek Elementary School. As a cohesive unit, choir members bear an enhanced level of responsibility. They are anticipated to embody positive peer role models, adhering to school expectations and guidelines consistently. It's important to acknowledge that I maintain ongoing communication with homeroom teachers and administrators, receiving regular updates regarding the conduct of choir members.

RESPONSIBILITY

Choir members are held accountable for submitting all required forms, permission slips, and related documents in a timely manner. To facilitate this process, a designated box for choir-related materials and information can be found in the music room. It's important to note that choir forms should NOT be given to homeroom teachers. This directive also applies to absence notes.

In instances of absence from choir practice, it is the student's responsibility to catch up on missed content. Managing choir-related matters is best done outside of regular music class time—before or after school, for instance. Our sole homework assignment revolves around practicing our individual parts. Practice is an at-home commitment, while rehearsal takes place during school hours. Every choir member is expected to submit their practice cards **each** Wednesday, as this helps monitor and encourage consistent practice efforts.

PRACTICE
learning your part at home



REHEARSAL
learning how parts
fit together



SCHEDULE

Our regular meeting day is set for Wednesdays, unless otherwise indicated on the schedule. As concert dates approach, we might require additional after-school rehearsals to ensure a polished performance on stage. These supplementary rehearsals will be clearly marked on the comprehensive choir schedule detailed on the subsequent page.

In the event that I am absent and a substitute is present on a designated choir day, I will promptly notify the office and the homeroom teachers regarding the status of choir rehearsals. Once I communicate with these individuals, they will in turn inform the students about the rehearsal status. Additionally, I will send out a message through the ClassDojo service to all parents. Details about ClassDojo are outlined below. It's highly recommended that all families participate in the ClassDojo communication channel either through text or the app to receive timely updates.

CHOIR SHIRTS / UNIFORM

Our official choir uniform consists of choir shirts, blue jeans, and athletic (tennis) shoes. It is imperative that every student adheres to this dress code for any occasion when the choir gathers. Each choir member is required to acquire a choir shirt. Returning members may or may not need a new shirt, depending on the current condition of their shirt. I HIGHLY suggest having an extra as a back up. I do not have a budget for purchasing extra shirts. Every year we have a few students who misplace their choir shirts. For concerts, it's mandatory for students to be in full uniform to participate in performances. No choir shirt means a student loses the ability to performance on stage with us.

Further details regarding shirt orders will be communicated to you at a later date. Your cooperation in adhering to the uniform guidelines is greatly appreciated and contributes to the overall cohesiveness of our choir's presentation.

STAY INFORMED!

To ensure everyone remains well-informed about the latest happenings in the music room and choir updates at Kocurek, I've established various channels of communication. For those who use Facebook, I encourage you to join or follow our respective pages and accounts.

In addition, this year we're using ClassDojo, a free app that simplifies communication. Through ClassDojo, I can send quick reminders directly to your phone or email, eliminating the need to share phone numbers or incur text messaging charges. This app plays a pivotal role in maintaining effective communication and keeping families informed. I strongly advise all parents to join ClassDojo, as it will facilitate transparent discussions about rehearsals, concerts, behavior expectations, and other upcoming events.

School Phone: 512-414-2547

Office Email: brian.vandewalle@austinisd.org

Website: www.mrvansclass.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/mrvans.musicroom

Choir Group: www.facebook.com/groups/koalachoir

Instagram: www.instagram.com/mrvansclass

YouTube: www.youtube.com/mrvansclass

To Join ClassDojo:

Information for joining ClassDojo will be sent home
after our first rehearsal.

KOALA CHOIR

FALL REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 9 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, September 16 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, September 23 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, September 30 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, October 7 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, October 14 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, October 21 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, October 28 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, November 4 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, November 11 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, November 18 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, December 2 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Monday, December 7 (Stage) 3:15-4:15
Tuesday, December 8 (Stage) 3:15-4:15
Wednesday, December 9 (Stage) 3:15-4:15

WINTER CONCERT

Thursday, December 10 (Stage) 6:30 PM

KOALA CHOIR

SPRING REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 13 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, January 20 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, January 27 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, February 3 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, February 10 NO CHOIR THIS WEEK

Wednesday, February 17 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, February 24 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, March 3 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, March 24 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, March 31 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, April 7 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, April 14 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, April 21 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, April 28 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, May 5 (Music Room) 3:15-4:15

Monday, May 10 (Stage) 3:15-4:15

Tuesday, May 11 (Stage) 3:15-4:15

Wednesday, May 12 (Stage) 3:15-4:15

SPRING CONCERT

Thursday, May 13 (Stage) 6:30PM

KOCUREK KOALA CHOIR

HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Return this page to Mr. VandeWalle before the next choir rehearsal.

Student Information

Name _____ Homeroom Teacher _____

Student Handbook Acknowledgement

*I understand the expectations stated in the Koala Choir Handbook and as a member of the Kocurek Koala Choir
I will do my best to follow them.*

Student Signature

Date

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

*I/We have read the Kocurek Koala Choir Handbook and agree to support the policies stated for the
Kocurek Koala Choir program.*

Parent Signature

Date

