



Choral Handbook

Mr. Griffin Coombs

Welcome to the AST choral program! By registering for the AST Choir, you have chosen the amazing experience of making music with others, AND learning to become a better singer. We are committed to performance excellence, teamwork, personal responsibility, self-discovery, and musical expression. So what does that mean, and why are we really here?

- *We are here to learn about ourselves and each other by cooperating, supporting one another, and expressing ourselves.*
- *We are here to gain the skills that allow us to become more independent musicians.*
- *We are here to explore, quality vocal music that you otherwise may never have discovered!*
- *We are here to learn to work as a team, by taking pride and personal responsibility for our personal roles in the ensemble.*
- *We are here to further develop ourselves as **FALCONS** through the unforgettable experience of group music making!*

A LESSON ON TEAMWORK...

Even though my computer keyboard is an old model, it works quite well except for one of the keys. It is true that there are forty-six keys that function well enough, but just one key not working makes all the difference.

I believe with all of my heart that a chorus is just like my computer keyboard when not all of the members are working together as a team.

You may say to yourself, "Well I am only one person. I won't make or break any organization."

But it really does make a huge difference! You see, for any performing ensemble to be effective, it requires the active participation of every member. So the next time you think that you are only one person and that your efforts don't matter, please remember my old computer keyboard, and start telling yourself:

"I AM A KEY PERSON IN OUR PROGRAM, AND I AM
NEEDING VERY MUCH."

Helpful Reminders

- We are cooperative, not competitive. Your only competition is yourself.
- You are safe here. You will not make others feel unsafe.
- **Everything we do is abnormal.** If it feels different, it's probably good!
- You only get better when you take responsibility for your own learning.

Expectations: You Probably Have Some Questions...

What do I need to bring to choir?

- ✓ Every member of the chorus must bring their chorus folder with sheet music, as well as a pencil every day. Water is also recommended.

What is not allowed in choir?

- ✓ Gum
- ✓ Food or drink (except water)
- ✓ Phones
- ✓ Toys, games, or other distractions

What do I do when I arrive to chorus?

- ✓ Bring your materials to your seat. You may talk with friends until you hear the piano music come to an end (see below).

What does the piano music mean?

- ✓ At the beginning of the class, Mr. Coombs will play something on the piano. This is your cue to be in your seat if you're not there already. Once the music stops, you will echo a 4-beat clapping pattern to show that you're ready.

What's the bathroom policy?

- ✓ Leaving in the middle of class is a huge disruption to our group flow. If you ask me to go to the bathroom in the middle of class, I will ask you if it's a dire emergency. Please take care of it before class instead of having to let us all know how badly you need to go!

Why do we spend so much time warming up? Is it that important?

- ✓ YES! You will be asked to put forth a lot of physical and mental effort during warm-ups. This is where you build the skills to become a better singer, making it easier to use those skills during the songs that we sing later in the class.

What do I do when Mr. Coombs isn't working with my section?

- ✓ You may sit quietly and wait for your section's turn. For possible extra participation points, you may also follow along with your part to see how it fits with the other parts. Another great idea is to listen to the instructions being given to another section, because it may apply to you as well. **DO NOT TALK** while other sections are working

Why can't I talk if I'm not singing?

- ✓ Other sections need to concentrate on the work they are doing, and talking around the room is extremely distracting. We move very quickly, and it may be your turn to sing again before you know it. If you're talking, you'll likely miss your cue and slow the entire class down. Stay on task at all times!

I'm just one person, and I just wanted an easy A. Do I really have to sing?

- ✓ Yes. This is an experience that depends on every single member working as a whole, much like a sports team. Some of you will become leaders, and most of you will learn from each other how to work as a team and how to become better group singers. No one, however, has the choice to not participate. If you signed up for choir at AST, you signed up to be part of something excellent!

How am I graded in chorus?

- ❖ *PAC (weekly)*
- ❖ *Arts - Performance*
- ❖ *Arts - Theory*

How is my participation grade calculated?

- ✓ Each student begins the week with an 80% in participation. To maintain this grade for the week, you must meet the minimum participation requirements:
 - Remaining quiet during instruction
 - Singing during warm-ups and rehearsal
 - Arriving with and using all of your required materials
 - Respecting everyone in the room at all times
- ✓ Points are added during each class based on the following observable positive behaviors:
 - Contributing thoughtful questions and/or responses
 - Making appropriate notes in your sheet music
 - Following your part silently while another section sings
 - Active listening (e.g. eye contact, affirmative gestures, etc.)
- ✓ Points are deducted based on observable behaviors that are inconsistent with class expectations, such as:
 - Talking during instruction or while we are rehearsing
 - Arriving without required materials
 - Choosing not to sing while we are rehearsing

- Showing any form of disrespect to peers or staff
- Chewing gum, eating, or drinking in class (except water)
- Abuse of bathroom policy

What else happens if I don't follow expectations?

- ✓ Please refer to the AST handbook regarding consequences for specific infractions.

How am I graded in the “Arts – Performance” category?

- ✓ Attendance and appropriate participation in each AST performance
- ✓ Singing exams: Technical / Repertoire
- ✓ Music literacy exams: Decoding / Reading

How am I graded in the “Arts – Theory” category?

- ✓ Written and oral exams on the principles of vocal technique

So what's the most important thing I should take away?

- ✓ Support and respect. This must be a safe place for people to open up and take risks. Encouraging others in a nonjudgmental way is the best thing anyone can do. On the flip side, unsupportive behavior toward others destroys the energy in the room instantly. There will be zero tolerance for this type of behavior.
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2017-2018 PERFORMANCES

Schedule of Events

TBA

ATTENDANCE POLICY

ALL school music performances are required for each student enrolled in the course. Attendance and participation at these performances constitute a percentage of everyone's course grade. Helpful considerations are listed on the following page:

1. *Homework, sports activities, rehearsals or performances for other shows, and inappropriate last-moment obligations are not considered valid reasons for being absent from a concert. Every performance is considered a major exam.*
2. *Students who are in school on the day of the concert and on the day following the concert will **NOT** be granted an excused absence for illness without a doctor's note.*
3. *Any anticipated concert absence due to travel, etc. must be cleared with Mr. Coombs in writing **two weeks prior** to the concert. Travel plans must be consistent with school policy.*
4. *An unexcused absence from a performance will result in a loss of credit for a performance assessment grade.*

DRESS CODE

*Semi-formal dress that complies with school dress code.
Detailed guidelines will be discussed prior to performance.*

Contact

Mr. Griffin Coombs, Music Specialist
American School of Tangier
149 Avenue Christophe-Colomb
Tanger, Maroc 90000

g.coombs@ast.ma
mrcoombsmusic.weebly.com

AST Choir Agreement

By signing below, you assert that you have read and understand the course expectations as outlined in the AST Choral Handbook. You are also acknowledging your personal role in the choir and agreeing to live up to these expectations and guidelines in order create a productive and musically rich environment for everyone involved.

(Student PRINTED Name)

(Date)

(Student Signature)

(Date)

As the parent or guardian, I ask that you confirm your own understanding of the course expectations by signing below. This helps assure me that we are ready to help each other in maintaining a high standard for each child in the performing arts.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)