

Ramsay International Bachelorette High School

Performing Arts Department

Choral & Piano Division

Student/Parent

HANDBOOK



Zachary Banks, Choral & Piano Director

Email: zbanks@bhm.k12.al.us

Office Phone: (205) 231-9677

Google Voice: (205) 626-9881

Zoom PMI: [653 776 8519](https://us03zoom.us/j/6537768519)

GroupMe: RHS Choral Department

Edmodo Codes

Homeroom: 26eb95

Concert Choir: 6jagh5

Concert Ensemble: 7x7mfn

Beginning Choir: dn4y9t

Treble Ensemble: pra6r5

Piano Lab: bir63d

Arts Survey: w94f7f

Instagram, Twitter, & TikTok: @RHSRamsChoirs

Facebook: @RamsayRamsChoirs

Website: www.ramsaychoraldepartment.com

Ramsay IB High School
1800 13th Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35205
(205) 231-7000

Introduction

Welcome to the Ramsay International Bachelorette High School, Performing Arts Department, Choral Divisions. My name is Zachary Banks, RHS '02, and I am glad to carry on the traditions of the Choral Division as the choir director. This year will be great as we embark on a new journey through the world of music.

The choral tradition at Ramsay High School is one of excellence. We aim to excel beyond the expectations of those around us, as well as within our choir. Every member of the choir will finish the year better than they were when the year started regardless as to how old you are. There is always room for improvement. To achieve these goals of achieving excellence and overall improvement, everyone must be ready to work hard and dedicate your time to this organization.

Please be sure to read this book thoroughly. No one wants to be caught unawares as to what is going on, or how we got to a certain point. This is a handbook, therefore, keep it handy. It will be referenced many times, and there are some important documents for future use.



Preface

The information in this handbook is designed to inform the parents, students, and interested parties of the policies and activities as they relate to the Ramsay High School Choral Division, Performing Arts Department.

Birmingham City Schools' (BHM) rules and regulations are always enforced. BHM policy has priority over choral policy should such conflict arise.

The Choral Director has the authority to amend or suspend any choral policy at any time, if necessary, in the best interest of the choral program.

I. Philosophy

The Choral Division of the Fine Arts Department at Ramsay High School is guided by the ideal that to provide a complete and balanced curriculum, a basic study of music is essential for all students. The Choral Division provides choral music classes at all levels of vocal development and maturity. Education is the key to this development and maturity. Through this education, the students can express themselves through the art of music. This education in music can help build a student's self-confidence and character, as well as guide some to a future in the arts.

II. Course Goals and Objectives

- a. Demonstrate the ability to produce an acceptable vocal tone
- b. Provide, promote, and encourage interest and participation in choral ensemble.
- c. Apply proper vocal techniques to various styles of choral literature
- d. Participation in all performances of one's respective performance group.
- e. Demonstrate ensemble performance techniques such as blend, balance, intonation, and response to conducting.
- f. Consistently strive to best serve the interests of the student, school, and community.
- g. Prepare and encourage the students for the experiences available in higher education, and to encourage future musical leaders.
- h. Instill the value of effort, sacrifice, cooperation, conformity, fellowship, self-discipline, and dedication.
- i. Develop an appreciation for musical artistry and aesthetic beauty, as well as increase the awareness of the arts within the community.
- j. Always strive for excellence in academic performance as well as musical performances.

III. Organization

- a. Chorus Council
 - i. The governing body of the choral department is the Chorus Council. The council will consist of the choral director and the following elected officers: President(s), Vice-President(s), Secretaries, Treasurer, Administrative Assistant, Student Conductor, Historian, Head Librarian, Fundraising Chairman, Uniform Managers, Chaplain, Social Media Coordinator, & Stage/Equipment Manager. In addition, there will be section leaders.
 1. Of these positions, there will be an Executive Committee (EC) that will consist of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Administrative Assistant, and Ex-Officio.
 2. Additional Committees will be appointed during the year to complete Council tasks.
 - ii. This council will meet every other week unless an emergency meeting is called.
 1. The EC will meet every week.
 - iii. The Chorus Council shall be empowered to make decisions concerning all matters of the Choral Department, if they agree with the BHM policy, Administration, and Director. On occasion, certain matters will be brought before the entire Department for consideration, in which case rule by majority would be in effect.
 - iv. It will be the responsibility of the Chorus Council members to see that all procedures and guidelines are always executed properly. In turn, all choral students will be expected to support the actions of the Choral Council.

- b. Ramsay Choir Booster Club (RamsayChoirBooster@gmail.com)
 - i. The Ramsay Choir Booster Club is a 403b Nonprofit Organization. With the expansion of the Ramsay Choral Department, membership with this organization will be expanded to include all parents who have a child in any of the three (3) choirs. The organization's name will remain the same due for tax reporting purposes, however; anyone in a performance organization will benefit from its work.
 - ii. The Booster Club operates independently from the school while maintain an extremely close relationship. The club has its own bank account and officers. How it spends and raises its money runs independent from Ramsay High School.
 - iii. The Club will have an organizational meeting soon after the start of the school year to elect officers for the 2021-22 academic year. The club will then meet periodically throughout the school year in the evening to discuss its work. Emails and text messages are the preferred method of communication with this group.

IV. Chorus Procedures and Rules for the Choir Room & Zoom Meetings

- a. All students are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the student handbook from the Ramsay High School Administration. Dress code is expected to strictly be followed and will be enforced in the Choral Division of the Performing Arts Department at Ramsay High School.
- b. To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late. Be on time. Call times and bell times are when rehearsals or classes BEGIN so students should already be in place. Call times for Zoom carry the same regards.
- c. There is NO FOOD, DRINK, OR GUM allowed in the classroom.
- d. No sleeping in class. Sleeping is to be regulated at home.
- e. Mature and dignified behavior is always expected of everyone. This includes talking during class. Politeness and attentiveness are expected from students towards the person in charge (or speaking) —whether it is the director, substitute, assigned student, or visiting guest. Rudeness by any individual is considered in poor taste and will not be tolerated.
- f. Deposit all personal belongings under your chair as you sit. This includes phones, bags, purses, binders, books, etc.
- g. Pencils are a requirement. One should be brought to class daily. To not make marks in music is to waste the rehearsal time and tempts insanity. When music is in order, the level of accuracy is heightened.
- h. Students are expected to maintain good posture and a positive, industrious attitude during rehearsals. This is defined as sitting tall on the front third of your chair or standing with healthy posture conducive to good diaphragmatic breathing.
- i. Leaving the choir room for personal reasons (restroom, drinks, etc....) will rarely be acceptable. Remember the educational time missed from a choral classroom realistically cannot be made up.
- j. Class will end upon dismissal by the Director and not when the bell rings. Students are to leave the choral room in an orderly manner with all chairs arranged and personal belongings picked up.
- k. The Director's Office is OFF LIMITS! Students are only to be in the Director's Office with prior authorization from the Director. The Administrative Assistant & Student Conductor are the only students with automatic authorization.

Strict adherence to these rules and procedures should allow every gathering of choral students to result in efficient, motivating musical experience. All infractions will be recorded, and appropriate action will be taken. Repeated infractions of D above will result in lowering of the conduct grade, repeated infractions of B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J will result in a lowering of the daily grade which will affect the course grade. Any person with multiple infractions may be suspended from choral activities.

V. Handling of Music

- a. Folders will be maintained in the bookshelves.
- b. Music should remain in the assigned folder as the individual assigned that folder will be held responsible for it. Students should never use music from another person's folder or leave it on the floor or in a chair.
- c. **MUSIC IS NOT TO BE ABUSED IN ANY WAY!!!** This includes tears, markings in ink, graffiti, lost pages, or other damages which make the music unable to be reused.
- d. Markings requested by the director or needed by the student should be done lightly in pencil.
- e. Students will sign for every piece of music issued to them in their folder. In the event music (or folder) is determined missing or abused by the librarians when collected at the end of the term, the chorus student who signed for it will be fined its current replacement cost.

VI. The Choral Facility

- a. All students will be expected to maintain the choral facilities in a neat and orderly fashion. These are defined as all areas designated for music activities including, but not limited to, the chorus room, band room, drama room, auditorium, offices, ensemble rooms, storage areas, and choral library.
- b. Other than the choral room area, certain areas of the facility will be except to designated individuals. More specifically:
 - i. Only the Head Librarian or Assistant Librarian are to be in the Choral Library
 - ii. Only the officers listed at the beginning of this book are to be in the officers' room
- c. The choral director's office and desk is a restricted area and is not intended to be a student lounge or occupied in general by students. Cell phones are not allowed in the choir room during normal school hours.
- d. The piano is to be used by the accompanists and Director during rehearsals. It is NEVER to be played by other individuals, between classes, during lunch, or otherwise without permission from the Director

VII. Uniforms

a. Performance Uniforms

- i. All members of any of the three choirs are expected to dress uniformly. The following is information concerning the uniform used by the program.
- ii. Girls Outfit: Uniforms may be purchased from girls who have been members of the Ramsay High School Concert Choir and Ensemble. The outfit has not changed for several years. New outfits are available through Stage Accents. **NO loose or hanging jewelry is allowed.** A small necklace will be agreed upon by the Female Uniform Manager of the choir.
 1. The girls wear: (Size Chart Tab is at the bottom of the page)
 - Stage Accents, Black, Solo Dress ([#8628](#)) \$76
 - Stage Accents, Rhinestone Necklace ([#7811](#)) \$15
 - Stage Accents, Rhinestone Earrings ([#7812](#)) \$12
 - Stage Accents, Character Shoes ([#650](#)) \$36
 2. The boys wear
 - Full Black Tuxedo (Pant/Jacket) ([Update](#))
 - White Winged Collared Shirt
 - Electric Blue Vest and Tie
 - Black Patent Leather Shoes
 - Cost from Mr. Burch in Birmingham for the full outfit has been about \$175
- iii. When you purchase the outfit, it becomes your property to keep. You may donate or sell it to a new member once you leave the organization or outgrow the uniform.

b. Ramsay Choir Shirts

- i. I would like for us to have shirts for choir students (Ensemble, Women's, and Concert). These could be worn on spirit days, when we travel before getting into formal wear, or while on trips. We will do this during the first few weeks of the school year.

VIII. Participation

- a. Each singer gives to the choir not only the strength of his/her own voice, but also gives confidence to others, which increases their strength. Because of this, the choir is greater than the sum of the individual voices. This means that there must be participation. A choral organization cannot exist if there is not participation from the members. Everyone in the choir must sing, but participation goes beyond singing.
- b. Rehearsals- The choruses rehearse during the regular school day. **Extra rehearsals will be announced with at least a two weeks' notice, so that all conflicts** (transportation, work schedules, family plans, etc...) can be resolved so that the student may attend the required rehearsals.
- c. Conflicts which arise because of your involvement in another school group activity should be discovered as early as possible and brought to the attention of the Director immediately. Every effort will be made to avoid scheduling concerts in conflict with other activities. Student athletes and cheerleaders must check and give a copy of their game schedule to the Director immediately, so that conflicts may be worked out. Athletes unable to resolve conflicts with their coach should see the Choral Director. The method of resolution may vary:
 - i. The student may be able to participate in both activities by making special transportation arrangements.

- ii. The student may be instructed by the Director or Coach as to which activity he/she is to undertake.
 - iii. The student may be given the option of choosing in which activity he/she will participate.
- d. On a day school is in session, to participate in performances of any nature (on school grounds or away), it is necessary that a student be in attendance for a minimum of a half day.
- e. **Fundraising** – The program will regularly present opportunities for traveling to workshops, performances, and other events. To relax the financial strain of traveling and fees for students, the director, and chaperones, we will have various fundraisers throughout the school year. Students may have to sell products or participate in activities to raise the funds. EACH STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE TO AID IN THE FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES. Effort is rewarded.
- f. **PERFORMANCES ARE MANDATORY FOR ALL!!!** Illness or an extreme family emergency is the only excuse for and absence. However, the parent must notify the director prior to the event for the absence to be excused. Phone (205) 626-9881
- g. **PLAN ACCORDINGLY** – Performance dates will be given well in advance. Arrangements for transportation are expected. If a performance comes up with short notice (which may occur) and are not during the day at school, leniency will be promoted for the time and performance.
- h. Students must maintain a 2.0 GPA for the semester to participate in most choral activities.

IX. Grading

- a. Grading will be mainly based on participation which includes daily, concert, rehearsal, and compilation of a portfolio, attitude of the student, adherence to classroom rules, and execution and improvement of basic musical skills and vocal production as determined by various means of evaluation in the following courses.
 - i. Daily Participation: (10 Pts) Each student's participation and contribution to the class will receive appropriate credit for that day. To receive full credit, a student will be diligently working to master the above listed performance expectations. This will include but is not limited to proper posture, use of sheet music, tone production, breath control, and response to director cues/instructions.
 - ii. Testing/Written Assignments/Projects/Portfolio: (50 Pts) There will be written assignments given from time to time as written examinations and/or skill level examinations. The assignments must be turned in on time to receive credit. At the end of the year, the assignments will be compiled in a portfolio that can be used for future use.
 - iii. Performances (100 Pts) The performance grade provides most of the student grade for the course. Students must be in school on the day of a performance, or on Friday for a weekend performance.
- b. **To receive an "A" grade for a performance, the following criteria must be met.**
 - i. The student will be on time to a performance for whenever called. For example, if there is a 7:30pm performance, and the student has been told to be there at 6:30pm, the student will be ready for roll call at 6:30pm. (5 pts deducted for lateness)
 - ii. The student will be responsible for his/her uniform, keeping it in good condition, and keeping track of its location. The student will come to a performance appropriately groomed and dressed in his/her well-maintained uniform. (1-5 pts deducted for failure of this line item) Students will not be allowed to perform if not dressed appropriately in his/her uniform.

- iii. For performances requiring field trip forms and or money, the field trip form will be turned in no later than FIVE days after it was issued. Students not turning in such items at least three days prior to the trip may forfeit their attendance on that field trip. (1-2 pts for failure of this line item)
- iv. The student will exhibit mastery of his/her music and will perform at his/her utmost individual capability. The student will conduct himself/herself in a mature and responsible manner at the performance site. **STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO HELP SET-UP AND PUT AWAY ALL EQUIPMENT AND PROPS.** (1-3 pts deducted for failure of this line item)
- v. For school concerts involving several departments, students are expected to attentively watch and respectfully attend the entire concert (1-3 pts deducted for failure of this line item.)
 - 1. If a student is absent (excused) from a performance (see handbook section Participation), he/she must do a written assignment to receive credit for that performance grade. The written assignment will be given by the teacher upon request of the student. Unexcused absences cannot be made up.
- c. Responsibility/Conduct (100 pts) By following classroom rules, attending performances, and turning in appropriate materials on time, the student will demonstrate his/her achievement of the overall ensemble.

X. Chorus Honors at Graduation

- a. Upon graduation from Ramsay IB High School, an Honor Cord (Pink) can be acquired by graduating Seniors based on the completion of the following requirements:
 - i. Students must complete 3 years in the RHS Choral Department
 - 1. Of those 3 years, participation during the Senior year is required
 - ii. Students must perform at least 10 times in the Choral Department.
 - iii. Students must audition for Alabama All-State at least twice.
 - iv. Students must maintain a “B” average or higher in the Choral Department
 - v. All debt to the Choral Department must be paid off to reach a balance of at least \$0 to receive the Honors Cord.
- b. Upon satisfaction from all requirements, an Honors Cord will be granted during the month of May of a Senior’s Year.

XI. Piano Lab

- a. Students will learn to play the piano in piano labs. Grades are somewhat on a sliding scale since it is possible that not all students enrolled in the class are total novice pianists. Evaluations will be made at the start of the school year to determine the individuals starting point.
- b. [Alfred’s Adult All-In-One Course](#) is the course’s REQUIRED text. It must be purchased at the start of the school term. The book may be purchased from Ellis Piano (Hoover, AL.). The cost of the book is \$17. Student’s assignments come directly from this text and students must “pass-off” certain pages each week to earn their grade. There is a window of opportunity to earn credit for these pages. Once the window closes, students will no longer be allowed to pass these pages off and will be given a score of zero (0) for that assignment.
 - i. If you have either taken this class before or have had private lessons before, then you may get the Level 2 or Level 3 books following this [link](#).
- c. More advanced piano students will be assigned additional music for their pass-off.

School Activity General Conduct Rules

Chorus is a school-sponsored activity; therefore, the BHM's Student Code of Conduct and Discipline Code will be in effect for all activities. Any infraction of these rules will result in school disciplinary action which can include suspension and/or expulsion. The following items are of merit:

1. Absolutely no possession of objects such as weapons, explosive devices, fireworks, or other potentially dangerous substances that could be used to harm another person
2. No fighting
3. Absolutely no possession of mood-modifying drugs or substances, including, but not limited to, alcohol
4. No use of profanity or obscene and abusive language or gestures in the presence of students or staff members. Chaperones are there for your protection and to help you. They are to be treated with respect. Any abusive actions or words directed at them will be dealt with through school administration upon returning from the field trip.
5. No theft or defacement of property.

These items are explained fully in the BHM Code of Conduct. Adherence to all BHM policies is expected as well as those listed above.

Important Dates:

August 2:	Classes resume
September 9:	Choir Parents & Booster Club Meeting
September 10:	AVA Fall Workshop (PD) (U of Montevallo)
September 20:	All-State, Show Choir, Honor Choir & OCS/OA/ME Reg. Deadline**
October 15:	All-State Show Choir & Honor Choir Auditions Due**, Online
November 4-5:	All-State Auditions**, Christ Episcopal Church in Tuscaloosa
November 6:	ASU Honor Choir Auditions, (Virtual)
November 12:	OCS/OA/ME Interviews**, Cahaba Heights UMC
December 2:	All-City Christmas Festival
December 8:	All-State Show Choir & Honor Choir Festival Registration Deadline**
December 9*:	RHS Fine Arts Winter Showcase, 6:00 PM**
January 17:	MLK Track Meet Performance, Ramsay & Crossplex
January 19-21:	AMEA Honor Choir, All-State Show Choir & Conference, BJCC**
January 21:	Solo & Ensemble Assessments Registration Deadline**
January 27:	All-State Festival Registration Deadline**
February 7:	UAB Honor Choir (Concert @4:30pm)
February 9-12:	TMEA, San Antonio, TX
February 14*:	RHS Awards Day
February 17-19:	ASU Honor Choir
February 23:	ACDA Southern Conference, Raleigh, NC (PD)
February 22*:	Pre-SCPA Concert, Ramsay High School (AVA)
March 4:	Solo & Ensemble Assessments**, Episcopal Church of the Ascension
March 10-12:	All-State Festival, BJCC**
April TBD:	BCS All-City Evaluations
April 5-6:	SCPA** (required field trip), Canterbury UMC or Gardendale Baptist
April 28-May 1:	San Antonio, TX WorldStrides Trip
April 22*:	Fine Arts Night, 6:00, Ramsay High School
May *:	Spring Concert, 6:00, Ramsay High School

*= Pending Date (Subject to change)

**=Alabama Vocal Association Event (Students may be asked to participate & assist)