

VELA MS CHOIR HANDBOOK

VMS-CHOIR.COM

2023-2024



SPECIAL THANKS

BROWNSVILLE ISD ADMINISTRATION

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rene Gutierrez

Assistant Area Superintendent, Rose Longoria

BISD DEPT OF FINE ARTS ADMINISTRATION

Fine Arts Director, Michael Garcia

Choral Lead Teacher, Melody Erikson

FILEMON B. VELA MS ADMINISTRATION

Principal, Michelle Garcia

Dean of Instruction, pending

Assistant Principal, Dr. Ana Rubalcaba

Assistant Principal, Alejandro Rivera

HANNA ECHS CLUSTER CHOIR DEPARTMENT

Hanna ECHS Choirs, Ignacio Cruz & Karen Hernandez

Vela MS Choirs, Victoria Graves & Nephi Sanchez

Oliveira MS Choirs, Leo Zamora & Israel Hinojosa

BISD Accompanist, Jacqueline Guevara





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WELCOME TO THE CHOIR!



Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome to the 2023–2024 school year! The Vela MS Choir Department welcomes all students to a year of making amazing choral music.

Students are placed in ensembles based on their singing experience, work ethic, and grade level. In other words, students will be placed in the choir that meets their needs as developing young musicians. This year in choir, students will learn to sing with strong vocal technique, in a variety of styles and languages, and they will also learn musical skills that are necessary building blocks for all musicians.

Not only do our students learn about music, but we hope that all of our students will also learn valuable life skills such as working to meet goals, meeting obligations, punctuality, teamwork, and leadership, as well as the ability to recognize and appreciate the beauty of music and culture.

Please take the time to read through this handbook and mark down dates for all concerts, competitions, and other events. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the VMS Choir Department via phone, text, or email.

Sincerely,

Victoria A. Graves, VMS Head Choir Director
Nephi Sanchez, VMS Assistant Choir Director

BEGINNING OF YEAR TO DO LIST

ALL CHOIR MEMBERS, Grades 6-8



The Membership Agreement

Complete this form stating that you have read and understand the expectations and policies for all members of the Vela Choir.



Subscribe to Remind

Subscribe to Remind to receive important reminders throughout the school year. You can choose to receive messages via text or email.



Concert Dates

To avoid scheduling conflicts, please view the Choir Calendar and add our Concert Dates to your planner and/or phone calendar.



Choir Supplies

All members of the Choir need these supplies for class. If you need assistance getting supplies, please let us know as soon as possible!



www.vms-choir.com

7TH & 8TH
GRADES ONLY



Formal Uniform Agreement

Complete this form stating that you have read and understand policies concerning the Formal Uniforms which are checked out to our students.



Contest Dates

To avoid scheduling conflicts, please view the Choir Calendar and add our Contest Dates to your planner and/or phone calendar.

OPTIONAL



Subscribe to Instagram

Subscribe to Instagram to view pictures and videos of the Choir, as well as to receive important reminders throughout the school year.



Subscribe to Facebook

Subscribe to Facebook to view pictures and videos of the Choir, as well as to receive important reminders throughout the school year.



Fiesta Texas Information

If you're interested in attending the Choir's Spring Trip to Fiesta Texas, please check out this info about chaperones and fundraisers!

PARENT COMMUNICATION



Instagram
@bisd_vmschoir



Facebook
/bisd.vmschoir



Remind
@vmschoir23



Apply to be a
Parent Volunteer!



Choir Office
956-698-0731



Google Voice
Graves: 956-203-0522
Sanchez: 432-698-0565



Email
Graves: vagraves@bisd.us
Sanchez: nsanchez2@bisd.us



**FILEMON B. VELA
MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR**

**KEEP IN
TOUCH!**

2023-2024

CHOIR CALENDAR

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	1	2

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Staff Dev and Teacher Prep Days
August 8-11 | December 22
January 8 | May 31

First Day of School: August 14
Last Day of School: May 30

7th & 8th Grade Only
MS All-City Choir: October 28
Solo & Ensemble Contest: Nov. 11
Pre-UIL Evaluations: February 27
UIL Concert & SR: March 5, 6, 7
Region Choir Auditions: April 20
Region Clinic & Concert: May 4

VMS Choir Concerts ★
Fall Concert: October 17
Winter Concert: December 12
Spring Concert: May 15

In the VMS Gymnasium
Students arrive by 5:30 PM
Concert begins at 6:00 PM
Mandatory for ALL Choir Members

Holidays & Vacations
Independence Day: July 4
Labor Day: September 4
Columbus Day: October 9
Thanksgiving: November 20-24
Christmas (Employees): Dec 25 - Jan 5
Christmas (Students): Dec 22 - Jan 8
Charro Days: (1/2 Day Feb 29) / March 1
Spring Break: March 11-15
Easter Break: March 29 / April 1
May Break: May 24 / 27

Summer Choir Camps
July 31 - August 4, 2023
June 3 - June 7, 2024



ENSEMBLE DESCRIPTIONS

Encore is a Varsity-level auditioned ensemble of advanced 7th & 8th grade mixed voices. The ensemble sings both traditional and contemporary choral literature for mixed voices in various languages. This ensemble is required to compete at UIL Concert & Sight Reading Evaluations, and members of this choir are also required to participate in Solo & Ensemble Contest and the TMEA Region Choir Auditions.

A Cappella is a Varsity-level auditioned ensemble of advanced 7th & 8th grade treble voices. The ensemble sings both traditional and contemporary choral literature for treble voices in various languages. This ensemble is required to compete at UIL Concert & Sight Reading Evaluations, and members of this choir are also required to participate in Solo & Ensemble Contest and the TMEA Region Choir Auditions.

Da Capo is a non-auditioned ensemble of beginner 6th grade mixed voices. The ensemble sings both traditional and contemporary choral literature for young treble voices in various languages. This ensemble does not compete in UIL or TMEA events. Students in this ensemble may be chosen to join Junior Varsity or Varsity ensembles when they move up to 7th grade.

Bel Canto is a non-auditioned Junior Varsity ensemble of 7th & 8th grade tenor-bass voices. The ensemble sings both traditional and contemporary moderate-level choral literature for tenor-bass voices in various languages. This ensemble is required to compete at UIL Concert & Sight Reading Evaluations, and members of this choir may choose to participate in Solo & Ensemble Contest and the TMEA Region Choir Auditions. 7th grade students in this ensemble may be chosen to join the Varsity ensemble when they move up to 8th grade.

Arioso is a non-auditioned Junior Varsity ensemble of 7th & 8th grade treble voices. The ensemble sings both traditional and contemporary moderate-level choral literature for treble voices in various languages. This ensemble is required to compete at UIL Concert & Sight Reading Evaluations, and members of this choir may choose to participate in Solo & Ensemble Contest and the TMEA Region Choir Auditions. 7th grade students in this ensemble may be chosen to join the Varsity ensembles when they move up to 8th grade.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

CHOIR COUNCIL

Choir Council Members meet once a month to assist in the planning of social events for the Choir. Officer positions include President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Class Representatives.

The Choir Council is elected by the Choir Classes once at the beginning of the school year, and members can be replaced throughout the year as needed by the Choir Directors.



CONCERT ANNOUNCERS

Concert Announcers go on the microphone at various times throughout our concert performances to give important announcements and reminders to the audience in English and/or in Spanish.

Announcers volunteer and are assigned duties by the Choir Directors.



SECTION LEADERS

Section Leaders assist the Choir Directors in class by marking attendance on clipboards, as well as helping other students in their section with marking music or singing in rehearsal.



REHEARSAL EXPECTATIONS

SHOW UP



Be on the risers with your music and supplies, ready to sing, when the bell rings.

BREATHE

No gum or food while we're singing. (It's a choking hazard!)



DO YOUR BEST



Participate in all rehearsal activities.

Clean up after yourself after every rehearsal, and take care to always put your binder away in its assign slot.

BE KIND



Come here to
LEARN



Phones should be put away at all times during rehearsal.

DISCIPLINE

Because choral ensembles are performance-driven, rehearsal expectations will be strictly enforced. Discipline issues will be documented and forward to administration as needed, in accordance with the BISD Student Code of Conduct.

The discipline plan is as follows:

- 1. The student will receive a verbal warning.**
- 2. Contact will be made with the student's parent or guardian.**
- 3. The student will be assigned lunch detention in the Choir Room.**
- 4. A conference will be requested between the student, parent, and Choir Teachers.**
- 5. Any further issues will be referred to Vela Administration.**

***Note: Severe incidents may be referred directly to Administration.**

POLICY



Per Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Music §117.208, students enrolled in music classes are expected to participate in performances, featuring a varied repertoire of music.

All members of the Vela Choir are required to participate in three concert performances throughout the school year, and 7th & 8th grade students are also required to participate in competition performances. In preparation for competitions, students may be required to attend sectional rehearsals outside of regular class time.

PERFORMANCE POLICY

Performance dates are given out at the beginning of the school year. Please plan accordingly.

If a student cannot attend an event, they have the responsibility to communicate about a scheduling conflict with the Choir Directors.

Included in this handbook are examples of what may be considered excused or unexcused absences. Feel free to speak with your Choir Directors for help. Many times, we as teachers, can approach another teacher or coach to help resolve a scheduling conflict if we are informed in advance.



EXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused absences must be communicated to the director in writing as soon as the conflict arises, preferably in advance of the performance.

- Serious injury or contagious illness
 - Death in the immediate family
 - Participation in a family wedding or religious event
 - Religious conflicts
 - Other circumstances may apply.
- Communicate with your directors for clarification.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

- No-show
- Forgot
- Did not have the uniform
- Minor illness (headache, sore throat, minor cold, allergies, etc.)
- Birthday celebrations or rehearsals
- Non-UIL activities or trips
- Athletic practices
- Lack of transportation
- Doctor's appointments that could be made at another time.

Remember that grades from absences will need to be made up, whether they are excused or not.

Please take the time to look at the Concert & Contest Dates now and put them in your calendar!



GRADING POLICY

Reminder: an elective class is one that you choose to take... That does NOT mean the class doesn't count toward your grades!

Grading for Choir classes will be in compliance with BISD grading policies. The school year is divided into six grading periods. At the end of each six week grading period, students will receive an average grade, based on a minimum of five minor grades and three major grades.

Minor Grades make up 40% of students' overall grade and will consist of daily rehearsal participation, pop quizzes, after school rehearsals, and any other daily class activities.

Major Grades make up 60% of students' overall grade and will consist of quizzes, exams, recording projects, and concert or contest performances.

- **Concert Performances** count as THREE test grades: Audience Etiquette, Performance Etiquette, and Concert Attire.
- **UIL Contest Performances** count as THREE test grades: Audience Etiquette, Performance Etiquette, and Concert Attire.
- **Region Choir auditions** count as one test grade for auditions, plus an additional one test grade for the performance.

UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS

7TH & 8TH GRADERS ONLY

Formal Uniforms will be used for the Fall Concert, Winter Concert, UIL Contest, and Region Choir

Formal Uniforms for 7-8 grade Tenors & Basses



Formal Uniforms are checked out to students for FREE for their use throughout the school year, after they complete the Formal Uniform Agreement. Pants will need to be sewn to the correct length before our first performance. Alteration instructions will be given along with the uniform.

You Need:

- Black crew-length socks or trouser socks.
- Black dress shoes, loafers, or dressy boots.

Not allowed:

- Barefoot / no socks
- White socks
- Open-toed shoes
- Multi-colored sneakers
- Jewelry
- Cologne / Body Spray

Formal Uniforms for 7-8 grade Sopranos & Altos



Formal Uniforms are checked out to students for FREE for their use throughout the school year, after they complete the Formal Uniform Agreement. Dresses will need to be sewn to the correct length before our first performance. Alteration instructions will be given along with the uniform.

You Need:

- Black pantyhose, tights, or trouser socks.
- Black closed-toe flat dress shoes or dressy low-heeled boots.

Not allowed:

- High heels
- Bare feet / no socks
- Open-toed shoes
- Jewelry
- Perfume / Body Spray

SPRING SHOW

Informal Uniforms will be used for the Spring Show in May.

Attire for the Choir's Spring Show

Choir T-shirts are available for sale for \$20!

Varsity Choir Hooded Tees are available for sale ONLY for members of A Cappella and Encore for \$35!

7th & 8th Graders may also wear their Varsity Hooded Tees or Region Choir T-shirts!

6th graders may wear their black pants/skirts from the previous two concerts if they don't have jeans.

You Need:

- Vela Choir T-shirt or a plain, black t-shirt.
- Any shade of full-length BLUE jeans without tears or holes.
- Comfortable lace-up shoes.

Not allowed:

- High Heels
- Open-toed shoes
- Cologne, Perfume, or Body Spray

6TH GRADERS ONLY

Semi-Formal Uniforms will be used for the Fall Concert and Winter Concert

Semi-Formal Uniforms for 6th Graders

You Need:

- Vela MS yellow 6th Grade polo shirt or plain yellow polo shirt.
- Black dress pants or midi/long skirt.
- Black closed-toe dress shoes, loafers, or dressy boots.

Not allowed:

- Barefoot / no socks
- High Heels
- Open-toed shoes
- Multi-colored sneakers
- Jewelry
- Perfume / Cologne / Body Spray

NOTE: All Choir Members will wear informal uniforms for the Spring Show.

Excellent Presentation is all in the details!



NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS



NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS

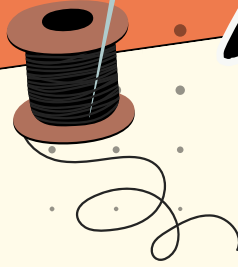


NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS



ALTERATION Instructions

**7TH & 8TH
GRADERS ONLY**



- When altering the length of the uniform, hand-stitch only. Hem tape, staples, and sewing machines are prohibited as they will damage the material.
- Do not cut off any material, take in the side-seams of the gowns, remove garment tags, or machine wash or iron the garments. White tuxedo shirts may be machine-washed with bleach & ironed on low heat.
- Formal gowns/pants **MUST** be hemmed to your height so your uniform is not dragging on the floor. Hems should sit lightly on the top of your foot while wearing your dress shoes.



PERMANENT ALTERATIONS



NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS



NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS

NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS



NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS



NO PERMANENT ALTERATIONS

END OF YEAR AWARDS

Choir Awards will be presented at the Spring Show in May. Awards recipients are chosen at the discretion of the Choir Directors. Considerations include classroom rehearsal skills, participation in concert performances, success in competitions, loyalty to the program, and musical ability and growth.

At the end of the school year, the directors will recognize Rising Stars, Outstanding Choir Members, 3-year Choir Members, and 1 *All-Star Choir Member.

*The All-Star Choir Member will have their name engraved on a special plaque to be displayed in the VMS Choir Room for years to come!



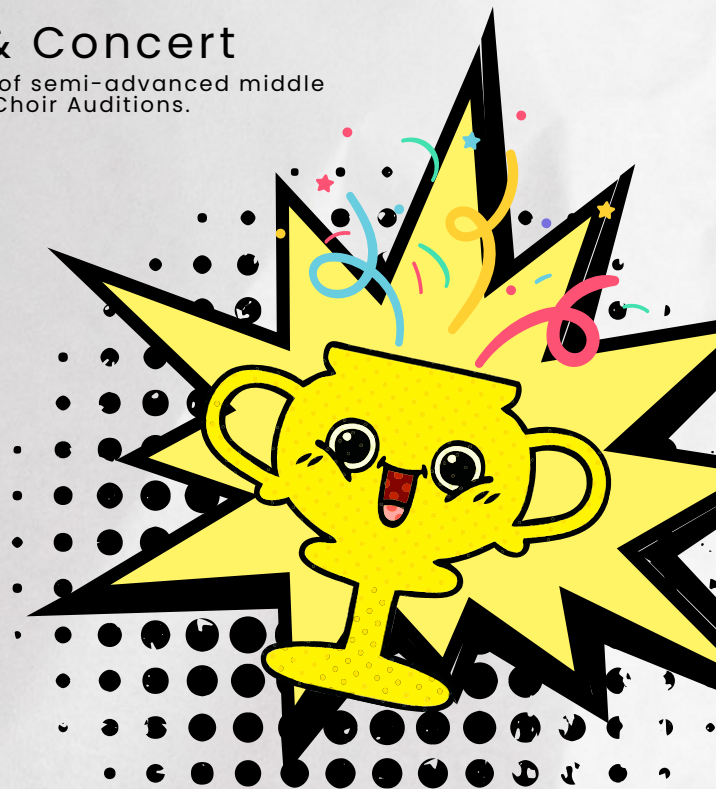
COMPETITIVE CHOIR EVENTS

2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

- 🕒 **Oct 28: BISD All-City Choir**
Selected students will learn 5 pieces of SATB choral repertoire, which they will rehearse and perform with MS Choir members from all over BISD.
- 🕒 **Nov 11: Solo & Ensemble Contest**
Students will perform a memorized solo with a live accompanist, or an a cappella ensemble piece, to be scored by a single judge. Students will strive to perform with strong vocal technique, independent musicality, and stage presence.
- 🕒 **Feb 27: BISD Pre-UIL Evaluations**
Students will perform for a panel of practice judges to help prepare them for their upcoming performance at the UIL Evaluations. Judges will come to VMS, and we will perform during our class time.
- 🕒 **Mar 5-7: UIL Concert & SR Evaluations**
UIL Evaluations have two parts: Concert and Sight Reading. Students will perform 3 memorized choral pieces to be rated by a panel of three judges. In a separate room, students will read and perform a new piece of music they've never seen before, which will be rated by another panel of three judges.
- 🕒 **Apr 20: Region Choir Auditions**
Students will learn 5 pieces of semi-advanced middle school choral repertoire. In a blind audition, students will perform "cuts" from three of the pieces for a panel of five judges hidden behind a screen, who will score each performance from 1 to 300 (best). The top 35 performers from each section will make it into the Region Choir.
- 🕒 **May 4: Region Choir Clinic & Concert**
Selected students will rehearse and perform the 5 pieces of semi-advanced middle school choral repertoire that they learned for the Region Choir Auditions.



- 🕒 Competitions for Individual Singers
- 🕒 Competitions for Choirs



ELEGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

Per the UIL "no pass no play" standard, students must be passing their classes at the end of the grading period prior to a competition sponsored by the Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) or University Interscholastic League (UIL).

However, for middle school choir, there are some exceptions to this rule.

Which contest does eligibility apply to?

~~⊗~~ Nov 11: Solo & Ensemble Contest

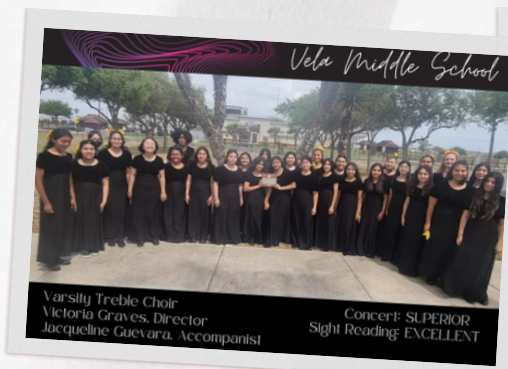
This contest is sponsored by Brownsville ISD at the middle school level, rather than by TMEA or UIL. Because of this, students do not have to be passing to participate.

~~⊗~~ Mar 5-7: UIL Concert & SR Evaluations

Since UIL Evaluations are like the STAAR for Choir, it has been mandated by UIL that all students enrolled in a 7th-8th grade Choir must participate regardless of eligibility.

✔ Apr 20: Region Choir Auditions

Region Choir Auditions are sponsored by TMEA. Therefore, students must be passing all of their classes at the end of MP5 to be eligible to participate.



Musical Vocabulary Guide



As part of our students' music education, we will be focusing heavily on concepts of music literacy. This is a guide to the vocabulary we will be using throughout the year.



Did you know?

Texas All-State musicians have consistently scored higher on the SAT! On average, they scored 22% higher than the national average and about 26% higher than the Texas average.

[Check out the data here!](#)



Musical Elements Guide

This is a guide to the musical elements we will be learning to read and write throughout the year. Students will receive a paper copy of both guides to keep in their Choir Binders.



INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA

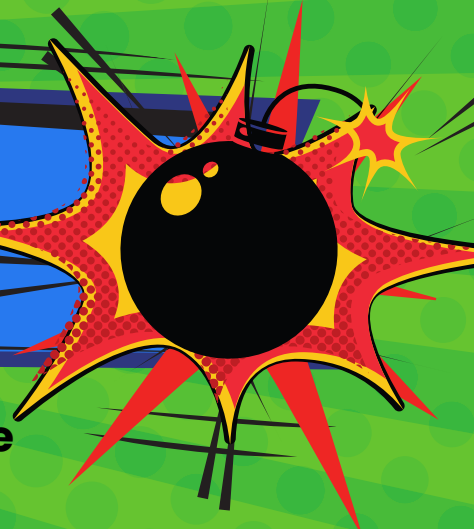
DISCLAIMER!

Any student member of an extracurricular organization (e.g. choir, dance team, cheerleading, student council, athletics, etc.) representing themselves or their organization in an unfavorable, questionable, or illegal manner through electronic media services, (i.e. websites, personal home pages, blogs, text messages, chat rooms, or similar websites and/or files accessible through a server or internet service,) or using electronic communication devices in such a way as to discredit, bring dishonor or disgrace on their organization or any members of the organization, or any other school organization, including themselves (i.e. camera phones, digital photos, electronic descriptions) will be subject to disciplinary actions determined by appropriate school officials an/or organization directors, including dismissal from the organization.

~~CYBER
BULLYING~~



Choir Merch

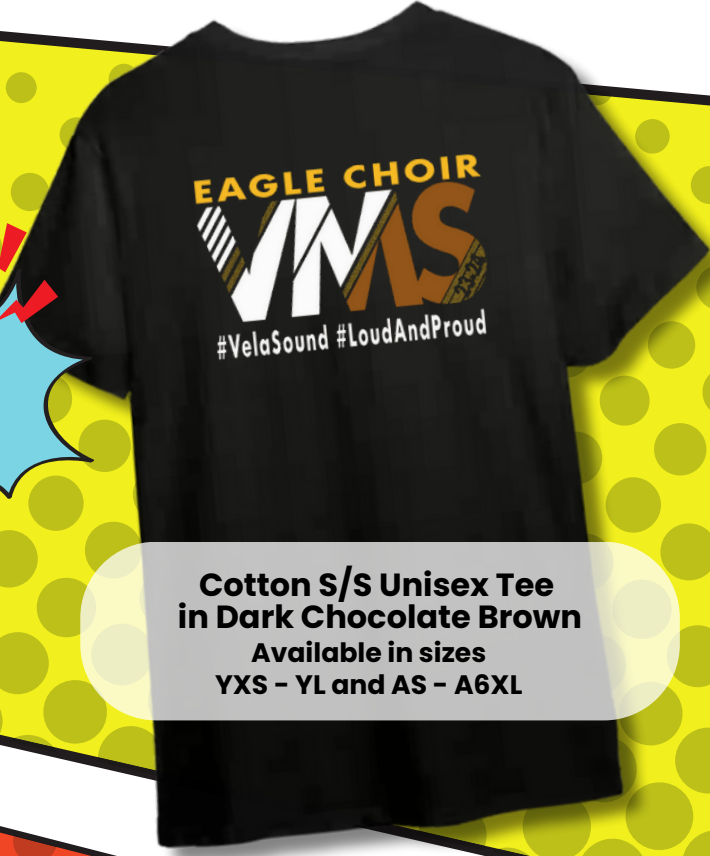


Choir Spirit Merch will be sold as a pre-sale fundraiser. Please help support our Choir!

Vela Choir Spirit T-shirts

Available for ALL Choir members... Also, friends, family, and teachers!

\$ 20



Cotton S/S Unisex Tee in Dark Chocolate Brown
Available in sizes YXS - YL and AS - A6XL



Soft Tek Unisex Hooded Tee in Charcoal Gray
Available in sizes AS - A3XL

\$ 35

Varsity Choir Hooded Tees

Only for members of the A Cappella and Encore Choirs!

VMS EAGLE CHOIR

SMILE!

PHOTOS AND *Recordings*

The VMS Choir Department captures photos and video recordings throughout the year of choir students during school, BISD, TMEA, and UIL events for public relation purposes.

The VMS Choir Department will also be taking an annual Panoramic Photo with Edward's Studio Panoramic Photography. Choir Panoramic Photos will be available for purchase through the choir directors.

Per the Texas Education Legal Code 26.009, the VMS Choir Department utilizes audio recording technology to record rehearsal clips and oral/aural tests in class, as well as video recording technology to catalogue concert and contest performances for instructional purposes.

\$25

CHOIR PANORAMAS

**PACKAGE INCLUDES:
ONE LARGE PANORAMA
ONE SMALL SILLY PHOTO**

**INDIVIDUAL
CHOIR
PORTRAITS \$25**

**PACKAGE INCLUDES:
ONE 8X10, TWO 5X7, AND
EIGHT WALLET-SIZED.**

*Panoramic and Individual Photos will be
taken before the Fall Concert, 10/17!*

40 SPOTS AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS!

SIGN UP TODAY TO SECURE YOUR SPOT!

**FUNDRAISING OPTIONS ARE
AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.**



**YOUR TRIP T-SHIRT IS INCLUDED
IN THE COST OF THE TRIP!**

**"MUSIC IN
THE PARKS"
MUSIC FESTIVAL**

**SIX FLAGS
FIESTA TEXAS**

SAT MAY 18, 2024 - SUN MAY 19, 2024

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS.](#)