

Saratoga High School Music

Choral Programs



Concert Choir • Chamber Choir • Saratoga Ringers



*For a digital info packet with videos,
www.saratogamusicboosters.org*



Welcome to the SHS Choir Family!

Thanks for your interest in the choral program! We are proud of our tradition at Saratoga High School. Our program involves a diverse population of students with varying backgrounds. Whether a student has many years of experience or is new to choir, we welcome all to create a “home” with us on campus. The choral program at Saratoga High School is a melting pot of students involved in virtually every sport, activity, and co-curricular on campus. Our program is designed to meet the needs of all students interested in the discipline of music as part of their academic life.

We are already making plans for the upcoming school year! The largest part of this preparation focuses on our new members who are completing their 8th grade year. Therefore, we want to begin an early communication with you, the students and parents, to ensure all those involved in the choral program will have a superb transition to our high school program.

NOW is the time when musical investment begins to pay measurable dividends. The seeds of success are about to produce a harvest of exciting opportunities for you as you take that all-important first step forward as a member of our organization. Making choir part of your SHS life is one of the most significant and beneficial decisions you can make!

Students are often ambivalent and a bit fearful about entering high school. Much of this first- year stress can be avoided when you are an integral and valued member of a meaningful and important group. Being in the choir helps to make this process positive and serves as a springboard for high school life and beyond. In addition, it affords every student the opportunity to enter an advanced level of instruction with a host of talented friends who share a similar interest and a familiar language. Our upperclassmen serve as a safe, fun, and supportive social family in the introduction to this new learning climate. We pride ourselves on our musical accomplishments, but even more on the supportive network our program provides.

This handout is meant to provide answers to frequently asked questions about the SHS Choirs and just a bit of information that will be of use to you in the next several weeks. Each family will receive an official Choir Handbook in August as part of the Fall Kick-Off, which presents all information in much greater detail and a schedule for the upcoming school year. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss our program in detail and share my professional thoughts about the positive implications associated with our choir program.

We are anxiously looking forward to working with you! In discussing the future of our program, we all feel next year’s entering class will bring a new level of excellence and camaraderie to our program!

Jason Shiuan
Performing Arts Department Chair
jshiuan@lgsuhd.org

Frequently Asked Questions:

Is high school choir difficult?

Just like anything worth your time, being in the SHS choir takes effort. However, we have a spot for ALL students, regardless of your current musical level. Our biggest wish is for all students to achieve consistently and enjoy the learning process. Every aspect of our program is designed to foster and encourage musical and personal maturity.

Is it possible to be in Choir and in Marching Band or Color Guard?

Yes. By participating in either Marching Band or Color Guard, a choral student is able to satisfy the PE credits required for graduation.

Does Choir take up all of my time?

No! This is perhaps the greatest misconception to incoming students and parents. Choir is a commitment, just like anything of worth, but does not prevent you from participation in other SHS classes, activities, and co-curriculars. The first quarter of the year encompasses the greatest amount of time outside of school, including the annual choir retreat, which is considered the "homework" for the class since no other work exists other than this rehearsal, memorizing and learning time. After this, time commitment is limited to class, home practice, and performances. Further, no other organization on campus has a greater success rate of everything from GPA to college placement than music. Structure and discipline work!

Can I play sports/other co-curricular activities?

YES! In fact, most of our students are involved in sports or other co-curricular activities. We encourage you to participate in a variety of co-curricular activities. No matter what activities you pursue, you must keep an accurate schedule and iron out any conflicts that may arise beforehand. We have a systematic approach to help you with this, but it is up to you to keep your schedule straight, for the good of the choir and for the good of your other activities. With a little give and take, most things work out just fine. We have students involved in every sport on campus. Again, structure and discipline work!

What is the time commitment outside of the school day?

All year long, the each choir will have various performing opportunities ranging from weekend school performances and festival competitions to seasonal caroling "pop-out" performances during the school day. These events are built into the curriculum, and are considered the "homework", similar to any other class. The calendar indicates these performances and students must arrange calendars accordingly, and see faculty with immovable conflicts



What Classes Should I Take?

Parents and students often ask about the demand of band on the academic schedule at Saratoga High School. You will find that some of the brightest and best SHS students are dedicated choir members. To the right are typical freshmen and sophomore schedules.

*PE Credit is earned by participation in Marching band or Color Guard. No PE credit is needed 2nd semester of Sophomore year as the credit can be earned by band/guard participation during Junior and Senior year. If a student is enrolled in Winter Guard or Winter Percussion, an additional semester of PE credit will be earned.

SAMPLE CHOIR SCHEDULE:
FRESHMAN FALL

Example "A" Day	Example "B" Day
Period 1 English	Period 2 Science
Period 3 Choir Level II	Period 4 Foreign Language
Period 5 Health/ Driver's Ed/ World Geo	Period 6 PE (or Band PE/Guard) (or Fall Sport PE)
Period 7 Math	Period 8 Music Dept. Only Marching Band/ Color Guard

SAMPLE CHOIR SCHEDULE:
FRESHMAN SPRING

Example "A" Day	Example "B" Day
Period 1 English	Period 2 Science
Period 3 Choir Level II	Period 4 Foreign Language
Period 5 Health/ Driver's Ed/ World Geo	Period 6 PE (Free period if participating in WG, WP or Spr. Sport)
Period 7 Math	Period 0 Symph. Orch. or Jazz Band Period 8 Winter Guard Winter Perc.

Do I need to be in choir both semesters?

Yes. The choir curriculum is set up as a year-long course, just as a foreign language class. Exceptions can be made in unusual circumstances, but must be approved by Mr. Ford, Mr. Boitz and the SHS Guidance Department.

SAMPLE CHOIR SCHEDULE:
SOPHOMORE FALL

Example "A" Day	Example "B" Day
Period 1 English	Period 2 Science
Period 3 Choir Level III	Period 4 Foreign Language
Period 5 World History	Period 6 PE (or Band PE/Guard) (or Fall Sport PE)
Period 7 Math	Period 8 Music Dept. Only Marching Band PE/ Color Guard

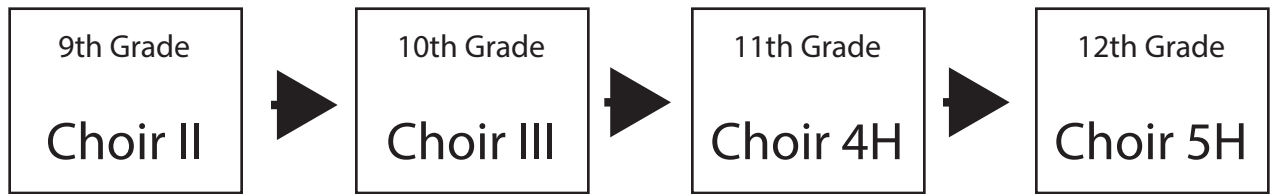
SAMPLE CHOIR SCHEDULE:
SOPHOMORE SPRING

Example "A" Day	Example "B" Day
Period 1 English	Period 2 Science
Period 3 Choir Level III	Period 4 Foreign Language
Period 5 World History	Period 6 PE (Free period if participating in WG, WP or Spr. Sport)
Period 7 Math	Period 0 Symph. Orch. or Jazz Band Period 8 Winter Guard Winter Perc.



I've heard the SHS Choirs earn honors credit?

Yes, almost all of our 11th and 12th graders earn UC, Private College, Out-of-State, and State College Honors Credit in their 11th and 12th grade year. Students must be enrolled in 9th grade (Choir II) and 10th grade (Choir III) to follow the sequence outlined by the UC system to earn this credit, or pick up the credit in sequence if added after 9th grade year.



Why are there different choirs and not just one?

We are fortunate to offer different choral groups to facilitate the learning process that fosters educational growth to the performing musician over the course of four years. Most incoming freshman are placed in Concert Choir, then audition for Chamber Singers as a sophomore, junior or senior. Soem students choose to make their home in Concert Choir for all four years. Course descriptions are found below.

CC (Concert Choir)

Mixed Voices, Grades 9-12

Concert Choir is a mixed vocal ensemble open to men and women. It is designed to propel students toward an advanced ensemble as they progress in the choral program throughout their high school experience. It combines students of all grade levels, and fosters an environment of diverse learning. Introductory music theory, vocal technique, and sight singing are covered in this course. All students complete a section placement audition at the beginning of the school year. Students will sing music from the Renaissance to Contemporary periods, and sing in several foreign languages. Students are also encouraged to audition for regional and state honor choir.

CH (Chamber Singers)

Mixed Voices, Grades 10-12

This class is an audition-only mixed ensemble involving 24-32 advanced choral musicians in grades 10-12. Priority placement for Chamber Singers is given to 11th and 12th grade students. Chamber Singers is our top vocal ensemble at SHS, and continues to focus on growing and refining musicianship skills. This ensemble performs music of all periods, in many languages, and represents the choral department in many on campus and outside community events. Students are encouraged, but not required, to audition for the regional, state and national honor choirs, sponsored through ACDA (American Choral Directors Association). More information on the honor choirs can be found at acda.org.

SR (Saratoga Ringers)

Saratoga High School offers a Handbell Chor, open to students of all grade levels. The group meets during the school day Even if you have never played handbells before, no audition is necessary. However, basic music reading skills are necessary. The bell- choir performs at the choir concerts during the year, and out in the community.



Questions About Choir Life

Does the choir tour?

Yes. Extensive tours, however, are not mandatory. We typically take a major tour every 3 years, with small tours in between. Our last major tour was during the summer of 2017 to Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands. The choir toured internationally during the summer of 2012 to Italy. In 2009 the choir toured Italy, and Australia in 2006, both with the band and orchestra.

Are there fundraisers to help pay for choir events and tours?

Yes. We have several every year. Students will have their own "account" set up by our music boosters for these purposes.

Is it hard to get an "A" in choir?

95% of our students earn an "A" in choir. Earning anything less than an "A" means you are simply not meeting the proficiency and commitment requirements. You will receive a detailed grading policy in your choir syllabus.

Do I have to attend all performances?

Yes! Choir is a group performance class. Performance situations can't be recreated around each individual student. These growth experiences occur infrequently and are very important to the development of the student. Since we depend on each other so much, it is a great loss to miss anyone. Each student's contribution is critical and irreplaceable. You will receive a performance schedule well in advance. If changes occur in the schedule, you will be notified immediately.

Do I have to take private lessons?

We highly recommend students take private or group lessons of some sort. However, they are not required. Students who truly excel academically are usually involved with private lessons. Successful music programs typically have a large percentage of their students studying privately. The frequency of lessons varies greatly. Some students take an hour private lesson weekly, some 30 minutes, some every other week, etc. Please see Mr. Ford or another faculty if you need a recommendation or list of potential private teachers in the area. Students who do not study privately are highly encouraged to seek extra help as often as needed.

Does Choir look good on college applications?

ABSOLUTELY! CHOIR STUDENTS CLEARLY STAND OUT! In fact, most college admissions departments seek out music students, as they recognize all that is involved in our academic discipline. Our graduates are attending some of the top universities and colleges in the country. Every year, the music office phone rings with questions from college admissions departments regarding our students. Most of our students stand out when compared to non-music students, and every year we have graduates earning scholarships based on their music participation and academic merit. No other organization on campus at SHS stands out in the way the Music Program does.



Choir and other electives.

This information is important to Choir students, as it does impact the choir sequence, and being able to stay in the ensemble for four years. While striving for four-year-seniority is certainly not a reason to join any elective class (in this case choir), in reality the course sequence does have an impact on many, as well as demonstrates on paper and in practical application a student's ability to commit and progress in a disciplined and engaging art form. Here is some information to help clear things up:

Choir and Journalism:

Many students elect to position themselves in Choir during their 9th grade year, then add another elective 10th grade year and beyond. Such is the case for Journalism. Journalism spaces do not fill up for 10th graders as they do for 9th graders (limited space exists for 9th graders), so there is no problem in adding Journalism as a 10th grader.

Choir and “Project Lead the Way” Elective:

Students can enroll in these classes at any grade level; there is no official sequence, regardless of course title (the course titles are a bit confusing/deceiving).

- 1. Intro to Engineering: This is NOT a prerequisite to the other classes, and students can take this class at any grade level*
- 2. Applied Engineering: 10th-12th graders can take this class, and there is no prerequisite, or required order, ie Intro before Applied.*

Choir and Rhetoric & Drama

Most students in Choir participate in athletics, clubs, and many other activities, including Rhetoric and Drama. Students need not be enrolled in an actual Rhetoric class or Drama class to participate in the Speech and Debate Team or Schools Plays and Musicals.

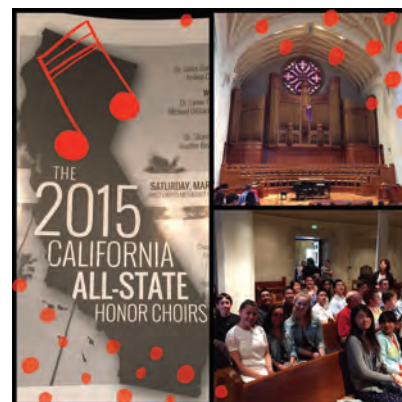
What about Jazz Band?

SHS offers two jazz bands. Students can participate in Choir and Jazz Band I, which meets during the 8th period at the conclusion of marching band season. No audition is required for Jazz Band I, and Performing Art semester credit is given to students for participation. Jazz Band II is open to grades 10th-12th, and explores the science behind sound engineering, recording, and production. Jazz Band II meets during 7th period and satisfies the Applied Arts credit at SHS. This is a great possibility for sophomore year if you are in choir and play an instrument and would like to be in another ensemble.

PARENTS! You play a large role in our success!

The success of our program largely depends on the dedicated parents who make everything happen! Not only is the SHS Choral Program a great way for students to get involved in the SHS Community, but it is also a great opportunity for parents to become involved as well. Many parents have made life long friends, and stayed in touch long after their students have graduated.

We are always looking for volunteers to help with receptions, be a part of the Jazz Cabaret event, chaperone events, help with uniforms, drive our vehicles, and most importantly... to cheer on the amazing choir students! Consider joining Saratoga Music Boosters to find out more ways you can be apart of the enriching music ensembles at Saratoga High School.



What are the ways parents can get involved with the choir?

The most important thing parents can do to fully support students is providing the ingredients for success in all academic endeavors. In music, some of these are: private lessons, praise and encouragement, patient ears, and most importantly, attend all events and performances. The choir program relies heavily on parent volunteers for many things. Becoming a member of the music boosters and volunteering when available is greatly appreciated. In general, choir students are a fun and inspirational group of young people to be around. Our volunteer parents have a wonderful time volunteering with our students, and many oftentimes become great friends!

Whom should I contact for more information?

Jason Shiuan
Performing Arts Department Chair
jshiuan@lgsuhsd.org

Takako Hasegawa
Performing Arts Assistant
thasegawa@lgsuhsd.org