

Dear Carmel Choir Families,

By now, everyone should have received the return-to-school plans sent out from the Carmel Clay School District and Carmel High School. The option was given to students to either stay home and continue virtual learning, or to return to a hybrid schedule of in-person learning. As you are aware, at this point, the plan is to split the CHS “in-person” learners into two cohorts, having them alternate days of at home classes and on campus classes, thus reducing the number of students on campus each day to less than half of the usual enrollment.

This hybrid plan creates some very interesting challenges for the performing arts department. As it stands right now, we assume that some of the students in each ensemble will choose the option to completely stay home and learn virtually. This makes it impossible for them to continue as a part of the in-person ensemble that rehearses during the day. We are hoping to create some sort of on-line curriculum for all of those students so that all fully-virtual choir students can in a sense be a part of the same ensemble that never meet in person.

For the students who choose to attend in person, their ensemble will basically be split in half depending upon which cohort they are assigned to. This will, in a sense, create two smaller groups of each ensemble, ie. Allegro A and Allegro B, New Edition A & New Edition B, etc. We have no guarantee that the number of students in each cohort and in each ensemble will be even or vocally balanced with the correct number of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses, nor have we received the assignments of which students are in each cohort.

This new hybrid schedule will insure far less students in the classroom at a time. Most of our ensembles will have around 20-30 students in person at a time. Below are the specific precautions that we will be taking in choir to help maximize student safety:

- All rehearsals will take place in either E157 or the Auditorium. Both spaces are VERY large with plenty of room for us to adequately spread students out with ample social distance. They also both have very high ceilings with higher quality ventilation systems. E157 has windows along the back wall that we can open to let in fresh air. Both spaces have multiple entries which allow us to create a one-way traffic flow into and out of the room. We will also stagger entry and exit before and after class allowing students to spread out and not congregate through the doorways. Students will have assigned seats and will all be facing the same direction with adequate social distance between chairs. They will also refrain from mingling or moving around the room during rehearsals, and no supplies will be shared. Our other choir room, P118, only has one entry and is a much smaller room with an older ventilation system. This room will only be used for small sectionals or break-out rehearsals.
- Students and teachers will be required to wear face masks at all times. We realize that this is not necessarily the school policy for all classes, but

considering the nature of what we do in choir, and considering the unknowns still surrounding the safety of singing without masks, we want to err on the side of caution. If it is at all possible, we would recommend that students have one of these kinds of options for masks. One is specifically designed for singers to keep the mask away from the lips and help with the overall sound quality. The other has a clear window to allow us to see expression and mouth shape while singing.

Links to both are below:

- Singer's Mask: <https://www.broadwayreliefproject.com/singersmask>
 - Clear Mask: <https://www.theclearmask.com/product>
 - Less expensive option: https://www.amazon.com/Gerbrief-Face-Covering-Visible-Expression-Hearing/dp/B08C2JTY28/ref=sr_1_18?dchild=1&keywords=clear+face+mask&qid=1595217148&sr=8-18
- We are also still selling custom Carmel masks at the link below. Carmel Choirs has paired up with MyShieldMasks, a local business providing masks to our community during the COVID-19 pandemic, to offer a pack of Carmel themed masks for use in public at events, the store, or anywhere you have an opportunity to show your school/community spirit! Proceeds from these sales can go directly towards the balance due for your son or daughter's choir fees. Just spread the word to friends and family and give them your student code to enter into the "discount code" field when they order. Individual codes for student are attached to this message.

<https://myshieldmasks.com/products/carmel-choirs-3-pack>

- We highly recommend that students bring their own bottles of hand sanitizer, and potentially their own sanitizing wipes to class each day. We will have some in the classrooms, but they will likely run out very fast. If any parents are willing to make donations of these items to the choir program, we would be so appreciative. We are also happy to reimburse parents for donations of these items if necessary. Chairs will be wiped down and sanitized in between each class.
- Students will need to bring their own water bottles to class as campus drinking fountains will be turned off. We will also be limiting restroom breaks to cut down on the number of students spreading germs. We recommend that students do their best to use the facilities as infrequently as possible.

Other important information:

- We are in the process of reevaluating all usual choir fees. Obviously, with so many unknowns about what we will or will not be able to do this year, we cannot ask families to pay fees for opportunities that they may not get to have. There are a few things that we know we will be able to provide for students, and we will determine a minimum amount that each student can pay for the things we are sure they will receive. Beyond that, we will not be asking families to pay any fees

until we have more definitive answers about how this year will progress in regard to performances, field trips, costuming, etc. If we find out that we are able to do more later this year, we will determine a future date for families to pay the balance. The exact fee amounts for the start of the year will be communicated to all choir families the first week of school.

- At this point, we simply do not have enough solid information to give any answers regarding whether or not performances will be taking place. We simply cannot safely make that determination yet, so for now, the status of all performances is yet to be determined.
- It is still important that all choir students complete a few important tasks to help us with communication. Please make sure that all students have completed the on-line data form and the contract/permission slip. Links found below. Also, be sure that all students have joined the “Remind” class for their specific choir. Those codes can be found below. Remind can be joined by either downloading the free app and putting in the class code below or texting the class code to 81010. We would also appreciate it all parents would complete the Parent Volunteer Form at this link. We realize that many of the things that we usually need parent help with, may not even be able to happen at this point, but it’s helpful for us to have this info in hopes that things will improve.

Women’s Data Form:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CarmelChoirs/20202021womensdataform>

Men’s Data Form:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CarmelChoirs/20202021mensdataform>

Contract/Permission Slip:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CarmelChoirs/20202021contractandpermissionslipallchoirs>

Parent Volunteer Form:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/CarmelChoirs/20202021parentvolunteerform>

Remind Codes: (text this code to 81010 or join in the app)

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| Accents: | @20acc21 |
| Allegro: | @20all21 |
| Ambassadors: | @20amb21 |
| Blue & Gold Company: | @20bg21 |
| Counterpoints: | @20cp21 |
| Expressions: | @20exp21 |
| Greyhound Sound: | @20gs21 |
| New Edition: | @20ne21 |
| Rhapsody: | @20rha21 |
| Select Sound: | @20ss21 |

Applied Music:

@20apm21

We realize this is a lot of information and that this is all extremely difficult to process. It is also a constant challenge for us to plan when the situation seems to be changing every day. We can assure you of a few things. We, as the choral faculty, have one main priority at this time and that is the physical, mental, and emotional safety of each student under our care and supervision. As much as we all want to sing together and have a “normal” year of performances, we must abide by state, county, district and school guidelines. We must make each decision with the safety of all students at the forefront of our minds. We are committed to getting creative during this process and challenging ourselves as teachers to find new ways to make music together. Sometimes the most difficult of obstacles are the catalyst for the most innovative opportunity. We will be doing our very best to continue to provide a high-quality music education for all students, while also increasing the amount of nurturing support that our students desperately need during this unprecedented time. We completely respect each family’s decision for what is best for you right now. If you have any further questions about our plans for moving forward this year, please don’t hesitate to reach out and we will do our best to work through all of this together. We appreciate your support and understanding, and we hope you all are staying safe and healthy.

Sincerely,
Kathrine Kouns, Kyle Barker, & Anna DeBard
Directors of Choir, Carmel High School