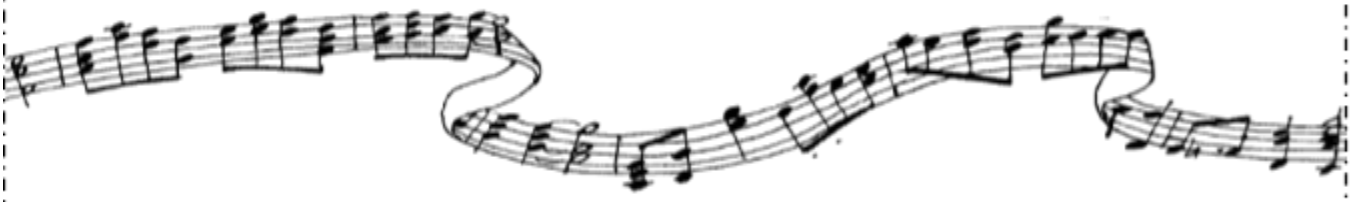
CHOIR HANDBOOK

2026 - 2027

ELEANOR J. TOLL MIDDLE SCHOOL

TRADITION. COMMITMENT. EXCELLENCE.

WELCOME!

Dear Choir Students and Parents/Guardians:

Welcome to Choir! I hope your summer break was fun. It will be my pleasure to lead you as your 2026-2027 choral music teacher at Toll Middle School. I look forward to making wonderful music with you!

Also, I wish to thank you in advance for your involvement and dedication to this growing music program. Every choir member is vitally important, especially as we tackle the digital learning environment. Through hard work, energy, creativity, and enthusiasm of the choir students and their parents/guardians, I am very excited to continue my goal of making a choral program based on excellence and fun!

In the following packet, you will find a list of concert dates, required materials and concert attire info, my classroom management plan and grading policy, and information about expectations. Please feel free to email me with any questions, concerns, or comments, and be sure to read over this packet carefully and return the signed portion at the end so I can be confident in your support.

Looking forward to a spectacular year!

Sincerely,

Amy Estep
Choral Director
E-mail: aestep@gusd.net
Website: TollChoir.net

Choir Mission Statement

The mission of the Toll Middle School Choral Music Program is to create a place for safe and fun learning for students to explore and develop their physical, emotional, and cognitive artistic abilities through involvement in singing, musicianship, and performance.

Eligibility

Every student is eligible to participate in the choirs at Toll. However, as both an academic class & extracurricular club, a student may lose the privilege of performances outside of school, or possibly continuing in class if they fail to maintain the high standards set by the director. This may include students who: choose not to participate in class, fail to maintain passing grades in other academic classes, receive probationary status in either academics or citizenship, and/or ignore the rules & guidelines of the Choir Handbook or Toll Middle School.

About the Choirs

Intermediate Choir is a choral group with a combination of students from all grade levels, 6-8. All are welcome to join; no experience necessary.

Toll Notes Choir is a select choir of students from all grade levels, 6-8. Audition and director approval is required to join.

The goals of these classes are to incorporate a student's previous experiences with music and provide them with a new and deeper understanding of how music functions and the roles of music. To achieve these goals, the classroom structure of assignments and grading closely adhere to the CA state standards for Music as well as the current framework for arts education. There are five overarching strands that the students are expected to learn from:

- **Artistic perception** refers to processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the use of the language and skills unique to dance, music, theater, and the visual arts.
- **Creative expression** involves creating a work, performing, and participating in the arts disciplines.
- **Historical and cultural context** concerns the work students do toward understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of an arts discipline.
- **Aesthetic valuing** includes analyzing and critiquing works of dance, music, theater, and the visual arts.
- **Connections, relationships, and applications** involve connecting and applying what is learned in one arts discipline and comparing it to learning in the other arts, other subject areas, and careers.

Choir Calendar

Please be sure to keep this calendar in a safe place for reference.

Fall Choir Calendar 2026 (*All events, dates, and times are subject to change)					
Date	**Choir**	**Call Time**	**Attire**	**Event**	**Location**
Aug 19	All	---	---	First Day of School	TMS
Sept 4	All	---	---	Back to School Night	TMS
Sept 15	All	In class	---	Concert Attire Payment DUE	5101
Sept __	All	In class	---	Cookie Dough Fundraiser	5101
Oct 12	All	3:05PM	---	Rehearsal for Fall Concert	HHS Aud
Oct 13	**All**	**3:30PM**	**TBD**	**Fall Concert (begins @ 6PM)**	**HHS Aud**
Oct ___	All	---	---	DASH of the Titans	TMS
Nov ___	All	---	---	Clothing Fundraiser	TMS
Dec 15	TN	8:00AM	TBD	Singing Holiday Gram Deliveries	TMS
Dec 8	All	In class	Formal	Dress Rehearsal for Winter Concert	Toll Aud
Dec 15	**All**	**4:00PM**	**Formal**	**Winter Concert (Begins @ 6PM)**	**Toll Aud**

A Spring Calendar will be sent home at the beginning of second semester, but please add these important events to your calendar in the meantime:

First day of School – January 11
SCVA Festival – March
Open House – March 18
Knott's Berry Farm Trip – April TBD
Rehearsal for Spring Concert – June 1
Spring Concert – June 2
8th Grade Promotion – June 10

Classroom Supplies

Most supplies are provided for the classroom by the choir program with funds that are collected from fundraising, concerts, and donations. These include (but not limited to):

- All music scores for in-class requirements, required and optional
- All music scores for required performances
- Choir rehearsal folder (these do not leave the choir room)
- Rehearsal tracks/mp3s for outside practice

Though many materials are supplied, choir is still a class that involves writing and study, and so it is the student's responsibility to come prepared to every class with the following materials:

- Binder to keep notes/papers/etc.; Lined paper; Two pencils, sharpened and/or with lead

Failure to come prepared to class with the above materials more than once will result in *negative consequences*.

Uniforms

Because choir is an art that emphasizes unity, our concert attire is important to signify our professionalism and dedication to excellence. Therefore, every choir member is required** to obtain concert attire. All measurements and orders for concert attire will take place during class time. Students who do not wear the appropriate attire to concerts will not perform and have negative consequences on a case by case basis.

Informal Concert Attire:

- Choir T-shirt or hoodie [one required, but both may be purchased from director]
- Blue jeans, no rips! (supplied by student)
- Sneakers/tennis shoes (supplied by student)

Formal Concert Attire requirements:

Females:

- Formal top (purchased from choir director)
- Black dress pants, or ankle-length black skirt (supplied by student)
- Black dress shoes (supplied by student; preferably flats/no heel)

Males:

- Dress shirt, vest, and tie (purchased from choir director)
- Black dress pants (supplied by student)
- Black dress shoes (supplied by student)

NO black jeans, black leggins, or sneakers will be accepted as concert attire!

**A student will never be excluded from performances if they are financially unable to obtain concert attire. Please contact the director directly to discuss alternate options, if needed.

Fundraising, Donations, and Student Volunteering

Fundraising is an important part of our program that helps us fund the music program. All fundraising money goes to provide materials for the classroom in the form of sheet music, sound equipment, supplemental texts/videos for curriculum, and lowered costs to every student in the choir which can include lower fees and costs for concert attire, buses for trips, theme park tickets, piano accompanist, and more.

Fundraisers include:

- Dash of the Titans
- Concert Donations and Concessions
- Movie Nights and Dine-out Nights
- School Sporting Event Concessions
- Cookie dough sales
- Block pARTy

- Donations: All donations to the Choral Program are welcome & very appreciated!
- Payment Plans and Choir Scholarships may be offered to students who demonstrate financial need. Please contact the choir director if you need assistance in any way.

Festivals/Travel

There are two opportunities for students to travel with the choir in the school year.

Southern California Vocal Association (SCVA) Festival: This is a non-competitive festival for choirs of the same grade level, where two certified adjudicators evaluate the choirs. The festival is designed so that each choir hears the performances of all the other choirs and receives feedback on their performance in the form of comments and letter grades. More detailed information is given out at the start of the spring semester.

Spring Theme Park Festival: As a reward for the hard work students put forth throughout the year, both choirs are given the opportunity to perform at a theme park to showcase their skills and spend the remainder of the day building relationships with their fellow choir members as they enjoy the theme park attractions. More detailed information is given out at the start of the spring semester.

Absence and Tardy Policy

All absences from class (virtual or in-person, excused AND unexcused) **will result in a zero for Daily Goals/Participation grade for the missed rehearsal**. The student may not make up the rehearsal, as it is a live experience that cannot be re-created. Though a few absences will not truly affect a student's overall grade, excessive absences may result in a lower grade and other consequences if the student cannot be involved with the class consistently, as each one is a unique opportunity to develop skills with fellow choir students.

Excessive tardies will also lower a student's Daily Goals/Participation grade in choir. If a student has 5 or more unexcused tardies in a semester, the result will be a parent/teacher conference. Be on time and prepared for class every day!

ALL PERFORMANCES OUTSIDE OF CLASS ARE REQUIRED OF ALL STUDENTS. Students who are absent from a performance for any reason will receive a ZERO and the points cannot be made up. The only exceptions to this requirement are severe student illness or extreme family emergency. Please carefully check the class calendar to avoid date/time issues and a parent/guardian must let the director know **in writing at least two weeks in advance** if there is a serious conflict with a performance or rehearsal so the director can discuss with parent/guardian about an alternate assignment, if absence request is approved.

Grading Policy

Students are graded with Standards-Based Grading scheme with a 4-point scale to help them understand what level of mastery they have achieved, which will be converted to a letter grade at the end of each quarter (see scale conversion below). A variety of assignments will be offered that will allow students to demonstrate their continued mastery of musicianship skills. The breakdown of assignments will look something like the following:

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS BY SECTION	GRADE %
Class achievement/goals, (daily)	25% of grade
Performances (4-5 per school year)	45% of grade
Sight-Singing Exams (2-4 per semester)	10% of grade
Writing Assignments/Quizzes/Exams (many)	20% of grade

Advanced: 4 pts (**A**, 75—100%)
Mastery: 3 pts (**B**, 62.5—74%)
Above Average: 2 pts (**C**, 50—62.4%)
Exploring: 1 pts (**D**, 25—49%)
No Serious Attempt/Effort: 0 pts (**F**, 0—24%)

Student Leadership Opportunities

Toward the beginning of the school year, students will have the opportunity to nominate and be nominated for the role of Section Leader and Choir Officer positions.

Section Leaders: Responsible students who assist the director in the classroom and demonstrate leadership amongst their fellow students. Responsibilities may include: collecting and passing out music, meetings before/after school or during lunch/snack, taking note of issues within their vocal section, assisting other students in learning music, etc.

Vice President: In charge of supporting the President, overseeing all committees, assigning tasks, overseeing outside event set-up and tear-down. May assume the duties of President, if he or she is absent. Office may only be held by a returning choir student.

President: Liaison between the students and the choir director. Responsibilities include leading all officer meetings when necessary, assisting/overseeing all officers in choir cabinet, bringing concerns to choir members or director, updates choir on important upcoming events, lead warm ups (if needed), write thank you notes, attend choir booster meetings outside of school. Office may only be held by a returning choir student.

(Please return signed pages to choral director) **DUE ON:** AUGUST 28th

CHOIR CONTRACT

STUDENT:

I have **fully read and understand** the Choir Handbook, and realize that my best performance and contribution to my school and the choir will result from following these rules and guidelines. I accept my personal responsibility in following the procedures outlined here; I pledge my support to the other members of my choir in meeting these responsibilities during the 2026-2027 school year.

_____ _____
Print Student's Name **Period**

_____ _____
Student's Signature **Date**

PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S):

I acknowledge receiving and reading through the Choir Handbook and I accept my responsibility in supporting and assisting my student in living up to the duties, responsibilities, and obligations as outlined in the handbook.

_____
Print Parent/Guardian's Name

(_____)_____
Parent/Guardian's phone number

_____
Parent/Guardian's preferred email (please print clearly)

_____ _____
Parent or Guardian's Signature **Date**

☐ Yes, I would like to be involved in volunteering at various events. (If possible, please also include your general availability dates and times below.)

RECORDING PERMISSION FORM

Dear parents/guardians,

As part of our contribution to the 2026-2027 Choral Music Program, Toll Choir members may be recording videos and presenting photos and audio recordings to share with our school community. For this reason, I am asking for your permission to use photos, audio, and video recordings of your student's work* that I will collect for any possible virtual performances or recruiting videos.

Any video or audio recording may be posted to the Toll Choir, Toll Middle School, or Glendale Unified School District website.

As the parent/guardian of (student first & last name) _____,

by checking the appropriate box below,

☐ **I give permission** for the above-named student's video/audio recording to be used for virtual performances.

☐ **I <u>do not</u> give permission** for the above-named student's video/audio recording to be used for virtual performances.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Please note that all work collected for in-class evaluations will be contained to our classroom, and **will not** be used in any other capacity without permission.