



STELLAR MUSICIANS & VALUABLE CITIZENS

ALBERTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL SHOW CHOIR PART TWO

by Lisa Gibbs, Ed.D.

Located on a plateau of the Appalachian Mountains, Albertville, Alabama, is known as “the heart of Sand Mountain.” At Albertville High School, the Choir Department is focused on the hearts of their students, with a mission to “provide a professional-level vocal arts program which emphasizes work ethic, perseverance, team dynamics, creative problem-solving, self-growth, and independent learning through the rehearsal and performance process.” The program develops valuable citizens and makes a difference in the lives of young adults studying music. Gavin Dover explains how he and his team mentor students to achieve these goals.





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Your website states that you are developing “more intelligent, well-rounded musicians and performers” for the two show choirs. What activities support that goal?

In our classroom, we view choir as another academic subject. In order for students to perform at the caliber that we expect, we must give them the tools to be able to rise to the challenges we place in front of them. We begin the year by diving into the fundamental techniques of singing, sight reading, and music theory. Once the foundation is set, we are able to continue building on that throughout the school year by selecting repertoire to provide moments for each student to grow as a musician and as a student, and for the group to grow as an ensemble. Our show choirs pride themselves in singing all styles and genres of music. Throughout the year, our show choir students prepare for concert choir performances as well as

show choir competitions. They are then able to carry the ideas that they learn through concert choir and implement them in the world of show choir.

Another part of show choir, and choir in general, that is not achieved through solo singing is fostering the ability to work as a team. So much of “adulting” is being able to “play nice in the sandbox,” communicate effectively and efficiently, and work together toward a common goal. These are all skills learned and developed in the music classroom. We are striving to not only make our students stellar musicians but also valuable citizens once they leave us.

You have a designated Leadership Team. Let’s get really in depth with that. What are your goals for these students? How are they chosen for the Team? What responsibilities do they take on as leaders? Can you share an

anecdote or two about how a leader has stepped up in a surprising way, or that produced a sense of pride for you and the department?

Yes, and they save our lives on a daily basis! Our goals for these students are to give them the opportunity to take ownership in their choral department, sharpen their skills as communicators, and hopefully, help them discover their purpose as they prepare to finish high school. These student leaders are selected by the directors from a large pool of applicants based on their performance in previous years, answers to interview questions, a letter of intent, and a teacher recommendation. The responsibilities that they are tasked with vary by position and group. Here are just a few of the leadership position descriptions as found in our Leadership Application, which was developed by Mr. Jim Schaeffer at Spain Park High School:

Choir President/Choir Council Representative *(All Classes)*

The President and Council Representatives are delegates from each choir who represent the choir in all leadership decisions. People in these positions should be comfortable speaking in front of the class, and all section leaders report to this person.

Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Assist with the implementation of the president's programs
- ✓ Develop ways of building teamwork and pride amongst the classes
- ✓ Act as a liaison between class and choir president
- ✓ Communicate standards and information to choir members in class and via GroupMe
- ✓ Collect attendance from section leaders during after-school rehearsals and performances

Section Leader *(CenterStage!, CenSations! and VocalEase)*

These students must demonstrate excellent leadership skills, be able to sing or play their parts on the piano confidently for their peers, and be highly skilled in both written and vocal musicianship.

Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Oversee their section and its respective progress, which includes maintaining discipline and pride within the section
- ✓ Run sectionals during class, as well as occasionally after school, and various administrative tasks within the class period/performances
- ✓ Must be able to sing and/or play their part on the piano for members of their section during sectionals
- ✓ Ensure that their sections' areas are clean and organized

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GAVIN DOVER
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A commitment to personal excellence as well as teamwork, encouraging leadership, and sharing the success of others definitely contributes to the development of both “stellar musicians” and “valuable citizens.”

- ✓ Keep an up-to-date binder with names, contact information, class schedule and transportation information of every member of their section
- ✓ Must have the ability to stay after school a minimum of once per month for tutoring or sectionals that they schedule.
- ✓ Report to their respective Choir President/Choir Council representative

Dance Captain *(CenterStage! and CenSations!)*

This student must demonstrate excellent leadership skills, be able to dance their choreography confidently for their peers, and be highly skilled in both learning, teaching and cleaning choreography.

Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Overseeing the progress of their respective gender/section, including maintaining discipline and pride within the section
- ✓ Run stretches and varying choreography sessions, both in class and after school, and complete various administrative tasks within the class period/performances
- ✓ Must be able to dance their choreography confidently for those they are leading
- ✓ Conduct individual assessments of each member within their section
- ✓ Must have the ability to stay after school a minimum of once per month for tutoring and pass offs that they schedule or as requested by members
- ✓ Report to the director

Social Chair (All Classes)

The Social Chair must have a positive relationship with each member of the choir. This student is also granted access to the Albertville Choir Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook pages.

Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Understand the purposes and uses of the different social media platforms
- ✓ Manage the exposure of our social media platforms

- ✓ Understand and agree to the guidelines set by the director which include but are not limited to: refraining from interacting with followers' likes, comments, and direct messages, and granting temporary access to other choir members with director permission for Instagram story take-over days (days of competitions, contests, concerts, etc.)
- ✓ Plan a monthly outing for the choir to bond outside of singing/school
- ✓ Relay information to choir members
- ✓ Encourage choir members to attend school functions, especially those involving choir members
- ✓ Work diligently to encourage all choir members to attend social events
- ✓ Maintain discipline and pride within the choir during events

Costume/Apparel Chair
(*CenSations!* and *CenterStage!*)

Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Assist with measurements/fittings for costumes and choir uniforms
- ✓ Keep the costume room neat and clean
- ✓ Assist in distributing, labeling and organizing uniforms and costume pieces
- ✓ Make sure everyone has the correct costumes and undergarments that are needed for each performance
- ✓ Verify that all costumes are hung up correctly after all performances

Every year that I have taught, I have seen students take their positions to the next level and rewrite what it

means to be a student leader. One of the proudest teacher moments I have had just happened last week while my choir colleagues and I were at the Southern Region ACDA conference. We left a list for every class of vocal fixes, choreography clean-ups, and costume and prop repairs to be accomplished over the course of the three days that we were out. While we were gone, our leadership divided up responsibilities, set a timer for how long each item should take, and flawlessly executed the tasks they were left. They even made time to record the final product on Friday to send to us because they were so proud of the work they had done as a team. It was an incredible moment to witness because this solidified why we create these positions—to give students the opportunity to grow as productive and communicative individuals who will be able to fly the nest and have success in life after high school.

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Do you have a favorite story or anecdote, or a few, from the past two pandemic years?

Another highlight for me personally took place at Oak Mountain High School's outdoor competition that we have all lovingly deemed as "Show-Chella." When I taught at Vestavia, I never really had the chance to say goodbye to my former students who I had spent five years with. That was crushing because those students and parents played such an integral role in making me the teacher that I am now. At Oak Mountain, our group performed directly after Vestavia. I just remember standing off to the side of the stage and watching with an immeasurable amount of pride as these kids performed with such conviction. After our performances, I finally had the opportunity to catch

up with them, talk to the seniors about their plans for the future, and really gain the closure that I never got! It was a beautiful moment.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Productions* staff writer Lisa Gibbs earned her Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration in 2018. She is an advocate for arts, particularly dance, in education and for increasing the financial well-being of artists through financial education.

SAVE THE DATE!



Back-to-School

SHOW CHOIR GUIDE 2022

Join us for our August issue when it will be time to return to schools and stages everywhere.

Our guide covers fundraising, costuming, stages, music, and technology—all the items that make a show choir award-winning!



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