



## **STUDENT HANDBOOK 2016-2017**

**Highbridge Voices**  
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[www.highbridgevoices.org](http://www.highbridgevoices.org)



### **The Mission of Highbridge Voices**

*“Inspiring excellence in the lives of the children of the Highbridge community through their participation in music”*

Highbridge Voices is an extended-day music and academic program designed to inspire excellence in the lives of children. Founded in 1998, the organization serves the Highbridge neighborhood of the South Bronx. Using a rigorous choral experience as a springboard, Highbridge Voices fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment in the youth of the community through high-quality musical experiences, academic support and enrichment, and a foundation of values geared to prepare each child for success in grade school, college, and life.

### **Program Schedule**

#### **Concert Choir**

Concert Choir students attend Highbridge Voices from 3:45PM-6:45PM Monday through Friday. The schedule varies from year to year, but includes approximately 7 hours of music instruction and 7 hours of academic instruction/homework assistance. Students also receive recreation time and snack time daily.

#### **Chamber Choir**

Chamber Choir students attend Highbridge Voices each weekday except Thursdays, unless otherwise notified.

Rehearsals take place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 5:30PM-7:00PM. Classes and homework time are offered Mondays-Wednesdays from 3:45PM-5:15PM. Students have the option to attend on Saturdays from 11:00AM-3:00PM for homework assistance, enrichment activities, and rehearsals, as needed.

## Behavior/ Discipline

Children are accepted into Highbridge Voices not only for their musical and academic abilities, but also for exhibiting maturity and leadership skills. We expect each child to respect him/herself, one another, the instructors, and the property. Our focus is on helping our students develop both their musical and academic abilities. The following outlines our discipline policy and the consequences for violating the rules and policies of Highbridge Voices.

1. Level 1: Warning
  - a. Teachers will work with students to rectify behavior.
  - b. Students will be sent out of class for 5 minutes per infraction.
2. Level 2: Call Home
  - a. If a student's behavior does not improve, parents/guardians will be notified about the behavior by telephone.
3. Level 3: Family Meeting and Student Contract
  - a. If the problem persists, the student, parents/guardians, program director, and Executive Director will have a conference about the problem.
  - b. A Student Contract will be created that outlines the expectations that the program has of the student in order for the student to remain enrolled in Highbridge Voices
4. Level 4: Dismissal
  - a. If there is no change in behavior, or if the student violates the Student Contract, then the student will be **dismissed** from Highbridge Voices.

### *Bullying and Sexual Harassment*

Bullying and harassment can take many forms and includes behavior that targets students because of their actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, citizenship/immigration status, religion, creed, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or weight. All forms of sexual harassment, i.e. the making of any unwanted advances and/or obscene remarks, are considered acts of bullying as well.

These behaviors pose a serious threat to all students, and it is Highbridge Voices' responsibility to eliminate the hostile environment created by such harassment, address its effects, and take steps to ensure that harassment does not recur. All students who engage in bullying and/or sexual harassment behaviors will be treated with a **level 2 behavior response**.

### *Academic Accountability*

Highbridge Voices partners with parents/guardians to ensure the academic success of all students. All students are required to bring in **every** report card that they receive from school which Highbridge Voices will then photocopy for the student file. Students and parents are expected to communicate regularly with our academic staff about how their child is performing in school.

### *Homework Policy*

All Highbridge Voices students are provided with dedicated time and space to do homework and study each day. If a student does not have homework, he/she is encouraged to read a book or magazine from our library or one of their own. Staff is present to monitor students during homework time, and is able to assist students. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete his/her homework.

### Attendance Policy

Rehearsals and classes are very important in the training of our young musicians. Here are the attendance policies for each part of the program.

#### **Concert Choir Rehearsals and Academic Classes**

Students must attend **at least 70%** of rehearsals and academic classes. Concert Choir students will receive an Attendance Warning Letter if their attendance falls below 70% and will be given time to improve their attendance. If a Concert Choir student's attendance drops **below 60%**, they will be **dismissed** from Highbridge Voices.

#### **Chamber Choir Rehearsals and Academic Classes**

Participating in Chamber Choir is an honor reserved for students who have demonstrated a strong commitment to *Highbridge Voices* and the pursuit of musical and academic excellence. Chamber Choir students with poor attendance may also have their access to incentives (ex. parties and trips) revoked. Any Chamber Choir student with **less than 70%** attendance in rehearsals, voice lessons, or academic classes during the semester will be **dismissed** from the program. Absences without a written note or unreasonably late arrivals to rehearsal are considered unexcused absences. In addition, frequent excused absences are not permitted during the semester. Students may be dismissed from the program once they have exceeded a reasonable number of absences. Under extreme circumstances, it may be possible to schedule a make-up rehearsal.

#### **Excused Absences:**

A doctor's appointment  
An illness  
A school-related appointment

#### **Unexcused Absences:**

"I was too tired to come today."  
"I have too much homework."  
"I have a test tomorrow."

A student must return to Highbridge Voices with a note from a parent, doctor, or school for an absence to be excused.

Being a student in Highbridge Voices is an honor. For this reason, students are expected to manage their time in a way that allows them to participate in the program and also have time for schoolwork and other after-school activities.

### **Family Support and Involvement**

One of the cornerstones of Highbridge Voices' success over its 18 years of serving the South Bronx community has been parental involvement. We expect parents to be actively involved in their children's academic and musical progress. At a minimum, parents are expected to attend all major concerts, attend mandatory meetings, and respond promptly to paperwork sent home that requires a signature (such as permission slips for field trips). Our staff is always available for meetings by appointment to discuss any concerns a parent might have about his or her child's progress.

### **Pick-Up and Drop-Off Procedures**

Parents are responsible for bringing their children to the program and for picking them up at the end of program. It is important that parents pick up their children no later than 15 minutes after the end of their rehearsals or classes, unless other arrangements have been made with Highbridge Voices. If your child walks home, he/she should leave immediately after rehearsals or classes have ended. If a parent is going to be late, please let us know in advance.

### **Internet Safety Policy**

At Highbridge Voices, we are pleased to provide a number of technological resources for our students to use in both an educational and recreational capacity. However, it is essential that

students use these resources appropriately so that we may continue to offer these services. Students should visit no website that has inappropriate content, including, but not limited to explicit language, illegal activities, and words, pictures and videos of a sexual nature. In addition, students may only use computers and other resources for recreation during approved times, or according to the discretion of the instructor. At no time should recreational computer use supersede educational use.

### *Personal Electronic Device Policy*

Students are responsible for their own electronic devices while they are at Highbridge Voices activities. Students are permitted to use their devices during recreation time and before and after program. Students are **NOT PERMITTED** to use their personal electronic devices during instructional time. This includes rehearsal, voice lessons, and classes. Use of personal electronic devices during independent work time is at the discretion of the supervising staff member. Students are expected to use their devices with adherence to our Internet Safety Policy. Failure to comply will lead to disciplinary action as outlined on page 3.

### *Dress Code*

Students are expected to arrive to Highbridge Voices dressed appropriately for the learning environment and the weather. Students are encouraged to wear clothes that make them feel confident, comfortable, and successful. However, students will **NOT** be permitted to wear the following:

- Miniskirts or short shorts
- Low-cut shirts
- See-through clothing
- Symbols or slogans that are profane or allude to illegal activities or suggestive themes



- Clothes that show underwear, lingerie, midriffs, backs below the shoulder blades, or hips

Students dressed inappropriately will be given a Highbridge Voices approved clothing item to borrow for the remainder of the day. Repeated dress code violations will lead to a **level 2 behavior response**.

### Performances

The culmination of each semester's hard work is a series of public performances. It is essential that each student of Highbridge Voices participates in these performances. There are three MANDATORY performances for all Highbridge Voices students:

Winter Concert 12/8/16

Community Concert 6/1/17 (tentative)

Benefit Concert 6/8/17 (tentative)

Students who do not participate in these concerts will be **dismissed** from the program. Absences from these performances are acceptable only in extenuating circumstances and must be approved by the **Music Director**.

Highbridge Voices is often invited to participate in prestigious events throughout the year which sometimes take place during the school day. Students are expected to make every effort to attend these performances. Students can be excused from performances **only with prior notice from a parent**.

Failure to attend any performance without prior notice ("No Call, No Show") will result in disciplinary consequences including but not limited to loss of future performance privileges.

## Uniforms

**Concert Choir** must provide

- A pair of khaki slacks, a pair of navy blue slacks and black socks
- Girls- black, closed-toe dress shoes with low or no heel
- Boys- black dress shoes

Highbridge Voices will provide ties and white, button-down, collared shirts for each student.

**Chamber Choir** must provide

- Girls- black stockings and black dress shoes.
- Boys- black dress socks and black dress shoes.

In performances, no jewelry is permitted on stage, except for small stud earrings for girls. Necklaces, bracelets, and other jewelry must not be worn.

Students with long hair should make sure that the hair is away from the face for performances. Please make sure any headbands or hair ties are simple and plain, and match the color of your hair. Please do not wear bows, sequins, or other large hair accessories on stage.

If you need assistance in getting the required items for your uniform, please let a staff member know. We can help make sure you look your best!

## Communication is Key!

Communication between parents, schools, and Highbridge Voices is a critical component to each child's success. Please contact us and stay in touch throughout the year. We look forward to hearing from you!