

September 15, 2019

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Key School Chorus. I'm excited to work with your new or returning singer. Here's a brief introduction to what your children will be doing in Chorus this year.

Chorus is a weekly afterschool program that focuses, largely, on American traditional music, drawing from iconic artists such as Lead Belly, The Carter Family, The Stanley Brothers, Elizabeth Cotten, Jean Ritchie, Mississippi John Hurt, and Pete Seeger, among others. In addition to a wide-ranging folk repertoire, students learn some of the basics of singing via pitch matching, rhythm exercises, call-and-response songs, rounds, and unaccompanied singing. Beginning in 3rd grade, I teach harmony singing, which adds an exciting new dimension to what children encounter in grades 1 and 2.

We have two performances during the year. For our annual Black History Month assembly, which takes place during the school day, we learn spirituals, peace movement and protest songs, and James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Our capstone end-of-year performance is the Hootenanny, an evening choral concert in which the students also tell the stories of the music we've been singing all year, giving it context. It's an exciting event with many of the elements of a professional performance: speaking parts, seating charts, dress rehearsals, and even bit of costuming. While we always perform our "hits"—it wouldn't be a Hootenanny without "Country Roads"—we also share new songs the children have been working on throughout the year. They are so proud to share them with you. Of course, for the Hootenanny, we can only present a fraction of the dozens and dozens of songs we cover during the school year. You're always welcome to come by a chorus session and see some of the other material we're working on.

Above all, what's most important is that we sing together. That's really the mission of Chorus: To bring children together to sing and see what can happen as a result. Singing

together takes us outside of ourselves and our individual concerns and struggles and can be transformative. Whether they are in the junior group (1st–2nd grade) or one of the big kids (3rd–5th), being in Chorus is a confidence-building, joy-inducing, Key School tradition. It can be a real growth experience for the children, boosting their confidence and helping them build connections with other students. Because they are taken seriously as singers, they learn to take pride in the work, and it shows. It is my great pleasure to share the joy of music with them, and with you.

Sincerely,
Ann Roddy