**Bell Choir Opening Letter**

Dear Bell Choir Students and Parents,

 First and foremost, I would like to express how excited I am to work with all of you this upcoming year! Being a member of this ensemble shows that you have proven yourself to be an impressive musician, a dedicated student, and a responsible person. The WAMS Handbell Choir will require even more practice, dedication and responsibility. With the extra responsibility, however, come a lot of great opportunities.

 The most important thing that each member of the Bell Choir and his/her family do before next week is go to sign up for Remind. Bell Choir has a lot of commitments which requires communication outside of school. Remind is by far the most effective means for this communication. Please use the attached instructions to sign up for Remind tonight!

**Performances:**

 The WAMS Bell Choir has the unique opportunity to use their talent as ambassadors in the community. Throughout the year, the Bell Choir will be doing many performances as a service to many locations throughout the area. Most of these performances take place outside of school, making it a big commitment on the part of not only the students, but their parents. It is important for everyone to plan ahead and contact me early if there are any issues. Students will be notified of all **required** performances through handouts and Remind **at least** 2 weeks in advance. Rehearsals and performances that are not announced 2 weeks in advance will only be considered on a case by case basis, and will have more lenient excusal guidelines.

**Rehearsals:**

 To prepare for these amazing and unique performance opportunities that the Bell Choir members have, there are several different types of rehearsals to commit to. In addition to the Wednesday rehearsals during Tutorial, each student in the Bell Choir will be required to go to an in-school lesson at least once per month. These lessons will take place during class, and will be in addition to lessons for other music ensembles. It is critical for Bell Choir students to communicate well with all their teachers, and to manage their time well so that they do not fall behind in their academic responsibilities.

Most importantly, there will be **after-school rehearsals** at least ONCE PER MONTH. These rehearsals are absolutely necessary for us to perform at a level that this award-winning ensemble needs. Due to their infrequency and importance, these rehearsals are absolutely mandatory. These rehearsals run from immediately after school until 5:10PM so that students may take the late busses or be picked up by parents.

\*\*\*The first 2 after-school rehearsals will take place on **Monday, 9/16** and **Tuesday, 10/1.** The future dates will be sent out separately\*\*\*

**Attendance Policy:**

The Bell Choir is one instrument played by 13 players. Because of this unique situation, missing students harm the entire group. Therefore, an unexcused absence from any mandatory rehearsals and performances will result in the removal of the student from the Bell Choir. Absences may be excused if the following circumstances are met:

 **Emergency Absences –** Unpredictable emergency absences such as severe illness, death in the family, car accident, etc. will be excused if the student brings in a note from the parents explaining the circumstances upon the student’s return to school. In-school and after-school rehearsals are automatically excused if the student has an excused absence from school on that same day.

 **Non-Emergency Absences –** Sports practices and games, vacations, play practices, and other predictable, non-emergency conflicts are not automatically excused. On a case by case basis, at my discretion, I may excuse these absences if the student brings them to my attention **at least** a week in advance and the student does the make-up work that I assign them. Please contact me with any questions on this policy.

 The WAMS Bell Choir is a very involved, prestigious and demanding group. If there are any questions that arise, my contact information is list below (e-mail is best).

Thank you!

Shaun Stuart

WAMS Bell Choir Director

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