

Dear Choral Director:

The idea for this handbook was born in 2009 when, at a NJ-ACDA Board meeting, it was suggested that the Board create a handbook to give guidance to new choral teachers – the sort of guidance that can only be gained through hard-earned experience. It has been my pleasure and privilege to coordinate the collection of essays contained herein. That was about three years ago and today, **A CHORAL DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK** is ready to go out into the world! It is by no means complete and will hopefully be added to and improved year over year as we all continue to learn. Our goal was to provide new teachers with a resource which was brief, poignant, relevant, down-to-earth and immediately useful. From this vantage point, it is a resource for every Choral Director, from those who are just beginning the journey to the seasoned veteran.

The truth is, no one point of view or list of do's and don'ts can make you a good teacher. We all learn by trial and error. We struggle; we sometimes fail; we make mistakes. Every person who contributed to this handbook walked in your shoes for at least part of their own journey. We represent different school settings and different places in our careers; we each have something to share that we hope will make your journey to "awesomeness" a little easier and a little less lonely.

It is our sincere hope that this labor of love will bring a smile to your face, even cause you to chuckle. Mostly, we hope it will help! When you find yourself frustrated, discouraged and on the verge of throwing in the towel, remember that you are not alone! One of the missions of NJ-ACDA is to educate, assist and mentor its members. You are the future of music education and we are committed to help you succeed.

Sincerely,
Amy Troxel, Advocacy Chair
2013 NJ-ACDA Summer Conference

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ★ Preparing for the First Day of School - Jennifer Sengin, Carol Beadle, Amy Troxel
- ★ Beginning & Running a Successful Choral Program; Conduct Unbecoming a Teacher - Barbara Retzko
- ★ Starting from Scratch; The Folder of Awesomeness - Amy Troxel
- ★ Multiple Roles of the High School Vocal Teacher - Fred Ford
- ★ Selecting Quality Repertoire - Michael Schmidt, Amy Troxel, Jennifer Sengin, Carol Beadle
- ★ Warming Up, Body, Mind, Spirit, Voice - Jack Hill
- ★ Creating warm ups based on your repertoire; Teaching Foreign Language & Multicultural Music - Jennifer Sengin
- ★ Sample Warm Up Exercises - Patrick Hachey
- ★ Vocal Pedagogy in the Choral Warm Up; Resources for finding quality warm ups - Judith Nicosia
- ★ Music Literacy - Jennifer Sengin, Al Holcomb
- ★ Voice Part Assignments & Seating Charts - Michael Schmidt
- ★ Rehearsal Techniques; Timelines; Thoughts about Fundraising - Amy Troxel
- ★ Expect the Best - Laurie Lausi, Barbara Retzko, Amy Troxel, Al Holcomb
- ★ Developing Student Leadership - Laurie Lausi, Amy Troxel
- ★ Recruitment & Retention - Carol Beadle, Jennifer Sengin, Amy Troxel, Laurie Lausi
- ★ Continuing Education & Professional Development - Jennifer Sengin
- ★ Your Teaching Voice: An Owner's Manual - Judith Nicosia
- ★ Appendices A: Course syllabus; Student handbooks, Choir contracts, Student info cards, Extracurricular audition form, Golden ticket, Vocal range chart.
- ★ Appendices B: Fundraising report, Student payment form

Preparing for the First Day of School

by Jennifer Sengin

Top 10 things to do BEFORE the first day of school

1. Orient yourself with the school building, your classroom and the main office
2. Review your schedule and school policies
3. Locate (and catalogue) all choral music
4. Organize music into individual folders
5. Create a place to store music folders
6. Establish the grading policy (be sure your program policy does not conflict with your district's grading policy)
7. Create a syllabus or handbook—photocopy for distribution
8. Set up a calendar of events for your program—photocopy for distribution
9. Familiarize yourself with student names from your class rosters
10. BREATHE!!!

Choral Handbook/Course Syllabus

It is important to establish the rules and policies of the choral classroom and convey this information to students in an organized manner. I created a Choral Music Handbook, which I review, in detail, with each of my curricular classes at the beginning of each year. The handbook contains information and policies for the entire choral program:

1. Mission Statement
2. Description of Choral Ensemble Opportunities
3. Choral Ensemble Protocol
4. Required Materials
5. Music, Grading Policy
6. Attendance Requirements
7. Conflict Policy
8. Concert Attire
9. Sectionals
10. Musical Guests
11. Behavior Guidelines (on-campus and off-campus)
12. Honor Choir Policies (Region, All State, etc.)
13. Private Lessons
14. Choral Music Website
15. Choral Music Contract

The Choral Music Contract is in the back of the handbook. Both student and parent need to sign and return the contract acknowledging that they understand and agree to the policies. The completed and signed Choral Music Contract serves as their first test grade.

Grading Policy (Curricular Choirs)

I establish the grading policy in the Choral Music Handbook. Here is an excerpt of my policy:

Grades are based on the following criteria:

Class Participation (35%) This grade is determined by your enthusiastic daily participation, attendance, and rehearsal etiquette. Come to the class regularly with a positive attitude, pencil, and ready to work in order to receive full credit for participation. You are expected to sing each day in choir. If there is an extenuating circumstance for which you are unable to sing, you must speak with the teacher prior to the beginning of class. These factors may negatively impact your participation grade: chewing gum, eating, drinking anything other than water, class disruptions, negative attitudes, and unexcused absences. Concert Choir Honors has additional participation expectations.

Tests and Quizzes (15%) This grade is determined through sight-singing evaluations, music memorization, music marking tests, and individual or group in-class performance assessments. Music should be maintained and marked appropriately (with pencil) throughout the rehearsal process. Examples of types of markings include, but are not limited to: translations, breath marks, phrasing, IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet), and any other musical marking covered in rehearsal. Each week, several random folders will be checked for markings. All folders will be examined an equal number of times per marking period, and every folder will be examined at least once per marking period. Concert Choir Honors has additional testing expectations.

Performance (35%) This grade is based on attendance, participation in concerts and performances, and concert preparation, which constitute the culminating experiences of this class. Please reference the choral music calendar for all required concerts. You may be excused from a concert by receiving approval from the director at least two weeks (fourteen calendar days) in advance or by verifiable emergency. Approval for EXCUSED ABSENCES IS RARE and are granted at the discretion of the director. In the unlikely event you are granted an excused absence, you must complete a supplemental assignment within one week from the date of the missed event in order to not receive a zero. If a performance is missed for an excused absence, you will be assigned a major research project, selected by the teacher, in lieu of the concert. This is so you may receive a Performance Grade. The project will be substantial because you will have been absent from a substantial culminating experience (35%). If the project is not completed, the Performance Grade will be zero.

Dress Rehearsals (15%) Attendance at all dress rehearsals is mandatory. The Dress Rehearsals are in place to address specific musical and logistical aspects of an upcoming performance. Several Dress Rehearsals are scheduled on the Choral Music Calendar. Additional Dress Rehearsals may be scheduled throughout the year with at least two weeks prior notice. If a Dress Rehearsal is missed for an excused absence, there will be a research project assigned reflecting the course requirement (15%). The excused absence policy is the same as Performances. If the project is not completed, the Dress Rehearsal grade will be zero.

Unexcused absences will be recorded as a grade of zero

You must think, "WHAT IF EVERYONE DID THIS?" when considering your own attendance

Always attempt sing on the first day in order to set the class climate and expectations. However, many school districts open the year with a half day, which means your class will be shorter, so you may need to move this to day two. Here are two possible plans, depending on your opening day schedule.

Day 1 (full day)

1. Take attendance
2. Introduce yourself
3. Warm up - choose something simple and fun
4. Sing a song - choose a round/canon or a simple unison song - the goal is to engage your students and get them excited about the work you will do together
5. Review some basic class expectations:
 - Sing every day
 - Be enthusiastic
 - Have a good attitude
 - Always bring your folder/pencil
 - Read the "Do Now" when you come in
6. Ice breaker activity

NOTE: It is important not to bombard students with a lot of dreary policy and procedure information on the first day of school. You only get one opportunity to make a first impression - the first day should leave your students wanting more!

Day 2

1. Take attendance
2. Ice breaker activity
3. Choral Music Handbook

Day 1 (half day)

1. Take attendance
2. Introduce yourself
3. Review some basic class expectations:
 - Sing every day
 - Be enthusiastic
 - Have a good attitude
 - Always bring your folder/pencil
 - Read the "Do Now" when you come in

Day 2

1. Take attendance
2. Warm up - choose something simple and fun
3. Sing a song - choose a round/canon or a simple unison song - the goal is to engage your students and get them excited about the work you will do together
4. Ice breaker activity

Day 3

1. Take attendance
2. Warm up
2. Choral Music Handbook

On the first day of school, it is important to both establish yourself as the leader while simultaneously engaging and exciting your students. Your agenda during the first few days of school will set the tone for the entire year, so plan your priorities with that in mind – and remember to have fun!

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### ***A note on grading policies...***

It is not a bad idea to have your supervisor proof read your handbook or syllabus. Since this is the tool you will use to enforce your policies and possible dock student grades, it is good for your supervisor to be on board with those policies. They will be the ones to "go to bat" for you with a disgruntled parent - or not.

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Curricular, Extracurricular and Co-curricular...and why does it matter?

Curricular classes are, quite simply, part of the curriculum. Students are given assignments and graded on their proficiency. Anything that you teach or assess during class time is fair game.

Extracurricular refers to activities that occur outside of the school day. Athletics, for example, are not graded. The primary penalty for poor attendance or performance in extracurricular activities is to be benched or removed from the team. The same is true in an extracurricular choir. (Any choir that exclusively after school will have to have a different set of attendance policies, i.e. three absence will result in removal from the group in any given semester. You cannot use grades as leverage in this type of setting.)

Co-curricular means that while your choir class is a curricular subject and meets during the school day, there are also activities that happen outside of the school day that are part of a student's grade. Before you present after school rehearsals and performances as mandatory and for a grade, make sure what category into which your particular class fits.

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### Things to do BEFORE the first day of school

Carol Beadle

1. **Prepare your room.** Make sure everything is neat, labeled, and in a place where you can find it when things get crazy.
2. **Determine what resources you have.** What was left for you in terms of resources? Flip through books, listen to CDs, go through your choral library and make a list of what you can use, what you need and what can be disposed of.
3. **Look at your curriculum.** What is the district expecting your students to be able to do? Is it specific and clearly delineated or do you have freedom to expand the concepts?
4. **Pick your concert repertoire.** What pieces are you going to do on the first concert? You'll have to tweak this a bit once you get to know your groups, but have some options for each ensemble that you can chose from so that you don't have to wait to order all of your music.
5. **Prepare all of your forms.** This could be a syllabus, a code of conduct, a permission slip to join an ensemble, order forms, etc. Try to get a head start on the paperwork as much as possible.
6. **Get to know your budget.** Do you have money to spend? If so, how much? How do you go about making purchases or getting reimbursed?
7. **Set up your technology.** Do you have your email address? A website? A way to send mass email messages? Make sure everything is set up before the year starts.
8. **Introduce yourself.** As you are setting up your room, make sure to introduce yourself to teachers in the building, the secretaries, the other people in your department, etc. You could even send a simple email that says "Hi, I'm Carol and I'm the new music teacher at LCS. I look forward to meeting you." Know the head custodian...they could be the one who helps get the risers set up, unlocks the doors for your concerts and helps you find materials for any number of projects. Treat them well!
9. **Map out your schedule.** Get to know your daily schedule. When does each period begin and end? How often do you meet with people? Also, get to know the schedule for the year. When are your concerts? When are things due?
10. **Create seating charts.** Once you get your class lists, type up seating charts so that you can start learning names from day one.
11. **Organize your bulletin boards.** Even if you're not artistic, you can still find posters or signs to put on bulletin boards so that they are informative, colorful, and useful.

### Things to do ON the first day of school

Carol Beadle

1. **Introduce yourself.** Make sure your students know your name by the time they leave your class.
2. **Sing.** Give them something simple to sing together so that they start feeling a sense of community and realize what the purpose of music class is.
3. **Go through attendance and seating charts.** This will help you to start learning names. The earlier you learn names, the easier classroom management will be.
4. **Go over the rules.** Students need rules and guidelines. It is also important that the students respect you from day one. Have the rules clearly posted so that you can refer to them if you need to. Also make sure that you have consequences that go with those rules.
5. **Go over procedures.** Going over procedures could be as simple as giving a tour of the classroom so that students know where things are located, where to drop off papers, how to be dismissed, etc.
6. **Thank them for coming.** Make sure to thank them, especially if the class is an elective. Give them something to look forward to for the next class.

### Things NOT to do on the first day of school

Carol Beadle

1. **Show that you are nervous.** You *will* be nervous, but try your best not to show it. Be confident in who you are.
2. **Try to cover everything .** There will be too much information to cover in one class. It is okay to spread it out over a few days. Do what is most important first, and leave the rest for later

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As you are beginning in a new school and establishing yourself as a member of the school community, it is important to build positive relationships with your administrators, guidance counselors, colleagues, office staff, maintenance workers and tech support team.

Administrators

1. **Be respectful.** Yes they are your superiors, but they are people too. It is okay to ask them how they are, what they did over vacation, how their kids are, etc. It makes everyone feel more human and connected. Remember to respect your administrators' time – if you need to speak with them, set up a meeting and bring a list of what needs to be discussed. You will appear much more professional and be able to conduct your meeting more quickly.
2. **Be transparent.** Update your administration as you go. Whether that means sending them forms to check over, asking permission for things that might seem obvious, or letting them know what's going on in your department, they will appreciate the update.
3. **Brag.** Let your administrators know how much you are putting into the program. Sometimes they don't realize how much time and effort is involved. Naturally, you need to do this with grace so as not to appear arrogant, but it is okay to say "The LCS chorus has

grown from 90 to 200 members. Isn't that exciting?" You are not saying "I'm great", you are letting them know about successful happenings in their building.

4. **Say thank you.** After a performance, I always write a thank you email to my administration. It is usually something along the lines of, "Thank you for supporting the music program. I feel grateful to be in a school where everyone is so supportive of the arts". This needs to be genuine and not forced, but sometimes it means a lot just to say "thanks for being there".
5. **Be seen.** If life permits, try to go to other school functions. Chaperone a field trip, go to events that other teachers are running, reach out and help. Make sure you say hello to your administrators while you are there. They will be impressed to see you helping while off the clock.

Colleagues

1. **Be interested.** Ask your fellow teachers what they are doing in their classroom. What projects are they working on? What specific subjects are they covering? You will get to know the curriculum better as you share with them, you will be more informed about what your students are learning outside of music, and your colleagues will very likely enjoy talking about their subject.
2. **Collaborate.** Offer to tie music into another teacher's subject. At the elementary level it can be connecting note durations with a fractions unit. At the middle school or high school levels, you can make historical, literary, and social connections.
3. **Get to know them.** It is okay to socialize outside of school. Go to the occasional happy hour and the end-of-the-year BBQ. It is wise to choose your friends carefully and to be discriminating as to how much you share, but it will benefit you and your happiness at work to feel connected and have a friendly relationship with your colleagues.
4. **Leave your room.** Make time to be out and about. Some faculty rooms get a bad reputation if people are constantly crabby and complaining, but give it a try. If it's not a positive place to be, just poke your head into a colleague's classroom during lunch to say hello.
5. **Volunteer to help.** If the foreign language department is having a cultural night, volunteer to help serve food. If the physics club needs an extra chaperone on their field trip, volunteer to help. People will appreciate your help, will get to know you better, will get to know your program better, and they may even offer to return the favor and chaperone one of your concerts.

Secretaries, Tech Support, Maintenance, etc.

1. **Ask them how they are.** Don't just start listing all of the things you need from them.
2. **Find a way to say thank you.** Find a way to say thank you. You can write a card, get a gift certificate, or bake them cookies.
3. **Write down what you need.** If you run into the custodian in the hallway and ask them for a list of things, your request might be forgotten. Find out if there is a system for submitting requests through email or forms, or have it written down so you can give it to them.

NOTE: See Appendix A for samples of a course syllabus, a student handbook, after school choir contracts and student info cards.

Beginning & Running a Successful Choral Program

by Barbara Retzko

Congratulations! You are about to embark on your first formal teaching position! Nervous? Excited? Having invested in a long career teaching high school music, I can tell you that it truly is a glorious ride, filled with memories that last a lifetime. But, none of that glory happens without a clear vision and determination to provide the very best education for the students who attend your classes every day.

Traditions of your Predecessors

PRACTICES TO AVOID: STARTING YOUR FIRST YEAR AND ELIMINATING ALL/MANY/MOST PREVIOUS TRADITIONS BECAUSE YOU WANT TO START NEW AND CREATE YOUR OWN TRADITIONS. BAD IDEA.

- Take the first year to run the program in its past format. (A year is *really* not a very long time!)
- Take time to evaluate what you think works and what needs to be changed. Established traditions mean a lot to your students, particularly in junior and senior high, and their parents. With time, you will discover what will work and how it will evolve into “your” program. In the interim, you will not offend every student and parent who has worked hard creating past traditions (especially your senior class).
- Keeping some traditions alive will create continuity and encourage alumni to return to your concerts.
- If you teach high school, *respect and expect resistance* from your senior class.
- If you teach high school, build your program around your underclassmen. Most programs are established within three to five years with a new director. Building takes time, so be patient.

What Administration Will Care About

PRACTICES TO AVOID: THINKING THAT IF YOUR CHOIRS NAIL EVERY NOTE IN ERIC WHITACRE’S LUX ARUMQUE THAT YOU WILL GET GREAT REVIEWS FROM YOUR ADMINISTRATION

- Here’s the truth: Your *musical* work is rarely noticed and many times not on the top of your supervisor’s or principal’s list.

THESE ITEMS ARE AT THE TOP OF YOUR SUPERVISOR’S LIST:

- Assessment and Grades – Having enough grades to justify the grade given in each marking period is critical. Create weekly participation grades if necessary. A clear cut Grading System needs to be understood from day one. Rubrics are a terrific way to assess your singers. Video assignments (YouTube) will incorporate a use of technology (necessary skills in 21st century education) and will permit you to give direct and individual feedback to each of your singers.
- Meet all Deadlines: Grades, Interim Progress Reports, Lesson Plans. Set your personal deadline at least two days in advance of the actual deadline. Create a reputation of always being on time with important paperwork.
- Understand your school’s online program for Attendance and Grading. Meet the tech support team as quickly as possible. Have their numbers and emails available BEFORE you need them.
- Attendance – Schools have been sued for attendance issues. (*Suzy Creamcheese was caught shoplifting on Wednesday afternoon when she should have been in a Final Exam. After checking the attendance records of the school, there was no accounting for Suzy on the day of the exam.*) Your daily attendance records are legal documents that can end up in a court of law. This is extremely important to your administration and school district.
- **YOUR** Attendance – Vital to the success of every school. Your contract will permit a number of personal and sick days—but you can be sure if you use or exceed that number, it will be noticed and it could be reflected/documented in your observations. Be conservative about how many

days you take. If you are really throwing yourself into your job, you will find that you can't afford to take many days off and really produce the program you want. Music class rosters are large, so bringing in a substitute for your class is a **major headache** to your administration, and they notice it.

- Be known for your success, not the extra work you generate.
- Be punctual – Be on Time. *“On Time”* means ready to teach, not pulling into the parking lot when the warning bell rings. As a music teacher, you will stay well beyond your contract time, but you should never be late to the opening of the school day, and you should never be late to any class you teach. You are legally bound to be “in the room” for class time. If there is a fight in your classroom or a student gets hurt or becomes ill, and you are not in the room, you are liable and can be sued. On the rare occasion that your car breaks down or you have a real problem that causes your late arrival, *call the main office.*
- Classroom Discipline – Your administration may not notice if your choir is balanced or has a beautiful tone, but they will certainly notice if your students are throwing spitballs, bullying, speaking out of turn, being rude, chewing gum, mouthing off, and so on. If you are struggling with classroom management, get some help! Find the director who has the best rehearsal discipline you've seen, and ask for real advice. Beg for real advice. *This administrative category will be a huge factor in determining your tenure.* It will also determine what kind of musical magic you can make, because no matter how musical you are, no matter how well you sing, no matter how organized you are, *If you do not conquer classroom discipline and control, you will not become an excellent music teacher!*
- Finances/Budget - If you do not keep accurate records, you will lose your job...period. Create an accounting book, use an Excel spreadsheet. Know your responsibility, and know how to access the money. Keep a log of all your requests, (for everything) and be meticulous in how you notate every transaction (no matter how busy things get). What are the rules of fundraising in the school? If you purchase something for your class, how will you be reimbursed? Is there an activities account that is separate from your curricular budget? Find out when you need to put in budget requests for the following year. Ask for twice your current budget - think of everything you could use (if you're lucky you'll get half of what you ask for). Find out what your present account figures are and spend every penny of what you have but not one penny more. Meet the deadlines for accessing these funds—purchase order requests in schools often get frozen by December, so spend early and completely. Be frugal with your purchases. A long-range plan will afford you the opportunity to purchase the extras (digital piano, percussion instruments) over time.

Professionalism

Dress Professionally: Your neat and proper attire projects your professional image (or lack thereof).

PRACTICES TO AVOID: LADIES, NO CLEAVAGE BEARING TOPS, NO MIDRIFTS, NO SHORT SKIRTS, NO BEACH FLIP-FLOPS. MEN, WEAR A TIE.

- The culture in each school as far as staff dress code and dress practices will differ. Even if the school where you teach tends to be very casual, always be neat, and always be modest. Remember that your appearance sends a message to your administrators and colleagues as to how seriously you take your position, and your appearance also sends a message to your students as to how much pride you take in yourself and your program.
- If you are a young teacher working in a high school setting, you are already relatively close in age to your students. Your wardrobe choices *will* help to establish your position as an authority figure and a professional or as “one of them.” This doesn't mean that you can't be hip and trendy, but image does matter. Avoid dressing like your students.

PRACTICES TO AVOID: WANTING YOUR STUDENTS TO “LIKE YOU”.

- YOU ARE NOT THEIR FRIEND, you are their teacher.

- Work to earn RESPECT, from your students, your colleagues and your administration.

PRACTICES TO AVOID: NOT CREATING CLEAR PERSONAL BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

- You were hired to teach music, not to be anyone's "buddy".
- You should not discuss your personal problems or your personal life in detail with your students. However much you choose to disclose, they will always want to go one step further.
- Be cautious with social media. If you take your students on trips off campus, it may be necessary for them to have access to your cell phone number. Be sure to establish clear rules about when and how your number should be used.
- Keep your personal e-mail and your school e-mail separate. Do not use school e-mail for anything personal – ever! School email *is* monitored by your administration. And yes, your Hotmail/Yahoo/Gmail accounts can also be monitored on a school computer.
- You should not discuss your last bad date, your money problems, or stories about college life gone wild in your classroom or rehearsal.
- Connect with your students through music
- Do not "friend" students on Facebook
- Be sure your personal Facebook page is squeaky clean – especially your photos.
- If you need to connect with your students regarding school-related matters, use the school email or call home directly.
- Don't fall into the trap of feeling you are the only person in whom they can confide. If they have a real problem, then it is your contractual responsibility to bring that real problem to someone who *was hired* to help them - the guidance counselor, the drug/alcohol counselors in school and/or their parents.
- As a young teacher, the line between personal and professional relationships should be very well defined for everyone's good and the sake of your career.
- You are a teacher 24/7 and are held to a **higher moral standard**. This principle should guide the choices you make in your personal and social life.
- A good rule of thumb: Speak with your students as if you are seated at their parent's dinner table.

Calendar Choices

PRACTICES TO AVOID: CHOOSING CONCERT, FIELD TRIP AND TRAVEL DATES WITHOUT CONSULTING YOUR COLLEAGUES, THE PRINCIPAL'S SECRETARY AND THE DISTRICT CALENDAR.

- First and foremost, consult your principal and fellow music staff with all the dates you will need throughout the year. Include rehearsal time on stage. Do not assume you will have stage use without requesting it.
- Make sure your dates are not conflicting with other big in-school events. Most districts have a master calendar that represents district-wide events, which may be published on the district web page.
- Make sure there is an understanding that no other school events should conflict with your date.
- Make sure your dates do not conflict with other music events in your district. If you teach in a regional school district, you will also need to check with your sending district's concert dates – many of your students may have younger siblings involved in these programs. Remember to invite all colleagues, K-12, to your concerts. Formally invite your Superintendent, Board members and Principal. Identify other events *around* your concert dates that may create scheduling challenges...school dances, major athletic events, standardized testing, etc.

Organization

PRACTICES TO AVOID: NEGLECTING THE "ORGANIZATIONAL" PLANNING ASPECTS OF YOUR CONCERT.

- Map out your “Concert Bulletins”, “Calendar Year”, and “Concert Programs” as far ahead as possible. **Keep records of all requests**—building use forms, calendar requests, account/ledger books of finances and PO’s, parent letters, field trip requests, fundraiser requests, honor choir records, folder assignments, music library, student databases (with names spelled as they would like it to appear in a concert program—nothing matters to parents more).
- Keep a copy of *everything* you submit, copy or distribute. Date everything!
- Memo *every* conversation you have with supervisors and administrators (“As per the meeting we had regarding budget and scheduling....”)
- Keep a copy of *all* emails for the first few years even if you have to BCC yourself.
- Purchase three ring binders that can be labeled on the binding. Use them for: Choral Library, Performance Apparel, Budget Information, Trip & Travel Info, etc.

Communication with other Music Professionals

PRACTICES TO AVOID: TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING ON YOUR OWN.

- Your music colleagues are your greatest resource. Support them and they will support you.
- Be eager to ask advice and quick to reply when asked. You can always learn from those around you (good or bad).
- Work at getting along. If you teach high school, the teachers who work K-8 often receive less fanfare and deserve your thanks and attention. They feed your program, so give generously to help them.
- Attend as many concerts as you can...and follow every one with a note of congratulations. *The hand-written letter really has not gone by the way of the buffalo and is highly regarded and appreciated.*
- If you are alone in your school situation, reach out to the other choral directors in your area and region.
- Join your professional organizations and become active so you have people to call upon as resources: NJ-ACDA and NAfME.
- Bring clinicians into your rehearsals. Your fellow choir directors will often come and hear your group for a free lunch, just to provide a fresh set of eyes and ears. Use them as a resource.
- **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING ALONE.**

Communication with the School Staff

PRACTICES TO AVOID: NOT REACHING OUT TO ALL FACULTY AND STAFF.

- Invite faculty/staff to every performance with a complimentary ticket. Whatever you lose in funds, you will build in goodwill.
- Ignore staff members who may have a grudge against “music people” (because it appears to other teachers that we are just having fun).
- Get to know the custodians, the secretaries in the main office and in the guidance office.
- A box of chocolates goes a long way.
- Always be friendly and have a smile on your face in the staff copy/lunch room.
- Show respect and follow the rules.
- Never blind-side your administration – ever! Student issues, parent issues – if you think your administrators should be made aware of a situation – *tell them.*

Politics Around You

PRACTICES TO AVOID: BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE “CRISIS DU JOUR”

- Do a terrific job in your classroom and keep your opinions about everything else to yourself. Spend your time at school teaching music, not getting involved in “office drama.”
- Don’t gossip, or you’ll be known as a gossip.
- You can and will develop close personal friendships with your colleagues, but like all true friendships, they will be established over time and they will be based on things of substance.

Avoid spending too much time with the “in crowd” on your staff. There is a common saying among some high school teachers: “We teach high school. We are not *in* high school.”

Communication with Parents

PRACTICES TO AVOID: AVOIDING THE “PARENT PHONE CALL” OR DEALING WITH PARENT MEETINGS.

- Use any opportunity you can to connect in a positive way with parents. Even a bad discipline moment can be a positive moment on the phone.
- Always ask for the parent’s “help” in looking for ways to get their son/daughter to succeed. Parents can be a very strong ally in developing your program. Ask for their help in specific, defined jobs.
- Separate the actions of a helpful parent from their son or daughter’s achievement in the program.
- Always be friendly, but remember that many good parents have a hard time being totally objective about their children. Use good judgment in the words you choose.
- Do NOT talk about other students with parents.

Student Management

PRACTICES TO AVOID: MANY YOUNG TEACHERS SPEAK WITH STUDENTS IN A MANNER THAT MAKES THEM THINK THE STUDENTS WILL “LIKE THEM” MORE. TRYING TO BE “COOL” OR TALK ABOUT “HIP” THINGS JUST DOESN’T WORK. IT ALSO HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CREATE PROBLEMS WHEN YOU HAVE TO DISCIPLINE ONE OF THESE “FAVORITES”.

- Treat every student in the same friendly manner.
- Connect with them in a professional way as they are coming in and out of your rehearsal space.
- Stand at the door at the end of class and say “Thank You”. Remember that your class is a *choice* they make.
- Do not try to be their friend – they have their own friends (and you should too – friends your own age!).
- Do not berate the entire class for one student’s bad behavior. Deal with bad behavior immediately after class/school. Do not permit a situation to grow that should have been addressed right after it happened.
- Young teachers are often hesitant to confront. Individual bad behavior needs to be identified and disciplined. All the silent students watching will notice when you are fair and consistent.
- Speak with seasoned veteran teachers about classroom management. Ask to observe as many classes as you can, even if they are not rehearsals. There is a lot to be learned by observing.
- The “First Day of School” information should clearly define your behavioral expectations for the school year.
- Do not make rules that will not have a direct consequence. False threats are just that, and your students will lose respect for you if there is not follow-through.

Repertoire

PRACTICES TO AVOID: CHOOSING MUSIC THAT IS TOO HARD FOR YOUR STUDENTS

- Choose a level easier than your first judgment, especially in your first year. Better to do an easier piece well, than a hard piece half-way.

PRACTICES TO AVOID: PROGRAMMING MUSIC BECAUSE YOU HAVE PERFORMED IT, WITHOUT AN ADEQUATE UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR GROUP’S ABILITIES, THE SCHOOL’S PAST PROGRAMMING OR THE COMMUNITY’S EXPECTATIONS.

- Place as many pieces of music as you would like in their folders. Choose **no more than five** pieces per group for your concert program. Choose them as a set...with contrasting tempi, keys, moods, genres. Your *entire* concert should not exceed an hour and a half.
- Your concert should start on time.

- Programming means you have a flow to your concert...a build to a climax for each group as well as the concert as a whole...purposefully create a reason for people to return and for the community to rave about your work the next day in the local Shop-Rite. *That* is how you will make a reputation for yourself with your students and parents. Your students want quality – they do know the difference.
- Teach every note you want to concertize in December by October 31st.
- If it is not ready, *do not* put it on the stage.
- **No one will criticize music they do not hear.**
- No parent will criticize a “too short” concert.
- Ask seasoned veterans for copies of their concert programs, not only for repertoire choices, but for layout and design.

PRACTICES TO AVOID: KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY.

- Be sensitive to the demographic, religious, socio-economic make-up of the town in which you teach.
- Review as many past programs as possible to understand what was chosen by your predecessor(s).
- Be careful to program solid, reputable choral literature.

PROGRAM VISION

DO YOU HAVE ONE?

You, your colleagues, your faculty and staff, your Supervisor, your Board of Education, your Superintendent and the guy who runs the deli in town should all be able to describe your program in the very same way. One or two sentences that capture what your program is all about. And remember, it is NEVER “Your Program”. It is *always* about the students.

VOCABULARY & COMMON SENSE IN THE CLASSROOM...

- “Please do not put me in the position...(of creating a STUPID assignment based on your STUPID behavior)...(of telling you that you cannot perform in the concert because you have violated the school’s dress code)...(of telling you that you cannot board the bus because you are not wearing your choir t-shirt)...”
- When I speak, you listen. When you speak, *I’ll stop my world...*that is the Day One Rule.
- Do Not Ever Speak In Your Classroom When the Students Are Talking...EVER.
- *My favorite* question...“Hey TEACH, anything I can do for you today?”
- Never burn a bridge – you never know when you will need to cross over it again.
- Rules need consequences, not false threats.
- Have “thank you” cards in your desk and use them.
- Find good mentors and use them...all the time...*do not* try to reinvent the wheel.
- Build your choral library...have a single copy of everything in your school library in a file or binder (that can be taken home)...make cataloging your library a priority.
- Create a number system for everything and use it. Folders numbered. Music numbered. Performance apparel numbered. Everything is expensive to replace.
- *Have a life* outside of school.
- Let the work of your group speak for you...
- **EVERY STUDENT MATTERS**...There is goodness in every one of them. (It just may take a moment or two to find it in some !)
- Most of the time, it is the *behavior* you do not like, not the *student*.
- Thank your students after every class...they make a choice to schedule choir.
- Don’t *ever* blind-side your administration.
- 5-4-3-2-1...(a countdown to quiet a noisy rehearsal...) or...“I’ll Wait” (and mean it!).

THE FOUR AGREEMENTS

By Don Miguel Ruiz

1. Be Impeccable with your Word.

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean.

Avoid using the Word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others.

Use the power of your Word in the direction of truth and love.

2. Don’t Take Anything Personally

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won’t be the victim of needless suffering.

3. Don’t Make Assumptions

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want.

Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama.

With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.

4. Always Do Your Best

Your best is going to change from moment to moment;
it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick.

Under any circumstance, simply do your best,
and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

CONDUCT UNBECOMING A TEACHER

Barbara Retzko

1. What is “inappropriate touching?”
 - Everything. Just don’t touch a student.
2. What are inappropriate comments?
 - Comments of a personal nature outside of the teaching environment and subject matter expertise. Anything that makes a student uncomfortable or would make a teacher uncomfortable if a student’s parent (or a teacher’s mother) was also in the room.
3. What is an inappropriate classroom attitude?
 - Manner, dress or behavior that takes away from or interferes with daily class instruction.
4. What is an inappropriate joke or story?
 - JOKE: The WPLJ joke of the day...Anything that uses sexual innuendo.
 - STORY: Telling of weekend escapades that involve drinking, sleepovers, dating, etc.
5. How involved should you be in a student’s personal life?
 - Limited to superficial discussion (“How was your weekend?”)...polite conversation
6. Is it appropriate to engage in any personal discussion of subject matter outside your area of expertise with your students?
 - Only if the student is at risk and you are engaging in discovery prior to potential escalation to school administration – always reminding the students that anything they say may need to be referred to a Guidance Counselor, Student Assistance Counselor, etc...
7. What is an inappropriate use of school resources?
 - Use of school resources for personal gain.
8. WHO are you to your students?
 - I am a function of my contract – i.e. – Choral Director.
9. WHAT are you to your students?
 - Role model, mentor, a resource for career planning and college audition preparation.
10. What is the role of the teacher today?
 - A member of a team of professionals who together are responsible for the education of their students.
 - A teacher’s role is very influential. It is important to guard against the irresponsible use of this position. (The Hippocratic Oath: “First do no harm”). By its very nature, the profession of teaching obligates its members to maintain a higher standard of personal conduct than members of many other occupational groups in the community.
11. How would you define an exemplary employee?
 - One who understands the *mission of the school*, one who conducts him/herself in a professional manner, one who dresses respectfully

12. IN LOCO PARENTIS...are you there to act as if you were your student's parent?
 - Only in the event a student may harm him/herself or others.
13. To whom are you responsible? For whom are you working?
 - The Superintendent first. Then Principals/Supervisors. Then parents/community.
14. What is your school community's current moral standard?
 - How many places of worship are there? How actively do the members of your community practice their religious beliefs? What is the socio-economic make up of your community? What is the average education level of your students' parents? Is the community ethnically or politically diverse?
 - Controversial discussions may include (but are not limited to) religious beliefs, political beliefs, war, abortion, gay rights, etc. Voicing your opinions to students, even if they ask you, can cause difficulties in the classroom.
15. Does it or should it affect our teaching profession?
 - A relationship of PUBLIC TRUST exists between a teacher and the community. In essence, this means that the community can hold certain "behavioral expectations" for its teachers, one of which depicts teachers as "role models" for all students.
 - Your moral and political beliefs may differ from the overall beliefs of the community where you teach. You have two choices: find a way to exist and be effective in a setting where you may be at odds with the people you work with (and for), or find a place to work where you are less at odds.
16. Public school teachers must recognize that:
 - They have both ethical and legal responsibilities to their employer (the local school board) to work to protect and maintain the relationship of public trust and reliance that exists between their school system and the community, especially parents.
 - As part of this public trust, public school teachers are:
 - 1) Obligated to conduct themselves publicly in ways that do not offend the community, and
 - 2) Expected to function as role models for the students they teach.

Starting from Scratch

by Amy Troxel

Whether you are a brand new teacher or simply find yourself in a brand new position, this is what I have learned about "starting over."

Before the First Day of School

As much as possible, take control of your classroom – set it up so that it is most conducive to teaching, so that it is organized, clean and friendly. This does not necessarily mean posters and cheery bulletin boards, but it does mean “a place for everything and everything in its place.” For example, a place for students to pick up or drop off paperwork, a calendar of upcoming events, flyers for cultural events in your area, a pencil sharpener, tissues, etc. If you have windows, plants are always a nice touch. If your classroom is tidy, your students will be more inclined to take care of it.

My classroom has cubbies and folder cabinets. Starting the second day of school, students must put their belongings in their cubbies. And from the day that their folders are assigned, they must always bring them to their chairs – with a pencil!

Organize and catalogue the existing choral library – in each job that I have been in, this has never been done for me. Make note of how many copies you have and the difficulty level of each score. You might also want to include accompaniment needs, language (if foreign), and occasion (such as holiday, patriotic, etc.). Putting together a library takes a lot of time, but it will save you endless frustration later – it will also save you from ordering music you may already own. Make a list of music you would like to add to your library and purchase it a little at a time.

On the First Day of School

I have made the mistake of taking the first day of school to talk about classroom rules, how I will not tolerate lateness or disruptive behavior, how there will be consequences for certain offenses, etc. All of these things are true, but what I forgot to say in those early years was how glad I was to be there! ***The order of events is important.***

Remember...

- you are glad to be there
- you are available to your students for whatever they might need – whether musical or personal
- you are a family

- you want them to strive for excellence in all that they do (especially in, but not limited to, their musical pursuits) and you will do your best to set a good example
- you have a few basic rules and expectations

Get to know your students. Learn their names. Ask them questions – let them ask you questions (they will want to know every personal little detail, so decide ahead of time where your line is). Play some games that let you watch them as they interact with each other and allow you to interact with them. And if possible, *sing on the first day!*

Classroom Management & Discipline

Be kind, and insist on kindness in your classroom. I made the mistake early on of modeling my classroom management after a mentor teacher who had a personality completely opposite of mine – you can imagine how well that worked out. In your discipline, you must always be true to yourself. If you are not a yeller, still don't yell. Think of how you would want to be treated if you were the student. Sarcasm should be used *very* sparingly and meanness, NEVER!

Keep your classroom rules simple and few – I have three: (1) be present and on time, (2) do not talk when I am talking, and (3) treat every person and every thing in the room with respect. They will not remember 21 rules nor follow them, and you will never be able to enforce them all. If you maintain a certain attitude of kindness and tolerance in your classroom, your students will catch on, and it will eliminate the need for endless, silly rules.

Do not talk when they are talking – insist on quiet. If you talk over them, they will talk louder. Have a non-confrontational cue that signals your need for their attention. It could be a clapping pattern, a raised hand (although an aural cue usually works better), a handbell, a vocal percussion pattern (my personal favorite – cuts through a lot of noise), etc. You will have to teach them to follow this cue, but it generally works. Your cue may become less effective over time, especially if you overuse it, so you may need to change or reteach – this is normal.

Whatever you do, whatever your rules, *be consistent*. Apply discipline fairly and across the board. You will hurt some feelings and bruise some egos, but your students will not respect you if you play favorites or have scapegoats.

If there is a serious or chronic issue with a particular student, address it with that student immediately. Express your concern and try to understand before making accusations. Explain how their behavior hurts the class at large. Sometimes there is a good explanation for behavior problems. 90% of the time, a student will make an effort if they are given the chance. If necessary, call or email home, enlist the help of guidance counselors or seasoned teachers. Confronting a student in class, especially in a hostile way, should always be a last resort and come after private counseling has already taken place.

On the other side of this coin, don't forget to encourage and acknowledge good behavior. As teachers, we never forget to tell a student when they do something wrong, but we must remember to thank them when they do something right. They will love your praise and work hard to earn your approval. They will learn to want to please you and loath to disappoint you.

One last thing I cannot stress enough...*admit when you are wrong*. We may be grown ups, but we are far from perfect. Sometimes I can't help but think how annoyed I would be if older people were constantly reminding me every time I made a mistake or did something stupid. Just because our students are "kids," doesn't make them less human. We need to remind them that we can fail, too, and that admitting failure is nothing of which to be ashamed.

Policies & Procedures

Be very clear from day one what your expectations are – have a handbook or a syllabus that students and parents must read *and sign*. Let students ask questions in class the day you hand it out, but be sure to frame anything that could be seen as dictatorial in a positive light. Be sure to address the following...

- grading & attendance policies
- behavior expectations & consequences (a call home, detention, etc.)
- dress code & uniform requirements
- calendar of events (especially mandatory events)
- trip eligibility (if applicable)

Your policies should be very clear, should anticipate likely scenarios, and should be strict. However, remember that you have an out. You made the policy, so you are allowed to make exceptions. I have learned that when you remind a parent or student of the policy to which they agreed (*because they signed it*), and yet offer this or that particular compromise, they are generally grateful, even if it means giving a lowered grade or a milder consequence. There will be times when you need to stand your ground, but keep in mind that not every battle is worth dying for.

Traditions – Old & New

The older the students you are working with, the more they will value the past traditions of the program (unless the person you are replacing was a complete disaster and disliked by the student body). You will do yourself no service at all if you try to dismantle everything in one year. Change is slow, and resistance to change is natural. Allow certain traditions to phase out as seniors graduate. Modify existing traditions to suit your educational goals. Create new traditions to replace old ones, but make the program serve you without threatening the sense of security that your students need.

Another word on traditions, get to know your school and community climate. Some places are very slow to change, very ingrown, and very loyal to the past (and past legends). You have to work *with* people, not *against* them. You may need to work very hard to sell your ideas, but if you are patient and understanding, you will see progress.

Be Willing to Change

Some things will work, and some things will not. If you are coming from a different school, don't expect everything you did *there* to work *here*. It won't. Be willing to change your approach. Remember the definition of insanity, and don't stand in the way of progress.

Build from where you are. Enjoy the process. Enjoy your students. Enjoy your job.

Long Term Goals

MAKE THEM! Personal, professional and program. Check in with your goals from time to time. We can easily get off track by the simple grind of day to day. Remember that your goals and priorities can change – this is a natural part of growth. What is important to you *now* may not seem so important in three or five years. What seems unattainable to you now may seem much less so in the future.

Have a Life

Know when and where to draw the line between work and everything else – do not be married to your job. Everyone does this in a different way. Some of us have responsibilities at home, such as children and spouses, and cannot stay late at work. Some of us do not have these constraints. For me, I do not take work home. I will stay until the job is done, but when I leave, I leave. My dad gave me a very good piece of advice in college after I had pulled one too many all-nighters. He said, “Do the best that you can with the time that you have, and learn to be content with the results.”

Pursue other hobbies that bring you joy and fulfillment. Whether these pursuits are musical or otherwise, it is important that you not neglect your own growth and enjoyment, even in the first few years of a new job. The time available for recreation will likely increase as you become more seasoned in your position, but do not neglect it entirely at the beginning. You are a whole person who deserves to have a whole life. You will have much more to offer your students and your program if you do not “burn out” in the first six months. Pace yourself, and keep your priorities in place.

One last word of wisdom...

Life is not a destination. It is a journey. Those who focus with such fury on the end result miss all of the scenery along the way. There will be many difficult days ahead, but don't miss out on all the good stuff. If you screw up (and you will – more than once), there is always tomorrow. Remember to smile, to laugh, to connect. And for mercy's sake, have a sense of humor about it all.

The Folder of “Awesomeness”

When I started my current job, I started in January, and I replaced someone who was generally well-loved by the student body. Starting over is hard enough, but starting mid-year magnifies all the normal “problems” of a new job. My friend gave me a piece of advice as I embarked my new journey – he told me I needed a “Folder of Awesomeness.” I took his advice, and you should, too. This folder was a great comfort to me at the beginning, but even as you establish yourself and build your program, there will be days when you will need to open this folder and take comfort in what is inside.

The “Folder of Awesomeness” is for any note, card or napkin scrap upon which a student chooses to thank you, tell you they love you, tell you how much they love choir, how much choir means to them, how you've been such an example and they wouldn't be who they are without you. It is the folder that reminds you that “even though you are feeling like crap and a failure today, you are actually awesome” – you just need some perspective.

The “Folder of Awesomeness” should never give you “a big head.” As musicians, we must often fight against our inner diva. Rather, it is there to pick you up when you are down. It is there to remind you that your kids may hate you today, but they loved you yesterday, so chances are, they will love you tomorrow – what can I say, kids are fickle.

The “Folder of Awesomeness” belongs in every choir director's filing cabinet. Some treasures will mean more than others, but as your folder becomes fatter and fatter with each passing year, you will be able to see, actually see, how much your work has been appreciated by your students.

Multiple Roles of the High School Vocal Teacher

by Dr. Frederic Ford

This is a list of the various roles (or “hats”) that I took on over my years as a high school vocal-choral teacher, and a breakdown of the chores belonging to each. Many of these chores come under the heading of things I wish I’d been warned about in teacher training. These roles and chores were specific to my position at Bridgewater-Raritan Regional High School. Most were not mentioned in the job description, or discussed in interviews. They came with our school’s practices, with our union contract, or because I felt they were necessary for the good choral program I was hired to oversee. These chores will, naturally, vary from place to place, but should hopefully serve to indicate the variety and scope of the jobs you may be considering.

The roles below are listed according to the percentage of time and energy they take. You will notice that administrative and managerial chores top the list, and fun things like teaching and making music come further down. It is important to find ways early on to ease the “administrivia” load – by organizing well, developing good and flexible computer files, by training student assistants and leaders, by finding parent help – so that you can put your best efforts into helping your students, and yourself, to learn and grow.

The Roles

I. Administrator

Attendance, each class – official record

Separate entries for simple absences vs. absences for guidance, field trips, nurse visits, etc.

Duty periods – lunchroom, buses, hallway, in-school suspension

Personnel records – maintain lists of students that include course numbers, voice parts, home phone numbers, cell phone numbers, email addresses, homeroom, guidance counselor, current grade, special honors, heights (for robes and riser placement – these need to be updated each year), ensembles

Arrange field trips – triple forms for prior approval by administration, two-weeks advance notice to nurses, permission slips and medical info for every student, buses and bus lists, lining up chaperones

Parent organization – attend meetings, relay program

Back to School – arrange sessions, connect with parents

Fund Raising – for special projects, trips (maintain records or find parent help)

II. Equipment and Supplies Manager

Music octavos

Select, order, arrange for payments

Mark, number, and distribute

Maintain music library, current and long-term

Collect music at semester end and update inventory (procedure for lost or destroyed music scores)

Music folders

Order, number, distribute, collect and inventory (procedure for lost or destroyed music folders)

Other teaching materials: select, order or create and distribute materials for sight singing, rhythm reading, listening or historical context

Clothing (robes or special uniforms)

Order, store, distribute by size, collect, inventory, clean

Piano(s) – maintenance and tuning

End of year awards – order, personalize, assign

III. Teacher

Singing skills

Choral skills

Rehearsal and concert behavior

Listening skills, critical thinking, analysis

Languages – pronunciation, translation

Context – historical and cultural

Classroom control – motivation, responsibility, discipline as well as dealing with guidance, detention, lateness, restrooms, food, gum, acting out, shyness and bullying

Assessment – assess skills via written and oral tests, assign warnings and grades four times per year, mid-year and final exams, final grades

Communicating with parents

Leadership training – select and train section leaders, attendance assistants, management help, librarians, robe managers, stage crew

Course development for one to four-year students of varying abilities and interest

IV. Conductor

Score preparation, learn, lead, and shape each piece

Lead each rehearsal

Prepare piano and instrumental accompaniment

Initiate and guide each concert

Stage etiquette – acknowledge applause for chorus, soloists, accompanists

Announcements and commentary

Accompany rehearsals, or identify and train/rehearse accompanists

V. Concert Manager (sometimes simultaneous with the above)

Prepare programs

Set up stage and house (including seating for chorus)

Arrange for pre-concert spaces and warm-ups

Arrange for ushers, sound systems, recording, lighting, front of house, stage management, ticket sales and at the door donations

Work with school maintenance to help set up risers, move pianos

Set up stage crew, and movements of people/equipment during concerts
 Recruit accompanists and instrumentalists
 Deal with the unexpected: fainting and falls, costume problems, performance gaffes, failures of assistants, security, etc.

VI. Professional

Professional relationships and demeanor with guidance office, administration, colleagues, parents, custodial staff
 Local teachers' union (NEA)
 State and local professional organizations (ACDA, NAFME)
 Professional development
 School committees or advising duties
 Advocate for choral music, with parents, PTA, administration

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### Concerns of the Choral Director:

Acknowledging your limitations and knowing when and whom to ask for help  
 Keeping up with deadlines - maintain a calendar (important to set up early)  
 Making administrative chores doable:  
   Setting up student, parent, administrative help  
   Computer aids:  
     databases for students, for grades, for music library  
     word processing for lesson plans, correspondence  
     spreadsheet for fund raising, for music orders  
 Adjusting for the Monday blahs and Friday hyperactivity  
 Flexibility in the face of unexpected pullouts for guidance, meetings  
 The religious music issue  
 Relating to the students – how friendly, how rigid? extent of access – the harassment monster  
 Student practicing responsibilities – how much can you require? how do you test?  
   Back to school night  
 Recruiting – especially boys  
 Tracking and teaching physically challenged and learning disabled students – IEP's and epi-pens  
 Classroom technology (benefits and limitations): computer, DVD, CD, SmartMusic, music notation and sequencing programs, learning aids  
 Copyright – knowing, understanding and observing the law  
 How to find and select repertoire – for daily use and for concerts  
 How to assemble and print a program  
 Special rehearsals, both during and after school – why and how  
 Selecting concert attire – yours and theirs  
 Your multiple personalities, depending on need: cheerleader, coach, comedian, listener, lecturer, warden, arbitrator, friend, critic

## Selecting Quality Repertoire

by Mike Schmidt & Amy Troxel

While repertoire selection may be a personal and situational endeavor, there are a few basic principles that should guide you as you research and select music for your choirs. Many other conductors and composers have offered their opinion on this subject (see the suggested resources at the end).

When researching and selecting repertoire, ask yourself the following questions about your singers:

1. **What is the size and makeup of the choir?** What is the balance of voice parts within the group? How many singers do you have in each section?
2. **What is the age and experience level of the singers?**
3. **What kind of repertoire has the choir sung in the past?** It is important to provide variety in the literature you teach, but it is also important not to overwhelm singers with too many different styles in one concert program.
4. **What is the skill level of the singers?** What is their level of musical understanding and maturity? How well do they read music (rhythmic and tonal)? How quickly can they learn new concepts or tackle musical challenges?
5. **What is a comfortable range for each section in the choir?** While a choir can be successful singing repertoire that challenges their comfortable range, it is vocal unhealthy to sing in these extremes, whether high or low, all the time. Repertoire needs to be balanced more heavily towards a comfortable range, particularly for young singers.
6. **Are there singers in your choir who are in the process of or approaching a voice change?** If so, how will their success be affected by any given selection? How will this affect the choir at large, both from a morale and a balance standpoint?

It is key that you have a good understanding of the group for which you are selecting repertoire. You need to be able to predict with some certainty how they will respond to any given selection. If it is something they will love, use it as a motivator. If it is something they may resist, know what you have to do to sell it. Anticipate what will be challenging for the group, and have a strategy in place to overcome those challenges. Be sure to choose repertoire that is not only appealing but also “educational” – meaning, each selection should teach or reinforce a musical/vocal skill.

It is important that we offer quality literature to our singers. While some selections will be the “meat and potatoes” of your program and some will be “dessert,” they should all be good. Ask yourself the following questions about any given selection you are considering for your choir:

1. **What is the text?** Is it easily accessible to the age group you are teaching? Is it appropriate for the age group you are teaching (too mature, too immature)?
2. **Is the music well-crafted?** Are there intelligent voice-leading? Do the text and the musical setting fit well together?
3. **Does the piece justify the amount of time it takes to learn?** Is it unnecessarily long or complicated? Is the difficulty level above the ability of the ensemble?
4. **Does the piece represent the musical style well?** Is there another selection that would be a more appropriate or authentic representation of the style? This question is particularly important when considering foreign language and multicultural music.
5. **What is the range?** Sing through each voice part to determine where the bulk of the musical line sits. Does the range sit particularly high or low? What are the highest and lowest pitches in each vocal line? Can your singers handle the extreme limits of the vocal range? Can you modify these extremes while maintaining the integrity of the piece?

As choral directors, selecting quality repertoire is the most important aspect of running a successful program. No other single factor affects so many things:

1. **Student recruitment.** If students feel that the literature is beneath or above them, lacking in variety, etc. they will not want to participate.
2. **Student retention.** Same as above.
3. **Classroom discipline.** If students love the literature they are singing, they will be less likely to become sidetracked and disruptive.
4. **Student motivation.** If students feel successful in their learning, and at the same time, sufficiently challenged, they will be motivated to work hard, learn more and maintain a higher level of excellence.

***Food for thought...***

Jennifer Sengin

Chances are if you are bored, so are your students. When you find things becoming stale, incorporate some of these ideas into your rehearsal:

*Have students stand in circles of their voice parts*

*Spread out around the room*

*Create one large circle around the room*

*Change the direction of your setup - face a different direction*

*Rehearse in a new location (i.e. auditorium, lobby, stairwell, etc.)*

*Incorporate physical movement*

*Listen to recordings of other choirs singing the repertoire you are working on - ask your students to critique their performances*

*Teach a new piece - sometimes both you and the choir need a break from the same process*

Always show ENTHUSIASM!!! If you are not excited, your students will not be either.

Where to find quality repertoire:

1. Go to an ACDA or NAFME reading session.
2. Talk to other choral directors whose programs you respect
3. Attend concerts and take notes on your program – you will often get good ideas for how to choreograph, add movement or visual enhancements in addition to finding good music
4. Go to conferences where music publishers and distributors are represented
5. Explore the following publisher’s websites:

Alliance Music Publications – [www.alliancemusic.com](http://www.alliancemusic.com)

Carl Fischer Music – [www.carlfischer.com](http://www.carlfischer.com)

Hal Leonard Music – [www.halleonard.com](http://www.halleonard.com)

Lorenz Music Publishers – [www.lorenz.com](http://www.lorenz.com)

Santa Barbara Music – [www.sbmp.com](http://www.sbmp.com)

Shawnee Music – [www.shawneepress.com](http://www.shawneepress.com)

Walton Music – [www.waltonmusic.com](http://www.waltonmusic.com)

### Programming Ideas for the Elementary School Choir

Carol Beadle

*Every song needs to be special*

*Expand the repertoire –  
program songs that are good for them to know even if they are not arranged for two parts*

*Program a variety of tempos, languages and styles*

*Add choreography to some songs*

*Add props to some songs*

*Bring in professionals to make a “guest appearance” –  
you don’t always have to pay them if you are willing to return the favor*

*Bring in high school students to play instrumental parts*

*Feature other staff members*

*Collaborate with older grades*

*Do a finale number at the end of your concert that combines all of the students in your program –  
sometimes it is good to show off the size of your program*

### References

Brunner, D.L. (1992) Choral repertoire: a director’s checklist. *Music Educators Journal*, 79, 29-32. doi: 10.2307/3399672

Head, P. (2008). A song worth singing – selecting choral literature at all levels. In M. Hold, & J. Jordan (Eds.), *The school choral program: Philosophy, planning, organizing, and teaching*. (pp. 134-145). Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc.

McCoy, S. (2012). The choir issue, part two. *Journal of Singing*, 68(3), 287-289.

## BODY, MIND, SPIRIT, VOICE

by Jack Hill

“As singers, we all appreciate the importance of a proper warm up, but in a day-to-day choir rehearsal, warm ups can often become routine and seemingly unimportant. I have always found it useful to keep in mind the adage “BODY, MIND, SPIRIT, VOICE” when planning your warm ups. If your singers touch on each of these concepts in each warm up, they will be physically, mentally and vocally prepared for a successful rehearsal.

### **BODY – Get moving**

- Stand
- Bend
- Jump
- Swing
- Stretch
- Clap

### **MIND – Get thinking**

- Sing using *solfege* syllables in a variety of patterns and alternating voice parts
- Sing scales, leaving out different syllables
- Add rhythm or clapping patterns that make the exercises more complex and incorporate elements from the repertoire
- Create interesting chords by moving individual voice parts by intervals to go beyond typical consonant harmonies

### **SPIRIT – Get excited**

- Sing an exercise that has a text designed to motivate your specific group (for example, sing a simple arpeggio on “Oh, how I love our track team”)
- Sing warm ups that feel good in the voice and get your singers excited
- Sing warm ups that allow some healthy competition between the sections

### **VOICE – Get singing**

- Sing exercises that develop specific skills
- Sing exercises that extend vocal range
- Sing exercises that provide a choral opportunity and enhance listening skills
- Sing exercises based on musical material from the repertoire

This last concept is where most choral directors are most comfortable, but it is only one of several important aspects of preparing your singers for a successful rehearsal.

There is no particular order you must follow, but preparation and consistency will allow you to touch on all four seamlessly and efficiently. Don’t fall into the trap of “winging it.” The time you spend planning out your warm ups will reward you with a group that is focused and ready to sing with BODY, MIND, SPIRIT and VOICE.

*During the first few months of school, take the time to teach many different warm ups to your choirs. As they become more familiar with the exercises, increase the difficulty level and demand higher levels of excellence in their execution.*

*Some ideas for increasing difficulty are to sing exercises in canon or add parts, to alter the articulation, to audiate certain portions, etc. Some ideas for demanding higher levels of excellence are to fine-tune vowels, consonants, breath markings, entrances, cut-offs, etc.*

### **Getting Class Started**

- Create a routine to get class started.
- Create a call-and-response to get the students' attention and transition into the warm up.
- Keep the focus by silently transitioning into physical warm ups such as stretching and breathing.

### **Sequence**

- Physical warm ups
- Vocal sighs
- Gentle singing and humming
- Vowel warm ups (get the voice moving)
- Warming down
- Upper-range extension
- *Solfège* (scales and canons)
- Ear-training

*There is a delicate balance between consistency and predictability in the choral rehearsal, especially during the warm up. There is pedagogical value to consistently covering the same material and moving through certain vocal skills in a specific order. The trick to keeping your singers on their toes, both mentally and physically, is to maintain some element of surprise or unpredictability in your routine.*

*Not only will your singers enjoy a little variety, so will you.*

We know, as singers, what exercises are necessary to successfully warm up the voice. The goal of the warm up is ***optimal singing***. Modify your warm up exercises to meet the specific needs of your singers and the demands of your repertoire.

Jennifer Sengin

## *Creating warm ups based on your repertoire...*

Jennifer Sengin

When trying to develop warm ups that relate to the repertoire, consider the needs of the repertoire itself. Determine where the challenges are in each piece, and isolate the specific skills needed. The warm up you develop should be designed to teach the skills necessary to sing the repertoire successfully. Planning ear-training exercises in this way also creates an engaging and efficient rehearsal.

Here are several examples of exercises based on choral repertoire:

**Challenging intervals** – Develop a warm up that addresses the leap. Reinforcing the leap through various keys will make the leap easier to sing in the context of the repertoire. Utilizing *solfege* in the warm up followed by *solfege* in the repertoire also addresses many interval challenges.

**Rhythm & Meter** – Develop a warm up in the meter of the piece. For example, Nick Page's *Niska Banja* is written in 9/8 with a 2+2+2+3 metric grouping. Before beginning this piece, develop a warm-up that incorporates the 9/8 rhythm. Pair the exercise with a physical gesture so that singers can kinesthetically feel the longer fourth beat.

**Identifying & Teaching Musical Themes** – Most music has an identifiable theme. Isolate the theme, and teach it to the class using *solfege*. Ask the students to identify the theme each time it occurs throughout the piece. This becomes a musical scavenger hunt and is a great way to transition from a warm up into the rehearsal.

The following warm ups were compiled by Patrick Hachey from Roxbury High School. These exercises demonstrate the suggested sequence for warming up the vocal apparatus. Each exercise can be modified to suit your particular choir's needs and abilities.

## Roxbury Vocal Dept. Choral Warm-ups

### 1. Initial exercises to focus the class and get the voice working.

- a. Have students sing exercise in octaves, raising pitch by half-step with each repetition.

bi - di bi - di bah bah bah

- b. Have students sing treble clef of exercise in octaves, raising pitch by half-step. Once the exercise reaches D major, have basses sing the bass clef line

ma ma ma ma ma ma ma ma mi mi mi mi mi mi mi mi

1 plus 6 min-us 2 e-quals 5 1 plus 6 min-us 2 e-quals 5

meh meh meh meh meh meh meh meh meh meh

1 plus 6 min-us 2 e-quals 5 1 4 5 1

### 2. Breathing and movement exercises to engage the muscles involved in breathing and vocalizing.

- a. Have students repeat pattern below, increasing tempo with each repetition

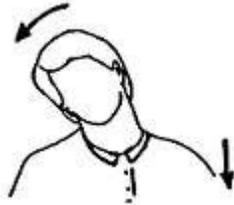
r p t k r p t k s s s s sh sh sh sh ft ft ft ft wsh wsh wsh wsh wsh

b. Standing Side Stretch



This stretch not only opens up the ribcage but also strengthens the core.

c. Neck Stretch



Loosens up the neck allowing for better vocal production.

**3. Long tone exercises to increase breath line and phrasing.**

- a. Have all students sing lower notes in octaves, completing entire exercise in one breath. Add upper harmony in tenor and soprano voices around D major.

maw meh maw meh

maw meh

- b. Students sing ascending and descending line each in one breath. Can be done in a round to add harmonic component.

zeh aw zeh

#### 4. Range Extension exercises (ascending and descending)

- a. Repeat the following exercises descending by half-step to reach low range.

ki - aw ki - aw ki - aw

Yaw haw haw haw

zing - a - ma - ma zing zing zing zing zing

- b. Repeat the following exercises ascending by half-step to reach high range.

ti roh to roh ti roh ti roh

ooh wah pah ooh

#### 5. Men's Falsetto range - have men and women sing exercise in unison in notated octave, ascending by half-steps.

ti roo i

#### 6. Harmonic exercises for choral tuning.

- a. Have students sing pattern on notated solfège syllables while using corresponding Curwen hand signs. On subsequent performances, increase tempo. Can also be performed in harmonic minor by substituting “me” for “mi” and “le” for “la”. Once pattern is mastered, add parts in a round.



(To be sung on director's vowel of choice)

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is written in the bass clef. The lyrics are: (To be sung on director's vowel of choice). The score is enclosed in a light gray rectangular box.

## Vocal Pedagogy in the Choral Warm up

by Judith Nicosia

1.

**Always warm up** – never miss the chance to gently allow the vocal folds to take up their daily duties, no matter how pressed for time you are. This is especially true for early morning rehearsals. Talking in homeroom or throughout the day is not the equivalent of singing – it doesn't demand the same pitch range, the dynamic range, the flexibility or the blood flow/breath flow as singing.

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2.

Take the warm up patiently and slowly. Structure it efficiently, and you can get through everything on this list in 10 minutes.

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3.

**Do inhalation and exhalation exercises first.** This slows down the heartbeat, improves oxygenation of the blood, relaxes the torso and helps focus the singers on the task at hand.

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4.

Move on to semi-occluded vocal tract exercises that allow the vocal folds to easily stretch and contract. Examples would be lip trills, raspberries, tongue trills, tongue hums (tongue gently protruded between the teeth), and the "ng" or open-mouthed hum. Remember that it's always to best begin with descending patterns. Start in the middle of the range, descending by half steps then ascending by half steps. Trills, raspberries and hums are best done using 5-4-3-2-1.

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*Nota Bene:*

*Lip trills raise the larynx, something we do not want. Therefore, always start by using them in descending patterns. Later on in the warm up, you can use them in quick arpeggios to stretch the range. Never, ever stop on a high note lip trill and sustain it.*

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Nota Bene:

Hums cannot be taken very high in the range without laryngeal discomfort. They are best used in mid- and low-range areas. Use them for sensations on the bridge of the nose, at the jaw hinge and at the roof of the mouth, then move on.

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5.

**Alternate slow messa di voce exercises (crescendo/decrescendo) with faster ones,** such as staccato or passagework. Always include work on legato vowel connection (e.g. "ah – eh- ee – aw – oo" on one pitch). Also consider reversing the order of these vowels:

beginning with a vowel such as "oo," which is impossible to sing loudly, and proceeding backward to "ah" to make sure the choir doesn't inadvertently crescendo.

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6.

If you're singing in a foreign language, be sure to warm up using the vowels and consonants of that language. The singers don't generally use that language outside of choir, and they cannot be expected to remember the pronunciation or the vocal sensations of that language unless you re-introduce them to it each day.

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7.

**Vary the dynamics on each exercise, so the choir isn't always singing full voice – this will encourage the vocal folds to learn fine motor control.** An example would be an arpeggio on "aw" at *mf* followed immediately by one at *pp*.

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Nota Bene:

Remember that when you are working with SAB or SATB repertoire, the developing male voice modifies vowels differently from the female voice. When the sopranos are singing a pure "ah" on a G-major arpeggio, the tenors will be singing a much more closed vowel, even a schwa. The same idea is true for altos and baritone/basses. Teaching each section how to modify goes a long way toward unifying your choral sound.

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8.

**Don't expect a complete range from any singer first thing during the warm up or rehearsal.** Work up to the highest notes for each voice part and/or put the more demanding pieces toward the end of the rehearsal.

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9.

Be sure to include work on consonants so that you may bring the singers' attention to pronunciation. A sample exercise is staccatos on one note using different consonant combinations, such as "da-deh-dee-daw-doo," followed by "aad-ehd-eed-awd-ood," followed by "dahd-dehd-deed-dawd-dood."

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10.

**Always stress breath flow.** Support is an old-fashioned word with some odd connotations attached. Keep the breath going, and many problems will disappear of their own accord.

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11.

Be sure to warm up yourself before you hit the school door.

Resources:

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For the choir that just finished its concert the night before, or one where a number of singers are under the weather or simply tired, the following is recommended:

1.

**YouTube “Vocal Straw Exercise” with Ingo Titze** – This is an excellent 4:37 demonstration on how to avoid “overblowing” while singing as well as learning how to relax the vocal folds after they’ve been overused. You can use this same technique to teach a new or vocally taxing piece, as long as you don’t pound away at it. If you are losing your teaching voice weekly, this technique is well worth trying. You’ll be amazed!

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2.

Humming (closed mouth) while chewing an imaginary food vigorously. This exercise is based on one for speech therapy and it works wonderfully. It is best done in short 2-3 minute spurts throughout a rehearsal. It relaxes the tongue, articulators and some of the laryngeal muscles.

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3.

**Audiation** – learn a new piece silently, hearing the notes in your head but moving the mouth and jaw for the vowels and breathing as though for actual singing. This is excellent for training the vocal tract while avoiding any additional strain.

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Resources for finding quality Warm ups
compiled by Judith Nicosia

** new in the last 4 years

K available in Kindle edition

K Albrecht, Sally K., ed. *The Choral Warm-Up Collection*. Alfred Publishing, 2003 (\$15.61) - **recommended**

Archibeque, Charlene and Adams, Charlotte. *Daily Workout for a Beautiful Voice*. (video – 33 minutes) Santa Barbara Music Publ. (\$39.95) [www.sbmp.com]

Brandvik, Paul. “Choral Tone” (chapter in *Up Front! Becoming the Complete Choral Conductor*). Guy Webb, editor. EC Schirmer Publishers, 1994. \$30.94 [amazon.com]

Crocker, Emily. *Warm Ups & Work Outs for the Developing Choir*. Vol. I and II. (Grades 4-9). Hal Leonard Publishing. (no date available) (\$1.50/ \$1.95)

Crocker, Emily, Day, Janet and Rann, Linda. *Voice Builders for Better Choirs*. Hal Leonard Publ., 2002 (Bk/CD) (\$17.99)

Dilworth, Rollo. *Choir Builders: Fundamental Vocal Techniques for Classroom and General Use*. Hal Leonard Publ., 2006 (\$21.89)

**Dilworth, Rollo and Crocker, Emily. *Choir Builders for Growing Voices: 18 Vocal Exercises for Warm-up and Workout*. Hal Leonard Publ., 2009 (\$14.99)

Erikson, Karle. *Choral Warmups from A to Z: Singing Dr. Seuss’s ABC*. Hinshaw Music, Inc. Teacher’s edition (\$8.46) [now available through Sheet Music Plus.com]

Fenton, William and Johnson, Sarah. *Choral Musicianship: A Director’s Guide To Better Singing*. Houston Publishing, 1990. [amazon.com] (\$34.00) (paperback)

Grier and Ebersson. *Time Saving Warmups*. Lorenz Corp. (no date available) (\$1.50)

Hammond Music Service. *Vocalises: Two Sets of Exercises – High or Low Voice (SATB)*, (Individual CD’s \$17, tapes \$15. Master tape set with permission to copy \$175.) Visit the website for details

Heisler, Kerry. *Strictly Warmups, Vol. 1*. Choral Resource Products. 2001. CD (8 minutes long) with accompanying book. (\$19.95)

Heizmann, Klaus. *Vocal Warm Ups*. Schott Publ., 2003. (\$11.16)

Jacobson, John. *Kids Gotta Move!* Hal Leonard Publ. (Bk/DVD) 200? (\$34.95)

- Jennings, Kenneth. *Sing Legato*. Neil A. Kjos Music Co., 1982 (**recommended**)
Accompaniment Edition - \$4.95 Vocal Edition - \$2.95? [ONLY BUY THIS DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHER!]
- Jordan, James and Denison, Craig, Metallo, Vincent, and Tsolainou, Constantina. *Group Vocal Technique: The Choral Ensemble Warm-up* (video - 120 minutes) (\$32.95)
- Nesheim, Paul and Noble, Weston. *Building Beautiful Voices*. Roger Dean/Lorenz Publishing, 1995, Conductor's Edition - \$24.95 Singer's Edition - \$2.95
- Robinson, Russell. *Warm Ups by the Dozen – Set 1* (SATB or SAB or Two-part). Warner Bros. (no date available) (\$1.50 each)
- K** Robinson, Russell and Althouse, Jay. *The Complete Choral Warm-Up Book*. Alfred Publishing Co., 1995 (\$14.54) [www.alfred.com]
- Selig, Timothy. *The Perfect Warmup: Seriously Fun Vocal Warmups*. Shawnee Press, 2005 (\$23.74)
- Shaw, Kirby. *Warmups for Pop, Jazz and Show Choirs*. Hal Leonard Publ. Co., 2000 (comes with a ShowTrax CD \$35) [www.halleonard.com] - **recommended**
- Telfer, Nancy. *Successful Warmups, Book I & II*. Neil A. Kjos Publishers, 1995/1996
Bk. I Conductor's Edition - \$29.95 Bk. 2 Conductor's Edition - \$24.95 Bk.1 or 2 Singer's Edition - \$6.95 [www.kjos.com]
- Texas Choral Directors Association. *Tried and Proven Choral Warm-Ups*. Contributed by members of the association. Southern Music Co. [www.southernmusic.com] (\$3.95)
- Tjernlund and Eilers. *Quick Starts: Choral Warm-ups*. Jensen Publications/Hal Leonard Publ., 1981, Vol. 1 (\$1.95) (Vol. 2 out of print)
- Van Camp, Leonard. *Choral Warm Ups for Minds, Ears, and Voices*. Lawson-Gould, 19?? (\$4.50)
- Van De Graaff, Kathleen. *Winning Warm-ups for the Voice* (beginning and intermediate voices). Domenico Productions, Inc., 1998-2000 (CD plus instruction book \$14.95) (Cassette tape plus instruction book \$12.95). Volumes for medium high and medium low female; medium high and medium low male.
- Van De Graaf, Kathleen. *More Winning Warm-ups for the Voice* (intermediate and advanced voices). Domenico Productions, Inc., 1998-2000 (CD plus instruction book \$14.95). One volume for each voice part: sop., mezzo, tenor, baritone-bass.
(www.domenicoproducts.com or phone (847) 675-0892 or toll free (877) 228-3866 pin#6223)
- **Walth, Gary. *Jazz Warm-Ups And Vocalises*. Hal Leonard Publ., 2011 (\$24.99)

Music Literacy

Literacy and musical independence are worth the investments of rehearsal time and energy. Set realistic goals for literacy and allow your expectations to suit the constraints of your particular program.

With entry-level singers, it's important to keep it simple...

Pitch

1. Ask students to follow whether notes are moving up or down – this encourages them to track the notes rather than the words.
2. Sing a scale on *solfege* syllables every day to orient tonality.
3. Write a *solfege* scale on the board vertically, and point to various syllables for students to sing.
4. Isolate repeated melodic themes from repertoire, and teach it on *solfege*. You may also wish to have students write syllables into their music and identify the theme as it recurs throughout the piece.

Rhythm

1. Introduce the concept of note values and their relationships.
2. Use a rhythm tree.
3. Clap rhythms from the board or flash cards.
4. Chant vocal lines from repertoire on a neutral syllable, rhythm syllables or on the text.

Once you have established some basic literacy skills, continue building on them. Always connect what you are working on to the repertoire you are teaching so that students can see the relevance and importance of what you are doing.

***Masterworks Press** has developed sequential sight-reading exercises that covers a variety of musical styles and rhythmic challenges. With this particular company, you purchase the rights to photocopy the material. For example, you can photocopy and bind a copy of "Easy Rhythm" for each student. Sing through one or two of these examples in each class period to continue working on sight-reading skills. These exercises are available in a variety of voicings. (www.masterworkspress.com)*

Jennifer Sengin

As music teachers, we want to help our students become as musically literate as possible. A few things to keep in mind, however...

There are many systems for teaching music literacy and each one has its own strengths and limitations. The educational goals, setting, students and amount of instructional time should be considered when choosing a system.

Teaching students to read and write music may not be appropriate in every music setting. The educational goals, setting, students and amount of instructional time should be considered when making this decision.

Pitch. Tonic sol-fa (do-based major, la-based minor) allows students to hear tonic function and predict notes, harmonies and cadences without an in-depth understanding of music theory.

Rhythm. An aurally consistent system (the beat is always “ta” or “du”) rather than a visually consistent system (two eighth notes are always “ti-ti”) allows students to hear beat-function across various meters and time signatures.

Tips for Effective *Solfège*-based Music Literacy Instruction

Al Holcomb

1. Help students develop their ears before their eyes – sound before sight – through patterns and songs.
2. Teach students to hear in *solfege* rather than approximate or guess when reading. This will allow students to bring meaning *to* the notation rather than extracting meaning *from* it. Finding a pitch by moving to it stepwise is like having to sound out every word when we read. The best way to teach a skip is through the context of chord function.
3. Have students audiate through a pattern or exercise (with at least a tonic, beat and subdivision) before singing.
4. Teach students to hear vertically (harmonies and chord changes) in addition to horizontally. This will enable them to sing better in tune, switch voice parts as needed and harmonize more easily.
5. Model, reinforce and teach students to be accountable for accuracy, vocal technique and expression at all times.
6. Set the students up for success by being aware of what they are able to audiate and read (differentiated instruction). Let them read what they can and learn the rest by rote.
7. Have everyone learn every part, beginning with the melody accompanied by the bass or root melody.
8. Avoid playing the accompaniment and parts all of the time.
9. Modify the *solfege* to match the resting tone rather than what is specified by the key signature. Show them how to recognize key changes and pivot as needed.
10. Before asking students to read a section of music, perform a tonal and rhythmic analysis to identify what is familiar and unfamiliar.
11. Introduce note names, key signatures and theory *after* students are able to hear and recognize patterns through *solfege*. Use absolute pitch names with advanced students and eventually with the class.
12. Teach students to relate and tune to the tonic and chord root.
13. Develop strategies to promote fluent audiation. For example, encourage students to look ahead and memorize while reading. Show a pattern on a flashcard, and remove it before the students have finished singing it.
14. Make literacy instruction fun with games, creative opportunities and extrinsic rewards.

Teaching Foreign Language and Multicultural Music

by Jennifer Sengin

Using IPA as a Teaching Tool in the Choral Rehearsal

It can be challenging to teach students a foreign language in the choral rehearsal. One of the greatest tools we can use is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Once singers have a basic working knowledge of IPA, you can reference specific sounds throughout the rehearsal.

Most choir directors learn IPA through rigorous diction courses in college. Although we are not afforded the same length of time as the college courses, there is a way to utilize these symbols efficiently in the high school choral rehearsal.

Several ways to do this would be (1) give students a handout with the most commonly used IPA symbols, (2) have a poster or posters containing the same information. It is important to include both the symbol and a word that demonstrates the appropriate sound.

When beginning a piece in another language, it is helpful to start with the musical elements (i.e. pitch, rhythm, phrasing, etc.). Students should be secure in these components before introducing the language.

Process for Teaching a Foreign Language in the Choral Rehearsal

1) **Teach pitches and rhythms without the text.**

Many choirs learn repertoire through *solfege* and count-singing prior to using the text. Learning a piece on a neutral syllable is also a common strategy.

2) **Introduce IPA vowel sounds.**

Once you have translated a piece into IPA, introduce the necessary vowel sounds to the class. For example, if you are learning a piece in German, discuss the difference between open [E] and closed [e]. You can also provide a reference word in English to remember the appropriate vowel sounds, i.e. [E] as in "pet." Once students understand the vowel sounds, most of the consonants will be similar to English.

3) **Introduce all of the text in IPA.**

After you review the necessary vowel sounds, write the IPA of the entire piece on the board. If any consonant sounds are not what they appear, they can be explained through IPA. Review the IPA as a class, and have students write the IPA into their music directly above the corresponding text.

4) **Pronounce the text together.**

It is often helpful to work phrase by phrase when learning the IPA and having students write it into their music. First, pronounce phrases out of musical context. Once the sounds of the language are established, pronounce the phrase using a

rhythm from the piece. These are some steps to use as you continue to connect the pronunciation to the repertoire:

- Chant the text in rhythm without pitch
- Intone the text on a chord
- Sing a theme from one voice part together on the text

Other helpful ideas:

- Create a musical warm-up using the text of the language
- Begin class with IPA written on the board, and ask students to write it in their scores as a “do now.” This is a great way to begin the class with a quiet focus as well as engage students in the language process.

Resources

This is a useful series to own. It contains translations, text stress, and the history of many choral music texts.

Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire: Vol. 1: Sacred Latin Texts

Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire: Vol. 2: German Texts

Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire: Vol. 3: French & Italian Texts

Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire: Vol. 4: Hebrew Texts

Earthsongs – www.earthsongschoralmusic.com//index.php

This is a fabulous place to delve into World Music. You can search by composer/arranger, title or first line, text author, voicing, region of the world, country, language, series and year of publication.

Additionally, there are many opportunities to listen to and view excerpts of the printed music. If wading through the website seems too daunting, Earthsongs has created CD's titled, “One World Many Voices” volumes 1-8. This will provide a great sampling of pieces from all over the world.

Santa Barbara Music Publishers – www.sbmp.com

This website has links to sheet music and audio clips/sound recordings of most of their choral music. You can search by composer, voicing, level, classification, and a few other search terms.

World Music Press – www.worldmusicpress.com/wmp/choralseries.php

This website allows you to search for music from a specific place of origin. There are often recordings to aid your search. Additionally, the website provides information about each selections and the composer.

These publishers are usually represented at ACDA conferences.

Voice Part Assignments and Seating Charts

by Michael Schmidt

Keep in mind that entire books have been devoted to this subject. Several useful resources are included at the end for further reading. You will also, no doubt, discover many of your own.

Assigning Voice Parts

A few basic rules for assigning voice parts are:

1. First and foremost, whatever voice assignment you make should allow the student to sing comfortably and freely.
2. Voice assignments are not necessarily permanent – young voices may change throughout the year and you will become more familiar with each student’s voice as well as vocal progress. You can change a singer’s voice part as you get to know each singer’s voice.
3. Voice assignments, mostly for women, do not have to be constant. Some of your female singers may feel more comfortable in one section, but allowing them to sing in a different section for one song will give them the opportunity to cultivate other parts of their range as well as their listening skills.
4. Consider students’ technical and musical ability when assigning voice parts.
5. It is not recommended that women sing tenor, but don’t be afraid to have the altos double or cover a high tenor part. This can be useful both from a balance and timbre standpoint.

Getting Started

At the beginning of each school year, spend the first week hearing each student in all of your ensembles. Listen for their vocal range, test their tonal memory and note various other aspects of their vocal identity (this will be useful in creating a good balance and blend in your seating chart):

1. **Highest usable note** – sing an ascending 5-note scale pattern, sustaining the top note. Listen for a free, well-supported and resonant sound.
2. **Lowest usable note** – sing a descending 5-note scale pattern, sustaining the bottom note. Listen, again, for a free, well-supported and resonant sound.
3. **Tonal memory** – play a short melody, and have the student sing it back to you on a neutral syllable. You may wish to use 4-5 patterns, beginning with something very simple (3-2-1) and getting progressively more difficult (this tests a student’s musicianship and is also extremely useful in hearing how well they manipulate moving throughout their vocal range)
4. **Vocal Identity** – tone and vocal color (i.e. dark, bright, etc.), intonation and breath support, vowels (i.e. round, spread), rhythmic accuracy

With young singers, particularly women, it is not necessary to classify their voices right away. Have them switch voice parts on each piece. Make these assignments based on their vocal strengths and weaknesses, range and musicianship. While you are moving students from part to part, listen for their ability to sing freely and resonantly.

Also for young singers, singing alone can be very intimidating. If your schedule does not permit you to listen to students on a one-on-one basis, modify your methods to accommodate both the comfort level of your choir and the limitations of your schedule. Here are a few tips:

Start by asking your students to sit in the section in which they *think* they belong. Then do a simple set of warm ups. As part of your warm up, teach patterns that you will use to hear individual sections and smaller groups (i.e. the ascending and descending scale patterns mentioned above). This way the students will feel comfortable with the patterns by the time they have to sing them in a smaller setting. Once you have warmed up, work with one section at a time, having them all sing to the top of their range, then to the bottom of their range. Next, work with one row at a time to hear students in groups of two's or three's. Rearrange the order to create the best blend. You will have to move some students to the side and bring down others from different rows, and depending on the size of your choir, it may take an entire class period per section. As you establish each row, make a mental (or physical) note of voices that are very strong, very weak, have pitch problems, have intonation problems, etc.

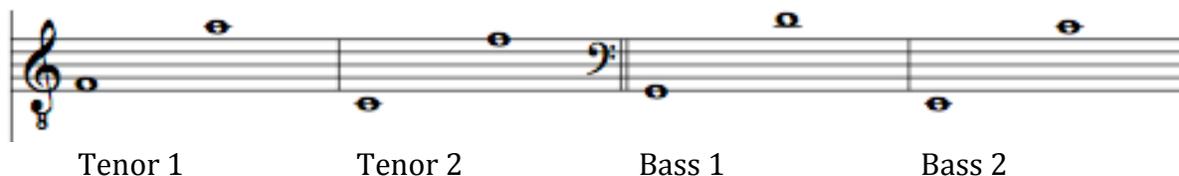
While this method is certainly less effective than hearing each individual voice, it is a place to start. As the year progresses, you will have the opportunity to hear students sing alone and modify their placement.

Singing Ranges

Brenda Smith and Robert Sataloff (2006) write, "The range of a singing voice is the number of notes, from lowest to the highest pitch, a voice sings... It is, however, only one of the determining factors in voice classification." (*Choral Pedagogy*, p. 172). For additional information on determining each singer's voice part, see *Choral Pedagogy*, p. 172 – 182.

For high school voice:





Terms to be familiar with...

Fach – Literally, “subject” or “box.” It is used to indicate voice classification. For example, dramatic soprano vs. lyric soprano (Smith & Sataloff, p. 224). For school-age students, however, you should not worry about this level of classification.

Passaggio – The shift or break between vocal registers (Smith & Sataloff, p. 230).

Registers – often, register refers to a series of adjacent tones on the scale that sound similar and seem to be generated by the same type of vocal fold vibrations and vocal tract adjustments (Smith & Sataloff, p. 232).

Tessitura – where the majority of the notes in a given piece of vocal music or in a given vocal line within a musical work lie (different from the range, which accounts for the highest and lowest notes) (Smith & Sataloff, p. 175).

Sample Seating Charts

Here are a few basic questions to consider as you begin to seat your choir:

1. Can the singers hear each other?
2. Can the conductors hear each voice part in balance with the others?
3. What are the acoustic advantages and limitations of your rehearsal/performance space?

These are the most common seating arrangements used for a **balanced choir**:

OPTION ONE

S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2
 S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2
 S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2
 S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2

OPTION TWO

B2 B2 B2 B2 B1 B1 B1 B1 T2 T2 T2 T2 T1 T1 T1 T1
 B2 B2 B2 B2 B1 B1 B1 B1 T2 T2 T2 T2 T1 T1 T1 T1
 S1 S1 S1 S1 S2 S2 S2 S2 A1 A1 A1 A1 A2 A2 A2 A2

S1 S1 S1 S1 S2 S2 S2 S2 A1 A1 A1 A1 A2 A2 A2 A2

OPTION THREE

S1 S1 S2 S2 A1 A1 A2 A2 T1 T1 T2 T2 B1 B1 B2 B2
 S1 S1 S2 S2 A1 A1 A2 A2 T1 T1 T2 T2 B1 B1 B2 B2
 S1 S1 S2 S2 A1 A1 A2 A2 T1 T1 T2 T2 B1 B1 B2 B2
 S1 S1 S2 S2 A1 A1 A2 A2 T1 T1 T2 T2 B1 B1 B2 B2

OPTION FOUR – *for the choir that can stand in mixed formation*

S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2
 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2
 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2
 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2

OPTION FIVE – *partially mixed choir*

S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2
 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2 S1 S1 S2 S2
 T1 T1 T2 T2 A1 A1 A2 A2 S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2
 A1 A1 A2 A2 S1 S1 S2 S2 B1 B1 B2 B2 T1 T1 T2 T2

OPTION SIX – *double choir*

S1 S1 A1 A1 T1 T1 B1 B1 S2 S2 A2 A2 T2 T2 B2 B2
 S1 S1 A1 A1 T1 T1 B1 B1 S2 S2 A2 A2 T2 T2 B2 B2
 S1 S1 A1 A1 T1 T1 B1 B1 S2 S2 A2 A2 T2 T2 B2 B2
 S1 S1 A1 A1 T1 T1 B1 B1 S2 S2 A2 A2 T2 T2 B2 B2

OPTION SEVEN – *double choir, for the choir that can stand in mixed formation*

S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2
 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2
 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2
 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2 S1 A1 T1 B1 S2 A2 T2 B2

These are some alternate seating arrangements for an **unbalanced choir**:

In this situation, which many of us face, here are some things to remember:

1. Use the seating chart to your benefit. For example, you can balance the choir by having the men in the foreground of the choir (as seen below).
2. Don't be afraid to change your seating arrangement. Keep tweaking it until you find the balance that works for you.
3. You may need to use different seating arrangements for different songs, depending on the demands and characteristics of the repertoire.

OPTION ONE – *This is for an unbalanced, "y'all-come" group.*

S1 S1 S1 S1 S1 S1 S2
 S1 S1 S1 S1 S1 S1 S2
 T T T T T T B B B B B B B B B B
 A1 A1 A1 A1 A1 A1 A1 A1 A1 A2 A2 A2 A2 A2 A2 A2

- This seating arrangement is great if you have a plethora of sopranos, a few altos, and even fewer men.
- Not only it will help to balance your choir, but it also allows for everyone in the choir to hear the melody.
- This seating arrangement can also work for the balanced choir as well.
- Caution: be mindful of the fact that if you have tall men you will want to have them stand in such a way that they do not block the women behind them. Make sure you have enough risers to have space between each singer, and have them stand in “windows” so as not to be blocked.

OPTION TWO

S1 S1 S1 S2 S2 S2 S2 T T T B B B B B B
 S1 S1 S1 S2 S2 S2 S2 T T T B B B B A2 A2
 S1 S1 S1 S2 S2 S2 S2 S2 A1 A1 A1 A1 A2 A2 A2 A2
 S1 S1 S1 S2 S2 S2 S2 S2 A1 A1 A1 A1 A2 A2 A2 A2

- This arrangement is good if you have a strong (but small) men’s section.

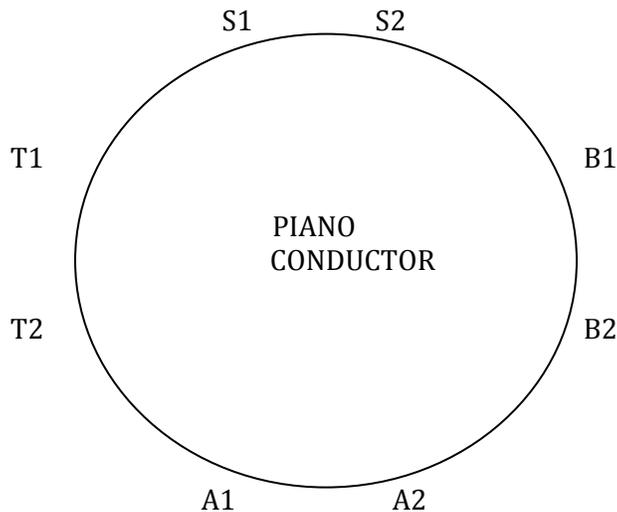
OPTION THREE – for the unbalanced choir that is able to sing in mixed formation

S2 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2
 S2 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2 S1 A1 S2 A2
 S1 A1 B S2 A2 T B S1 A1 T B S2 A2 T B S1 A1 B S2 A2
 S1 A1 B S2 A2 T B S1 A1 T B S2 A2 T B S1 A1 B S2 A2

- Caution: be mindful of the fact that if you have tall men you will want to have them stand in such a way that they do not block the women behind them.

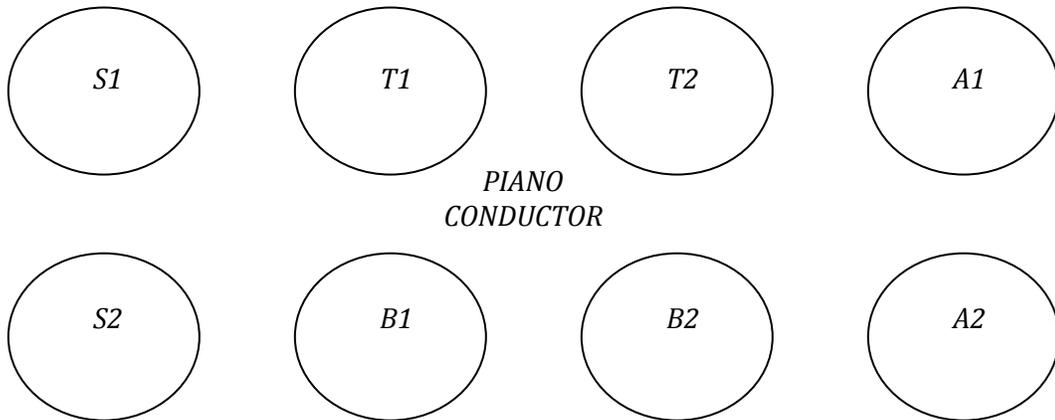
In addition to the more traditional seating assignments, sometimes it is useful to have your choir stand in a large, single-file circle around the room.

OPTION ONE



Benefits:

1. The conductor can see each member of the choir clearly and thereby monitor each student's posture and breathing (not to mention behavior).
2. The students and the conductor can hear everyone in their section clearly, as well as the rest of the choir.

OPTION TWO

Benefits:

1. This is a good rehearsal strategy early in the learning process (i.e. learning pitches) since the students can clearly hear everyone on their own part. Thus, you can teach more than one part at a time.
2. Caution: you cannot monitor every student's participation since some of them will have their backs to you.

References for Assigning Voice Parts

- Haasemann, F., & Jordan, J. M. (1991). *Group vocal technique*. pp.141-144. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Hinshaw Music, Inc.
- Smith, B., & Sataloff, R. T. (2006). *Choral Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). pp. 171-182 San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, Inc. (Original work published 2000)

References for Seating/Voicing the Choir

- Haasemann, F., & Jordan, J. M. (1991). *Group vocal technique*. pp.145-151. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Hinshaw Music, Inc.
- Smith, B., & Sataloff, R. T. (2006). *Choral Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). pp. 182-187 San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, Inc. (Original work published 2000)

Rehearsal Techniques

by Amy Troxel

These are a few things I have learned through trial and error over the past ten years.

1. **Rehearse from bell to bell**

It is easy to fall into the logical pattern of taking attendance and making announcements at the beginning of each rehearsal. I did this for years until I realized that it was taking up about ten minutes of my class. Announcements inevitably lead to questions, and questions lead to more questions. When the bell rings, begin your warm ups. If students are still coming in and getting their folders, teach them to join in as they quickly and quietly move to their seats. At this point you can take attendance or even put it off until after you work briefly on your first selection. Put announcements on the board. Teach your students to pay attention to whatever is posted. If announcements need clarification or discussion (which they rarely but sometimes do), take the time to go over the details. Otherwise, move on. Only on rare occasions should you end class early. Rehearse until the dismissal bell rings. If you “finish” early, have a few fun end-of-class activities you can do for those last few minutes. This demonstrates to your students that you are there to work. They will learn to love those few minutes of “free time” if they are a very rare occurrence.

2. **Keep the pace moving**

There are times when you need to dig in and spend an entire rehearsal on one piece of music, but avoid doing this too often. Students have a difficult time processing too much too quickly. If you can plan your rehearsal week so that you spread things out, not only are you keeping the pace moving, you are also reinforcing skills over a longer period of time.

3. **Don't always begin teaching a piece from the beginning**

Part of keeping the pace moving is being unpredictable. Why do we always teach a piece of music from the beginning? A professor of mine in graduate school asked me this once. I had no good answer except that it seemed logical to me to start at the beginning. He followed this question up with, “What is your favorite part of the piece?”

Why don't you start there?" This makes total sense to me now, but at the time it was startling. When I start a new piece of music, I start with the part I think they will like the most. If it is a particularly challenging piece, I start with the easiest section – if they feel like failures on the first day, most of them will automatically dislike the piece, but if they feel successful, they will keep an open mind.

4. **Don't always rehearse a piece from beginning to end**

This is another valuable lesson I learned from my professor. Start rehearsing a piece in the section you wish to teach. Avoid singing through sections that you don't plan to work on. There are two reasons for this. First, if you hear mistakes and you address them, you are being sidetracked from what you already set as a priority in rehearsal. Second, if you hear mistakes and you do not address them, you are practicing them into the music – and practice makes permanent.

5. **Know what you wish to accomplish before rehearsal begins**

Have a plan. As you become more experienced, you will find that you are capable of winging it, but that will never be your best work. Plan which repertoire to rehearse each day, and which measures within each piece. Beyond that, know what you want to emphasize – diction, phrasing, tone, pitch or rhythm accuracy, etc. Anticipate what students will have difficulty with, and devise a plan for success. This will save you an immeasurable amount of time and energy. Know where breath marks should be. Know where every cut off belongs. Don't wait until a student asks you "where do you want that 't'" to decide if it should be on "three" or "three and." Part of knowing what you wish to accomplish in each rehearsal depends on a good overall plan for preparing for a concert as well as a lot of time preparing your conductor scores. Don't skimp on this step. It will always pay off.

6. **If something is not working, change your plan**

Sometimes even our best-laid plan can be foiled. When this happens, don't be afraid to change your course. We need to know when to walk away from a problem. It could be that a musical selection is too difficult, that you left a challenging piece for too late in the rehearsal, that you need to come up with an alternate way of teaching a passage, or it could be the weather! Whatever the case may be, when you sense that a

problem is not going to be solved, move on to something that can be solved. Reassess your plan, and go from there. This is not giving up, but not every hill is worth dying on.

TIMELINES

It is always a good idea to have a timeline for your academic year. The more detailed this timeline is, the more helpful it is. Any student or professional knows that deadlines and responsibilities pile up, and getting sidetracked can happen. By mapping out what happens, or needs to happen, during each month of the school year, you can plan ahead and reduce stress during already busy times.

Find a medium that works for you –your calendar may be digital or on paper. Be sure to check and update your timeline regularly – make it part of your Monday morning or Friday afternoon routine.

SEPTEMBER

- Fundraiser
- Order choir T-shirts
- Schedule region choir interest meeting

OCTOBER

- Uniform size charts and payments due
- Mail region choir paperwork

NOVEMBER

- Fundraiser
- Exchange uniform sizes as needed
- Region choir auditions

DECEMBER

- Arrange for concert to be recorded
- Order poinsettias for stage
- Have piano tuned
- Holiday concert dress rehearsal
- Holiday concert performance
- Senior citizen performance
- First region choir rehearsal

These are just a few examples. Also include deadlines for budgets, approvals for upcoming field trips, fundraisers, financial reports, grades, etc. Towards the end of the school year your timeline should reflect planning for the following year. Administrators and supervisors will appreciate your initiative in planning ahead.

EXPECT THE BEST

At the front of my classroom on a big neon banner, I have the phrase “EXPECT THE BEST.”

On the first day of school I explain that this is my rule for each and every day. I expect my students to give their best work, which includes being in their seat with their music and a pencil. I understand that some days they will not be at their best, vocally and/or mentally, but they are expected to give their best for that particular day. I also tell them that they can expect me to give my best teaching every day. Although there will be days when I am tired or sick, I promise that I will always give the best that I have to offer.

Laurie Lausi

Don Miguel Ruiz, a Toltec master and author of “The Four Agreements,” says:

***Always Do Your Best.** Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstances, simply do your best and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse and regret.”*

I expect...

That you will give me all the energy you have every day in class, even if you “just failed a test,” “just broke up with your latest soul mate,” whatever the crisis du jour is.

Barbara Retzko

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As musicians, we are trained to maintain high standards of excellence, to strive for perfection, to be constantly improving. In a college practice room we can control a lot of the variables involved in attaining perfection – or near-perfection. In a classroom, however, this is far from the case.

As a new teacher, learning to be realistic in your expectations – of yourself and of your students – is key to being and feeling successful and staying positive. If you live and teach by this rule, “EXPECT THE BEST,” you will be more likely to keep a healthy perspective of your own limitations and of your students’ progress.

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SUCCESS IS THE BEST MOTIVATOR... If you suspect that your students are not giving their full effort, there are a few tools you can use to help motivate them.

I often ask my students to grade themselves on a scale of 1-10, ten being the highest, on whatever they have just sung. Then they silently hold up the appropriate number of fingers. As they look around the room, they can see if their assessment matches that of their classmates – interestingly, their self-assessments are usually right on the mark. I then ask them what the highest grade they think they can achieve is, or I ask them to raise their grade by 2-3 points. By taking ownership of where they are and where they wish to be, the level of commitment from the group increases.

Another strategy is to pull a few students out of each section and bring them to the front of the room. Their job is to listen to the group and comment on what they are doing well and what needs improvement. Two things will usually happen. First, the singers in your choir will probably step it up so as not to be “criticized” by their colleagues. Second, when constructive feedback (that probably reinforces everything you’ve already been saying) comes from another student, the class will take it seriously.

Once your students begin to see what their best can actually achieve, they won’t be as likely to settle for anything less.

Some Thoughts about Middle School

Ten Strategies to Promote a Positive Learning Environment in the Middle School Classroom

1. Establish the classroom as a community with varied opportunities for leadership (officers, warm ups, conducting) and input (goals, rehearsals, literature).
2. Develop independence (critical thinking, habits of mind) and ownership (learning, vocal development, behavior) rather than just compliance.
3. Help students understand the purpose and value of each activity (warm ups, rehearsal process, assignments).
4. Get to know and care about your students.
5. Make the music room a cool place to hang out.
6. Seek to set all students up for both success and challenge every single day.
7. Be enthusiastic towards your students, towards music and towards learning. Use language that is inclusive and polite. Greet students at the door. Demonstrate positive expectancy. Smile a lot. Begin and end each day with a positive experience that leaves them wanting more.
8. Target and reinforce specific behaviors (completing tasks quickly, helping others, having supplies, singing alone, sight reading).
9. Use extrinsic motivations (special privileges, point system, hall-of-fame, prizes, notes home) initially to reinforce individual, small group and large group behaviors (both musical and non-musical).
10. Develop a supportive environment that fosters risk-taking. Have a zero tolerance policy towards unacceptable behaviors such as laughing at or making fun of another student, bullying or ostracizing.

Al Holcomb

Developing Student Leaders

by Laurie Lausi

At the beginning of the year, I tell the students, “This is *your* choir, and it is what *you* make of it.” To foster this sense of ownership, I provide opportunities for student leaders to emerge.

In each of the auditioned choirs (grades 10-12), students elect officers for their ensemble. In the top choir (primarily grades 11-12), I also appoint the office of **secretary** (my most responsible and meticulous student who can take attendance and do other important jobs), **student director** (leads rehearsal in my absence), and **section leaders**. I may rotate the job of section leader throughout the year to give more able members an opportunity to lead. Section leaders help by setting a good example in rehearsal, both musically and behaviorally.

Student-Elected Officers:

President – Speaks for choir in concerts. Leads by example. Organizes choir forums for students to voice ideas and concerns; reports back to the director. Helps run auditions for annual coffee house and is the lead organizer of that event. Accepts trophies at competitions.

Vice President – Works alongside president with same responsibilities. Helps choir line up at concerts.

Historian – Collects photos from other choir historians and takes photos of the entire choir year. Puts together a collage to be displayed in the vocal room for years to come.

Librarian(s) – Hand out music and keep records of what is loaned out/turned in. Files and catalogues music.

Social chair(s) – organize social events .

Publicity manager – Publicizes concerts, coffee house and choral news to share with the school community.

In my beginning choir (this could also work for middle school students), I give opportunities for students to lead stretches, warm ups and section work. Occasionally, I divide sections into circles and give them a sight reading example or a musical excerpt to rehearse.

When working with younger and less experienced students, there is more of a need to ease them into leadership roles – give them tasks that are small and very specific. Supervise them and assist them while they are carrying out this task – you may also want to give feedback. There is also a need to ease the rest of the class into the role of respecting and following student leaders. It is normal for young people to resist “taking orders” from their peers. Make it clear that student leadership is going to happen, and explain why it’s a good thing. Make sure your students know that they all have the potential to be leaders, and that they will all be held accountable to be good followers. As you are grooming young leaders, make sure there is not an abuse of power – you may need to rein them in from time to time.

We all know that while some of us are born with the charisma and abilities to lead, what makes us really good is experience. The sooner you begin to develop leadership skills in your students, the better they will become, and the better your program will become.

Tap into the talents of your students. Know your talented instrumentalists, and include a song that features them. Use your artists to design concert program covers or posters for a choir event. Have a capable student photographer take pictures of a rehearsal or a group photo. Utilize computer savvy students to record videos of senior comments, and incorporate them into your spring concert to fill time as choirs are moving on and off the risers. Have a student design a slide show to enhance a song. Ask a student to choreograph a song or be featured as a dancer.

Bottom Line: ***KNOW YOUR STUDENTS***. Attend their games, dance recitals, plays. Listen to their music. Know their interests outside of school. Assign journal activities throughout the year, and especially at the end of the year, to reflect on their musical growth, share the highlights of their life in choir, and offer suggestions for next year’s class. Take note of these suggestions, and apply them. Your students will surprise you with ideas you have never thought of.

Recruitment & Retention

I find that as an elementary school teacher, it is easier to recruit boys than at other grade levels. Since I see every student in the school, I have easy access to everyone in grades 3-5. In my school, we have a third, fourth and fifth grade we have a chorus that meets before school and is optional. Boys do not usually come knocking down the door, so I have used a few techniques that have proven to be quite effective.

1. **Tell them it's not permanent...yet.** Encourage boys to come try chorus for a rehearsal. If they hate it, they never have to come again. Once you get them into a rehearsal, they will usually like it. Getting them in the room is the key.
2. **Tell boys that they should bring a friend.** Very often they simply feel shy or out of their comfort zone. If you allow them to bring a friend, they will feel more at ease - plus it will double your numbers!
3. **Find the ringleaders.** There is usually that "one boy" that everyone in class looks up to because he is cool, smart, athletic, etc. If you can recruit *him*, others will think "Oh, if Nick thinks it's cool, then I'll try it too!"
4. **Let them pick their seats in rehearsal.** In the beginning I let everyone sit where they want within their voice part. Once again, this helps them to feel comfortable and come out of their shell. Once they start getting too comfortable or chatty, I will assign seats.
5. **Assess everyone.** At the beginning of the year, during my general music classes, I give the class a worksheet or a movie to watch. I then pull students out of the classroom into the hallway one by one. I have them sing a simple song a cappella – usually *America, the Beautiful*. I am always pleasantly surprised by how many good voices I hear.
6. **Convince the parents.** After the vocal assessments, I email parents of children who I think will be a great asset to the choir. The email usually says something like, "Your son/daughter has a lovely voice, and I would love to see him/her use his/her talents in choir." Parents are usually so honored and excited that they encourage their child to join.

Carol Beadle

Words of Wisdom...

Use every opportunity to interact with students!!!

*Talk to EVERYONE you pass in the hallway –
say hello, compliment their shoes, congratulate them on being nominated Student of the Month, etc. -
make a connection!*

Sit down at student lunch tables and introduce yourself

Show up at sporting events and club activities

Interact with everyone all of the time.

Seriously.

Do it.

Have an all-male ensemble.

Forming an all-male ensemble allows you to create a safe environment where the men in your program can take risks with their voices. They are much more likely to sing out and experiment when there are no women present. It is also amazing to see the camaraderie that forms in a men's choir.

Find quality, "quick-teach," choral pieces so that they can experience success instantly. You may have to arrange or modify music yourself to meet the needs of a small or unbalanced group. Choose music they will enjoy - this is crucial.

It is also helpful to find a rehearsal time that does not conflict with athletics.

If a men's choir does not already exist in your district, it may be helpful to begin with the men who already participate in choir and the school musical. Once you have a group in place, have each member bring a friend. The men of your choir are the greatest ambassadors of that choir - they will be the ones to talk it up and bring more men - but only if you make it a good experience.

It is a simple fact of nature that a group of men singing on stage will excite the audience, even if they don't sound like The King's Singers. If your men are a little rough around the edges, make up for their lack of musical finesse by adding humor, hand drums, a guitar or even choreography. Young men are surprisingly willing to make spectacles of themselves on stage if they think it will get a laugh. Use that to your advantage.

Amy Troxel

A male a cappella group is the best recruiter I know!

Test the waters, and have the men of your choir learn a song to perform in a concert by themselves. See how it is received and if the men ask to do it again.

Always have the men's a cappella group sing when visiting younger grades for recruitment!

Once your group is established, partner with an elementary or middle school choir director, and do a workshop.

Invite the boys from your elementary and/or middle schools to join on a song, and perform it in a school assembly or concert.

Laurie Lausi

"Golden Ticket" Day

Create a day towards the end of the year to focus on recruitment. You should try to do this around the time that students are choosing their schedules for next year. In my district, we have been able to host a "Golden Ticket" Day for the past two years. Each student in the choir receives a "Golden Ticket" that they can give to another student who they think would be an asset to the choral program. This ticket acts as a "pass" to miss class and attend choir for the day.

On "Golden Ticket" Day, I welcome all of our guests, and talk a little about the class and what it entails - concerts, field trips, all the good stuff. We do a warm up together to give visiting students an opportunity to sing with us. If they do not feel comfortable singing, they can just listen. Then the members of the choir sing a song or two - choose songs that will appeal to your audience. After this mini performance, members of the choir share about their experience in choir - the most common thing they say is that "choir isn't just a class - we are a family." During the last few minutes, visiting students are given a chance to ask questions.

You should expect some behavior issues during this day, especially with younger students. Some will view it purely as an excuse to "get out of class." However, if you get a handful of quality students out of this event, it is worth the headache. It has been quite successful for me at the middle school level as well as my colleague at the high school.

Your administration will need to be on board with any recruiting event like this since it involves students missing class. You will also need to give teachers sufficient warning to adjust their teaching plans as well as the right to keep a student in class if they see fit.

Amy Troxel

If you want students to stay in choir year after year, you have to develop a quality music program. But do not underestimate the importance of the social experience. This is what creates a sense of closeness, loyalty and even family.

Choir is a social experience.

If you have student-elected officers (see "Developing Student Leadership"), create a position for a social chair. Some of the most successful social events have been after school in the choir room or after a concert where students bring food to celebrate a job well done.

I encourage students to go to other choir members' games, have a movie night, order pizza to eat in the cafeteria before the spring musical and then attend it together. Social chairs plan icebreakers and fun games that divide the students into different groups so that they can become better acquainted with each other. We also do an annual hayride which the social chairs plan.

Community involvement is another way to foster a social experience while teaching the importance of community service. Performing for senior groups is very important in our community where senior adults need justification for their tax increases. We perform for senior church groups and dinners at the Jewish Community Center.

If there is a township recreation department, get to know the director and offer to provide student musicians for community programs – Memorial Day, Veterans Day, etc. Audiences will love having a student perform the National Anthem or other patriotic song.

Don't forget your school community. In our district, students sing the National Anthem at basketball and baseball home games. Offer to have a group perform at a faculty meeting. An opening song and a quick "commercial" to come to a concert may get a few teachers into your audience.

The most successful and exciting event we do for the community is an annual coffee house. The top choir and the Thespian Society choose a local charity and plan a theme for the evening. The set designers go to work, and the students form committees to plan and publicize the event. I try to involve other groups in the school who don't always have the experience of working toward a goal (like a concert) and reaping the fruits of their labor. For example, the art students submit logos for the shirt and our shirt committee chooses which one to use for the coffee house. That shirt is then worn by all the students hosting the evening and is for sale to attendees. Other art students make jewelry, pottery, stationary, etc. to sell, and proceeds are donated to the cause. Student Government members and athletes have been involved manning wii games and moon bounces. Cooking classes bake cookies for the bake sale. The possibilities are endless!

If you want to increase your visibility in the community, create an intergenerational choir. Many of the assisted living facilities and churches have an adult choir that would love to do an exchange concert or rehearsal. Involve a children's choir - either one from your community or from an elementary school - in one of your concerts.

Go caroling at an assisted living facility during December, or put together old love songs for Valentines Day and have a sing along – think “Bicycle Built for Two,” “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” etc. Bring lyrics sheets and dress in red and pink.

Laurie Lausi

Some Thoughts about Fundraising

by Amy Troxel

The question of whether to participate in fundraisers or not depends on the expenses associated with your program. When I taught high school, the band and choir traveled out of state for several days each spring to compete in a music festival and do some educational sight seeing. We traveled to Williamsburg, Los Angeles, Chicago, even Montreal. Sometimes we flew. Sometimes we drove. The cost of the trip varied depending on how far we were traveling and what we were doing once we got there. We provided our students with one fundraiser each month to help them pay for the cost of their trip. These included things like Joe Corbi's Pizza, Pee Jay's Fresh Fruit, Gertrude Hawk Chocolates, can shakes, car washes, benefit concerts, raffles and the ad book for the marching band home show (we had a lot of overlap between band and choir students) and the spring musical. Students could also ask friends and family members for pledges – we had a standard letter they could use for this purpose (see sample).

In my current position teaching middle school, I don't foresee trips like this being part of the program, at least not at the moment. We do, however, have some outside expenses. First, students are responsible to purchase their own choir uniform. Second, it has become a long-standing tradition for the middle school choirs to participate in the Trills and Thrills Festival at Dorney Park. This trip is not mandatory, but 95% of the students attend. I do three fundraisers each year, the first of which is specifically for seventh grade or new eighth grade students who need to purchase uniforms. The other two fundraisers are for Dorney Park – delivery for one is scheduled for just before the winter holidays, and delivery for the other is scheduled for just before Easter. This will help with your sales.

Questions to ask when deciding which fundraisers to use:

1. What percent profit goes to the student? This can be anywhere from 35-50%. Some companies offer a higher percentage of profit if the total sales reach certain benchmarks.
2. How much money do your students need to raise? And how much financial assistance do they need? (If you teach in a very affluent area, you may not see a lot of participation in fundraisers because the need for help may not be there.)
3. What types of products will sell best? This may depend on the age of your students and their salesmanship skills – my students do well with candy but not so well with fruit.
4. How many fundraisers do you need/are willing to do? Remember that your client base may become weary of buying, and your students may become weary of selling. If you are

providing a lot of fundraising opportunities, it's a good idea to vary them in product and potential client base.

Keep in mind that fundraisers generally require a lot of paperwork on your part. Check every order to make sure that the totals match. Be organized, especially with cash, and have a reliable system for keeping track of money and student profits. I use a spreadsheet that records their total sales in one column and student profits in the other. I use the same spreadsheet for all three fundraisers so that it's easy to add up the total profit for each student (see sample).

Lastly, most districts require fundraising activities to be approved, so before you begin, find out what procedures are in place. Some districts also require that all funds be deposited within a 24-hour period after collection. When dealing with money, it is important to avoid any gray area.

NOTE: See Appendix B for samples of a pledge letter, a fundraising report and a student payment form.

Continuing Education & Professional Development

by Jennifer Sengin

As a teacher, it is critical to continuing improving and developing your craft. Take time to assess your own skills. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What areas would you like to improve that would directly impact your teaching? For example, piano skills are a must in the choral classroom. If you are confident in your own ability to play parts and accompaniments, your ensembles will benefit. If your piano skills are weak, you need to work on them. Find your weaknesses, and address them. The only way to improve is to face challenges head-on. After all, this is what we teach our students.

FREE ways to improve your own teaching:

1. Observe other teachers
 - use professional development days to observe teachers both in and out of your district
 - attend regional choir rehearsals and concerts
 - attend All-State Choir rehearsals and concerts
 - attend local children's choir rehearsals and concerts (take notes on your program of repertoire you like and may want to use in the future)

2. Create an idea bank
 - start a log that you can add to over time
 - create categories for different issues: strategies for tuning, fixing rhythm, etc.

Not only is this a great source for rehearsal solutions, it also creates an opportunity for critical reflection.

3. Record your rehearsals – you will learn a lot about your choir and about your rehearsal

Things to listen/look for:

 - how much time do you spend talking vs. singing?
 - are your students engaged in the rehearsal?
 - how well are your students singing?

If you have a trusted friend, colleague or mentor, share the recording with them

and ask for feedback. This is a humbling yet helpful process.

OTHER ways to improve your own teaching:

1. Attend NJ-ACDA events such as the Summer Conference, Fall Reading Session and other workshops offered throughout the year.
2. Attend ACDA Eastern Division and National Conferences (usually in February/March). *
3. Attend NJMEA Conferences (usually in February). *
4. Take a course at a local college or university. **
5. Take private voice, piano or conducting lessons.
6. Attend professional concerts to remind yourself of your choral ideals
7. Make friends with the choral directors in your district and region, and call upon past mentors to provide advice. Come to workshops/conference with some questions that you can pose to directors you meet. Strike up conversations in the hotel lobby with other directors. Some of your best teaching strategies and repertoire ideas will come from these conversations.
8. Meet up with choral directors in your area and “talk shop.” Ask people to bring copies of their favorite repertoire and repertoire that their choirs loved to perform.

* Find out if your district will provide any financial assistance in the way of registration, hotel or travel. Be prepared to justify how your attendance or involvement will benefit you and your program.

** Find out if your district has tuition reimbursement.

~The best teachers are constantly evaluating their teaching methods and making modifications.~

Be one of those teachers!

YOUR TEACHING VOICE: AN OWNER'S MANUAL

by Judith Nicosia

No one really thinks about his or her speaking voice until there's serious trouble. In switching from a generally passive role in the classroom to a very active one, your voice usage (amount of speaking, dynamic level, pitch level, singing in various tessituri, breathing habits) soars, and you generally experience problems that have not manifested themselves at any previous point. When you start experiencing serious vocal fatigue, an eroding of the singing range/quality, extended periods of huskiness or laryngitis, and even pain – when all this threatens your choral program and in turn, your paycheck and your livelihood, it's past time to do something about it.

Advice to teachers young and old is basically the same:

1. **No matter how early you start, warm-up every day.** Exercise the voice in a systematic way which will get you from A to Z in time to meet the demands of your teaching load. Unless you are sick (tired doesn't count - as a teacher you're *always* pooped), sing and/or recite. Do breathing exercises, humming, lip trills, whatever. A runner wouldn't dream of jogging before stretching – the same goes for extended use of the vocal apparatus (conjures up parallel bars, doesn't it?) And, by the way, an efficient warm-up is a maximum of fifteen minutes. If it takes 30-45 minutes for you to get going in the morning, see a voice teacher. Something (or everything) you're doing is wrong. Make a CD of exercises for yourself, pop it in the car, and away you go.
2. **Slow down your speech – the kids can't understand you when you talk fast anyway – and pay attention to taking deep breaths.** Much of the time, poor speech habits, such as speaking at too low a pitch and "off the breath," cause severe dysfunction (laryngitis or worse). Merely *thinking* about taking a good breath and talking while deliberately concentrating on your exhalation can go a long way toward producing good speech. Right along with that goes learning to speak resonantly so that you can be heard without

straining. The pitch of the speaking voice will rise and fall of its own accord, and you will be able to speak for extended periods of time without tiring.

3. **Don't demonstrate for the choir without some thought for the singing sound you are about to utter.** Beginning teachers who are jumping parts from soprano to high baritone can really wreak havoc in the larynx simply by switching from speaking to singing too quickly and forcing the voice into a range it wasn't designed to handle. This is often doubly true for male teachers switching abruptly from falsetto to head or chest voice. It may be worth some time with a voice teacher and/or speech therapist for an analysis of possible problems. Whatever you spend will pay off handsomely in the future (and it may even be tax deductible – see your accountant).
4. **Find rest periods within the day where you do not have to talk or sing.** Avoid the chit-chat in the teachers' room if you're feeling strained. No one is suggesting you short-change your classes, but if you're totally out of commission and still have to conduct an important rehearsal, it's your voice that may suffer – permanently. No teacher should keep going without a break from class to class, hour after hour.
5. **If you are feeling strained, go to YouTube and look up the "Vocal Straw Exercise" with Ingo Titze** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xYDvwvmBIM>.) This is a terrific video on how to use flow straws to relax the muscles of the larynx and figure out exactly how little breath you need to sing and speak efficiently. Young teachers who have been feeling vocally taxed in their work week say that this exercise alone helps them get through the demands of their job – and still have voice left over for their church choir or other voice usage. It looks silly but works miracles.
6. **There's a difference, believe it or not, between husky and hoarse.** A husky quality may indicate a lot of mucus from overnight drainage or an allergic reaction or simply being tired, among other possible causes. It doesn't necessarily mean that your vocal folds won't work properly or even that you have strained them. Again, a voice teacher or speech therapist has exercises for dealing with such a condition so that you can keep singing healthily while functioning in the classroom. Hoarse, however, is another matter entirely. If there's an infection in the larynx, or the folds are swollen for whatever reason, nothing, I repeat, *nothing* is going to help except vocal rest. *Total* vocal rest – that's right,

no whispering, no singing, no nothing. The sooner you do it, the sooner you'll get your instrument back in good condition. Colds featuring prolonged chest congestion and coughing are the worst, since every time you cough you bang those two little pieces of flesh together. And, of course, being a teacher, you are exposed to every malady under the sun. That said, the following precautions may be worth a thought or two:

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As the late otolaryngologist Van Lawrence said, "Sing wet, pee pale." At the risk of seeming indelicate, if the liquid deposited in the receptacle is bright yellow and strong-smelling, you're dehydrated. You exhale between one and two quarts of water per day under normal circumstances. In teaching it must be even more! Keep fluids in your system – the tissues of the body, particularly the ones in the throat, respond nicely to hydration and are better able to fight off infection. Besides drinking water and avoiding caffeinated beverages, you can also use a small atomizer to “mist” the back of your throat (more on that below).

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Try to control the heat/moisture in your classroom. If it's too dry, put out a big basin of water, or get a humidifier. Schools tend to be much like airplanes - extremely low humidity levels. A professional singer-friend recommends lubricating the inside of the nasal passages with a light coating of Vaseline, and I've found it works wonders. If you are one of those who becomes so dried out in your nasal passages that it's almost painful, or if you feel as though you can't breathe by the end of the day, this is an inexpensive solution that more than repays the investment. Also, keep the temperature down as much as possible – overly warm, humid climates are Club Med for germs.

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Although it's very old-fashioned these days, stay away from the chalk. I once put a black cloak near my blackboard and was horrified to see the "frosting" on it at the end of the school day. Wash the board down with a wet cloth or better still, let the custodian or a student do it. Get one of the kids to clap out the erasers once or twice a week, and clean your hands on those neat personal wipe cloths (baby wipes will also do).

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When illness starts running amok at school, use those same wipes on: your hands after every class, the door knob, the CD player and anything else the students touch that you touch, too. Fastidious as it may seem, it might possibly prevent you from catching whatever your students are passing around. Hand sanitizers also work well!

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An additional note on allergies: occasionally you arise in the morning and, for no reason that you can put your finger on, your voice is not working at all. You haven't sung or talked too much and you're not sick, but your vocal cords won't phonate and it's frustrating beyond belief. You are probably experiencing an allergic reaction to something you smelled. The problem is, you may never be able to pinpoint, and thus prevent, what it was from reoccurring. It could have been someone's perfume or cologne, something in the air, anything. Your body thinks a foreign body has entered yours and responds by flooding your system in an attempt to flush the "poison" out. Unfortunately, this causes some edema or swelling in the vocal cords and adversely affects the speaking voice, the singing voice, or both. Short of an injection (which would only help for a short time anyway) there's not much you can do but cut down on your voice usage until you feel normal again. Usually, this will take three to four days, perhaps less. In extreme cases it may persist, however, and in that case you should see an otolaryngologist for help.

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It's been said so often most people don't even read the words but here it comes again: Eat a balanced diet and take vitamins if you need them. What's served in the cafeteria may be balanced for the kids, but it usually won't begin to meet your adult needs, particularly when you literally run through a typical school day. Avoid foods that cause lots of phlegm (flem) such as cheese, milk products, pickles, anything with brine, anything with monosodium glutamate, chocolate (this is truly sacrifice for one's art), red wine, shellfish, etc.

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Ever notice that you tend to get sick immediately after an important concert? STRESS! You manage to hold the germs at bay until your mind informs you that it's alright to let

your guard down, and BOOM, you're sick as a dog. Yes, we all lead stressful lives to a degree, but most people do not depend on the healthful functioning of a tiny musical instrument inserted in a human body for every aspect of their daily profession. You do – sleep, exercise and relaxation, no matter how busy you need to be, help fight off infection.

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Just prior to singing, use a small atomizer filled with warm water. These tiny droplets you spray in your mouth are then inhaled into the lungs and nothing does a better job of keeping the edge of the voice folds moist. If the Met mists backstage before the production begins, what better recommendation do you need? And try pineapple juice at intermission or during pauses in your performances. The sugar content gives you a boost which doesn't cause phlegm, and it comes in convenient, disposable, recyclable containers.

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Stay in touch with a local voice teacher. Most public school teachers could not see a voice teacher every week, even if they wanted to, and most voice teachers haven't got room in their schedules to see every student every week. If the voice teacher understands your goals, there's no reason why a check-up once every three months or so shouldn't be part of your continued training. In this case, the voice teacher or speech therapist is the health professional – you'll find out what's new, keep bad habits in check, and renew your instrument.

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Lastly, watch out for the huge amount of vocal misinformation that is posted in blogs, on websites and on YouTube. Your students are reading this and perhaps taking it to heart. You need to know what they are reading and seeing and you need to be a force for change by being the person to recommend the “good stuff.” Good luck, and *may your pharynx always be moist.*

BURLINGTON CITY HIGH SCHOOL

Vocal Music

Grades 9-12

Course Syllabus

Course Description

It is the goal of this class that each student will develop a sincere appreciation for choral music, an informed ear that can assess both one's own performance and the performances of others, an improved ability to sing with musicality, proper technique and accuracy, and the skills to function as a positive member of the ensemble.

Course Materials

All materials will be provided by the instructor. These will include a folder to store all music scores and handouts (such as calendars, syllabi, assignments, etc.) and a pencil (which is the only writing instrument appropriate for marking music). Music will be distributed periodically throughout the year. All scores must be kept in good condition and returned after each performance. Any music or other materials not returned before the end of the year or damaged must be replaced at the student's expense.

Have a system in place for distributing and collecting music so that you can keep track of what is returned, damaged and missing.

If students are to provide their own folders, be specific as to what they need (i.e. a black, matte, 1-inch 3-ring binder and a pencil). My colleague also requires each of his students to bring in either a box of tissues – since the office often runs out by January in time for everyone to have the sniffles – and a plant for the windowsill.

Course Requirements

1. **Attend rehearsal.** Vocal Music is a co-curricular course, which means that all activities, both in school and after school, are mandatory and for a grade.
2. **Arrive on time.** In accordance with school policy, every three tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence. Students arriving more than twenty minutes late to class without a pass will be marked for a cut.
3. **Be positive.** Contribute with a positive attitude and good behavior. Don't detract with a negative attitude and bad behavior.
4. **Be prepared.** Always arrive to rehearsal with your music and a pencil.
5. **Participate fully.** Students are expected to be actively engaged and give their best effort every day.
6. **Complete all assignments.** All assignments are weighted according to their difficulty and importance, but they all count towards your final grade.

Check with guidance or your administration as to whether or not after-school choral activities can be counted for a grade. Not every district is the same.

Enforce your school's attendance policy when it comes to tardies and absences. Keep good records. Attendance is also a legal record.

Grading Policy

PARTICIPATION (40%) – Because this is a performance-based class, participation is a very important aspect of the final grade. Good participation implies that a student demonstrates a positive attitude, a willingness to follow instructions and assist others, and is an active and responsible member of the ensemble.

Some districts require all teachers to use the same grade percentages. Be aware of your school's grading policy.

ATTENDANCE (35%) – As previously outlined, in accordance with school policy, every three tardies equals one unexcused absence from class. Loss of credit occurs if a student exceeds twenty absences.

I used to use a form that students had to complete, have signed by a parent/guardian and turn in at least one day before the absence in question. You may want to use a form as well, or you can simply require them to notify you in writing. You may also want to specify what constitutes an excused absence (i.e. a death in the family or extreme illness). You can always be lenient in your enforcement of the policy, but it is important to be strict in the way you outline it to students and parents to avoid abuse.

In addition to class attendance, students will receive a calendar listing all rehearsals and performances occurring outside of the school day. If a choir member is unable to attend a rehearsal or performance, a **Rehearsal/Performance Absence Request** must be submitted before the absence in question. The instructor reserves the right to deem an absence unexcused or require a make up assignment. If an absence is unexcused or a make up assignment is not completed, the student's grade will be lowered and participation in upcoming performance(s) may be jeopardized.

ALL OTHER ASSIGNMENTS (25%) - The instructor will, from time to time, assign outside work such as reading, writing, research, etc. Tests and quizzes will be given occasionally. Each assignment will be weighted according to its difficulty and importance.

Important Dates

A calendar of events will be distributed to each student. A **signature page** will be attached which must be signed by both student and a parent or guardian verifying they are aware of all dates on the calendar.

If there are dates yet to be determined, list the events and the month they will occur. Identify these events as TBA. Once the dates are set, send home a list with a new signature page.

Concert Attire

Ladies - Each female member of the group will be assigned a black gown. Ladies are required to wear black panty hose and closed-toed shoes for all performance. Hair should be pulled away from the face. Make up should be tasteful. Jewelry should be small and tasteful. Do not wear perfume.

If your school does not have uniforms, either paid for by the district or by the families, be specific about your dress requirements. For example, black pants does **not** include black jeans, leggings, capris, etc. Black shoes do not include sandals, Uggs or sneakers. If you don't tell them, they will not show up for a concert dressed appropriately .

Gentlemen - Each male member of the group will be assigned a tuxedo which will include black tuxedo pants, a white shirt, blue vest and bow tie, and a black jacket. Gentlemen are required to wear black socks and dress shoes for all performances. Black sneakers are not considered dress shoes. Hair should be brushed away from the face. Do not wear cologne.

If there are any financial issues that do not allow a student to meet the concert attire requirements, please notify the instructor in advance and assistance will be given.

If a student **does** arrive inappropriately dressed, you must decide whether to let them perform and/or whether to lower their grade. Go over possible consequences beforehand.

Clearview Regional
Middle School
Choral Student Handbook

2012-2013

*Have pride in what you do. Do what is right.
Believe in yourself.*

Amy C. Troxel
Choral Director

Dear Parents and Students,

I am very proud to be part of the Music Department at Clearview Regional Middle School. The reputation of the choral program in our district is one that we should all hold in high regard. But such a reputation is something that must be constantly nurtured and maintained. For this reason, each member of the choral program has a responsibility to contribute to its continued success. Outlined in this booklet are the expectations for each choral student and their families.

It is a privilege for our students to have access to such a wonderful musical education, and it is my privilege to educate and inspire them to work hard and to love to sing.

Together, I know we can continue to move forward and build this program to even greater success. So here's to song! Many exciting rehearsals, many successful performances, and many beautiful memories to be cherished for years to come!

Sincerely,

*Amy C. Troxel
Choral Director*

(856) 223-2740 x3568
troxelam@clearviewregional.edu

Important Dates to Remember

A complete calendar of events will be provided to each student to keep in their choir folder. A few spring dates are still pending.

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Sept. 13 | Interest Meeting for after school ensembles |
| Sept. 17 | Wolfgang Chocolate Fundraiser Begins |
| Sept. 18, 20 | Auditions for after school ensembles |
| Sept. 24 | 7 th Grade Back to School Night |
| Sept 25, 27 | Rehearsals begin for after school ensembles |
| Sept. 28 | Commitment Forms due |
| Oct. 1 | Fundraiser Ends
8 th Grade Back to School Night |
| Oct. 12 | Choir Uniform money due |
| Nov.2 | Pee Jay's Fruit Fundraiser Begins
All South Jersey Choir Auditions |
| Dec. 3 | Fundraiser Ends |
| Dec. 13 | Dress Rehearsal (2:30-4:30, mandatory *) |
| Dec. 17 | Dress Rehearsal (8:30-11:30, mandatory *)
Holiday Concert (mandatory *) |
| Feb. | Gertrude Hawk Fundraiser Begins |
| Mar. | Fundraiser Ends |
| April (TBA) | Choral Festival (mandatory *) |
| May (TBA) | Trills & Thrills/Dorney Park |
| June 4 | Dress Rehearsal (2:30-4:30, mandatory *) |
| June 6 | Dress Rehearsal (8:30-11:30, mandatory *)
Spring Concert (mandatory *) |

* **Mandatory** performances are performances that require the presence of the entire choral program. There are three mandatory performances during the 2012-2013 academic year. Attendance at these performances and their corresponding dress rehearsals comprise 25% of a student's grade.

Philosophy

The choir performs in regular concerts as well as special events for the school and community. Choral student members are trained in vocal technique and musicianship. Students will experience a variety of quality music literature through its practice and performance. Students will acquire the skills needed to perform this literature and will have the opportunity to perfect it for the enjoyment of many different audiences. The intent of the program is to increase each student's understanding and appreciation for choral music, to develop musicianship, to improve control of their vocal instruments, and to develop self-discipline along with a sense of achievement and pride in the ensemble as well as their own contribution to it. It is the goal of this program that students will be set on a course for a life-long enjoyment and performance of music.

Goals and Objectives

- To create interest and participation in the performance of choral music
- To develop the individual voice and understand its relationship to the choral ensemble
- To challenge students to be better musicians and to develop their musical independence
- To expose students to many styles of music at varying levels of difficulty
- To instill the values of hard work, commitment, self-discipline, self-respect, respect for others, dedication and responsibility in each member of the ensemble

Rehearsal Procedures

Students must arrive on time for all rehearsals and performances – this means in one’s assigned seat, folder in hand, ready to sing. Students arriving late or leaving early must do so without disturbing the rehearsal.

Students will place all of their belongings in cubbies before class begins. Students may not have their bags or backpacks on the risers or on their floor near their seats.

Students will sit in their assigned seats at all times.

Students must receive permission to go to the lavatory or water fountain. Students should not abuse their hall privileges by regularly using choir as a time to take care of these things.

Students must not talk while the director is talking.

Students must not chew gum in class, nor are they permitted to have any food or drink in the choral rehearsal.

Students may not use the choral rehearsal as a time to engage in other activities such as reading, homework, texting, socializing, sleeping or making up work for another class.

Concert Attire

Women – black velvet top, black skirt (hemmed to top of foot), black closed-toed dress shoes (preferably comfortable flats), pearl necklace.

Men – white tuxedo shirt, black vest, black tuxedo pants (hemmed appropriately), black bowtie, black dress shoes, black socks

Hair away from face. No fragrances. Tasteful make up.

Requirements

CHOICE – This course is an elective, and each student must become a “choir member.” Because each student accepts *by choice* all of the responsibilities that membership entails, there is no excuse for giving less than your best effort at all times. This is central to the success of the choir. *Commitment implies responsibility.*

WILLINGNESS – Each member must be willing to give the effort required for excellence.

MUSICAL ABILITY – A student does not need to be the best singer to be part of the choral program. However, each student is expected to improve over time. The director will monitor each student’s progress and discuss areas for improvement. Students are expected to work diligently to improve in these areas.

ATTITUDE – A person’s attitude says more about them than almost anything else, and even the greatest talent on earth will not succeed with a bad attitude. If a student’s attitude interferes with their individual progress or the progress of others in the choir, the director will address the student individually. **If a student is unwilling to address and improve such issues over time, they will be removed from the course.**

MATERIALS – Each choral member will be provided with a black leather folio a pencil and choral repertoire for upcoming performances. Choral music will be collected after each concert, and folios will be collected at the end of the year. Any materials provided by the school district that are not returned in good condition must be paid for by the student.

Each choral member will be required to purchase the following:

Concert Uniform (gowns for women and tuxes for men). The cost of the uniforms is \$70. The September-October fundraiser is specifically designed to offset the cost of the choir uniform. Students will provide their own shoes: closed-toed black shoes for women, black dress shoes and black socks for men.

CRMS Choir T-shirt (money to be returned with Commitment Form no later than September 30, 2012). The cost of the shirt is \$10.00. The T-shirt will provide a uniform option for small or casual performances as well as boost team spirit.

Student Responsibilities

All students are expected to adhere to all of the policies and procedures as outlined in the district *Code of Conduct*.

Arrive to class on time with all required materials (folder, pencil, music) – every day, no exceptions! Consequences for tardiness per marking period are as follows...

1st and 2nd Tardy – warning

3rd Tardy – take-home detention/parent notification

4th Tardy – teacher detention

5th Tardy – white card

Chronic tardiness will not be tolerated!

Demonstrate a positive attitude that is ready to learn.

Participate in all aspects of the choral rehearsal. This includes, sitting or standing when appropriate, participating in warm ups, stretches and movement exercises, rehearsing repertoire, completing in-class written assignments, answering questions when called on, etc. Every activity, no matter how small,

has its part to play in overall growth and learning. It is not for students to pick and choose which activities they will participate in and which they will not. *Failure to participate in any part of the choral rehearsal will be reflected in a student's participation grade and possibly result in disciplinary measures.*

Respect and cooperate with the director, student leaders, accompanists, guest musicians, substitute teachers and anyone else in a position of authority.

Respect and work together with other members of the choir. *A choir is a team – either we work together or we fail together.*

Respect and care for all of the resources in the room. We are fortunate to have a beautiful facility in which to rehearse, but it is each member's obligation to take care of the furniture, equipment and music in the room. *Disregard for or misuse of these resources will result in disciplinary measures.*

Observe and follow all class guidelines set by the director. The choral rehearsal should be a place of self-expression and enjoyment, but like all public settings, there are certain guidelines for behavior and speech that must be observed.

Arrange to be in attendance at all rehearsals and performances on the choral calendar. Attendance is mandatory for all students. Failure to attend will result in a failing grade. *The only acceptable reasons for missing a concert are personal illness of a serious nature (verified by school nurse) or a death in the family (verified by attendance office). In these two instances, a note must be provided by the parent/guardian. The director reserves the right to assign make-up work for missed performances.***Grading Policy**

Participation (work ethic/behavior/attitude) – 50%

While choir should be an enjoyable experience, it is not intended to be “an easy A.” How well students fulfill their responsibilities and follow rehearsal procedures will determine their grade. If an F is failing and an A is excelling, then a C is average. Average participation will receive an average grade. Only those who put for the effort will earn an A.

Performance and Rehearsal Attendance – 25%

Students who are in attendance for dress rehearsals and concerts and who perform and behave in an acceptable manner will receive an A. Unexcused tardiness, dress code violations or behavior problems will result in a lowered grade. **Students with an excused tardy or absence** will complete a make-up assignment at the director’s discretion. Failure to complete the assigned work will result in a failing or lowered grade. **Students with an unexcused absence** will automatically receive a failing grade.

Musicianship – 25%

The method for evaluating students’ musicianship skills will vary (written or sung quizzes and tests) as will the materials covered (sight singing, knowledge of musical terms, vocal health and production, etc.). The materials being tested will always be those emphasized in rehearsal.

Discipline

Students who fail to fulfill their responsibilities as members of the choir will not be allowed to enjoy its privileges. Any student who has received two or more white cards for behavior-related offenses during the year will not be permitted to attend any choir events without specific approval by the director. Furthermore, failure to improve behavior over a period of time may result in a student’s removal from the class altogether.

Fundraisers

The cost of uniforms as well as the cost of our annual trip to the Trills and Thrills Music Festival at Dorney Park do add up. For this reason, students are strongly encouraged to participate in the three fundraisers sponsored by the choral department. The first fundraiser is timed to assist with the purchase of uniforms, and the second and third to assist with the cost of the Dorney Park trip.

Wolfgang Chocolates Fundraiser (Fall)

Pee Jay’s Fruit Fundraiser (Winter)

Gertrude Hawk Chocolates Fundraiser (Spring)

Parent Leadership

Parents who are willing to help out with various activities throughout the year are always greatly appreciated. Please provide your contact information and areas of interest on the signature page to be returned by October 5, 2012.

In Closing

This program has a long history of excellence and a reputation that we can all be proud of, but it is up to us to keep the story going. So I encourage each of you...

Have pride in what you do. Do what is right. Believe in yourself.

Parent/Guardian Information

There will be various things throughout the school year that will require some assistance from parents. If you are willing and able to help, please let me know by filling out the form below. I am always so appreciative of parent assistance, and such involvement can only enhance the educational experience of the students.

Thank you in advance for your time and support!

I would be willing to help with the following (check all that apply):

Measuring students for uniforms _____

Fundraiser delivery (unloading and sorting) _____

Chaperoning field trips _____

Chaperoning dress rehearsals _____

Chaperoning the holiday or end-of-year party _____

Anything _____

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Preferred Contact Method _____

If you are not sure if you can help but would like to be contacted if there is a need, give your information and check here. _____

I'm looking forward to a great year!

Commitment Form Due no later than October 5, 2012

Failure to return this commitment form, signed by both the student and a parent or guardian, will result in removal from the course. It is imperative for the success of individuals and the ensemble that all students and parents agree to the principles and guidelines set forth in the Choral Student Handbook.

Students:

I have read and agree to principles and guidelines set forth in the Choral Student Handbook. I understand that failure to fulfill my responsibilities as a member of the choir and/or failure to follow rehearsal procedures will result in a lowered grade, disciplinary measures and possibly removal from the course.

Student Name _____

Student Signature _____

Date _____

Parents/Guardians:

I have read and agree to the principles and guidelines set forth in the Choral Student Handbook. I understand that failure on the part of my student to fulfill their responsibilities as a member of the choir will result in a lowered grade, disciplinary measures and possible removal from the course.

Parent Name _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

CLEARVIEW REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

After School Choir Contract

Fall 2012

As a member of the CRMS after school choir program, the following is expected of you:

- Attend the Middle School Holiday Choral Concert on December 17 at 7pm.
- Attend the mandatory after-school dress rehearsal for the Middle School Holiday Choral Concert on December 13 from 2:30-4:30pm.
- Be at all rehearsals **ON TIME**. Rehearsal begins promptly at 2:30pm and ends at 3:20pm. Any student late to rehearsal or leaving early must make arrangements with Miss Troxel ahead of time.
- Students in the choir are expected to be at **EVERY** rehearsal. If you must be absent due to illness or an emergency, you must make arrangements with Miss Troxel to learn the music you missed. **ANY MORE THAN THREE ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN REMOVAL FROM THE GROUP - TWO PARTIAL ABSENCES WILL BE COUNTED AS ONE FULL ABSENCE.**
- During rehearsal, all students are expected to be engaged in preparation for the performance.

By signing below you signify that you understand what is expected of you once you accept admission into Cantate or Troubadours.

_____ Signature

_____ Printed Name

_____ Parent Signature

CLEARVIEW REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

After School Choir Contract – SPRING 2013

A Cappella Choir

As a member of the CRMS a cappella choir, the following is expected of you:

- Attend the Tri-District Choral Festival on April 10, 2013 at 7pm as well as in-school dress rehearsal (same day, 8:30-1:30).
- Attend the Trills & Thrills music festival trip on May 10, 2013.
- Attend the Middle School Spring Choral Concert on June 6, 2013 at 7pm as well as the in-school dress rehearsal (same day, 8:30-11:30).
- Attend the mandatory after-school dress rehearsal for the Middle School Spring Choral Concert on June 4, 2013 from 2:30-4:30pm.
- Be at all rehearsals **ON TIME**. Rehearsal begins promptly at 2:30pm and ends at 3:20pm. Any student late to rehearsal or leaving early **must** make arrangements with Miss Troxel ahead of time.
- Students in the choir are expected to be at **EVERY** rehearsal (a list of rehearsal dates from February- June are listed below – please mark your calendar). If you must be absent due to illness or an emergency, you must make arrangements with Miss Troxel to learn the music you missed. **ANY MORE THAN TWO ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN REMOVAL FROM THE GROUP – THREE PARTIAL ABSENCES WILL BE COUNTED AS ONE FULL ABSENCE.**
- Absence from any “emergency rehearsals” added to the schedule below will not be counted against a student’s attendance, but they are expected to make every effort to attend **and** keep up with any work missed.
- During rehearsal, all students are expected to be engaged in preparation for the performance.

| | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|----|-----------|----------------|
| February | Monday | 4 | 2:30-3:00 | Meeting |
| | Thursday | 14 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #1 |
| | Thursday | 21 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #2 |
| | Monday | 25 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #3 |
| March | Monday | 11 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #4 |
| | Thursday | 21 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #5 |
| | Monday | 25 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #6 |
| April | Thursday | 4 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #7 |
| | Monday | 8 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #8 |
| | <i>Choral Festival (4/10/13)</i> | | | |
| | Thursday | 18 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #9 |
| | Monday | 29 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #10 |

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|----|-----------|---------------|
| May | Monday | 6 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #11 |
| | Thursday | 9 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #12 |
| | <i>Trills & Thrills (5/10/13)</i> | | | |
| | Monday | 20 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #13 |
| June | Monday | 3 | 2:30-3:30 | Rehearsal #14 |
| | <i>Spring Concert (6/6/13)</i> | | | |

NOTE: In my program, Cantate (all women) and Troubadours (all men) are non-auditioned choirs. The attendance policy is very strict, but due to other after school commitments (tutoring, athletics, mentoring programs, etc.), I do make a lot of exceptions. As long as a student has a good reason, doesn't take advantage of my generosity and keeps up with the repertoire, they are generally not removed from the group.

The a cappella choir, however, is an auditioned ensemble, and the music is much more challenging. The attendance policy for this group is much more strictly enforced.

CLEARVIEW REGIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Cappella Choir Contract

Spring 2013

By signing below you signify that you have read and understood what is expected of you once you accept admission into the a cappella choir.

_____ Student Signature

_____ Printed Name

_____ Parent Signature

Sign and return to Miss Troxel NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 14th.

Clearview Regional Middle School

Student Info Card

2012-2013

Name (last, first) _____

Home Phone _____

Street Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Parent Name _____

Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

Parent Name _____

Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

Preferred method of contact _____

Medical concerns _____

Other _____

Student Info, cont.

Name (last, first) _____

Grade (circle one) 7 8

Birthdate (month/day/year) _____

Grade school attended (circle one) JMT PVS Other

List three musical goals you would like to set for this year:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Why did you join choir this year? _____

How will you achieve your personal goals and help achieve the

goals of the group? _____

Audition Form 2011-2012

Name _____

Grade (circle one) 7 8

I am auditioning for (check all that apply):

Young Women's Ensemble (Tuesdays) _____

Troubadours (Thursdays) _____

Concert Choir (Wednesdays) _____

What voice part do you think you are (circle one)? S A T B

How many years have you been in choir (*not* including this year)? _____

Experience (Do you take private lessons? Do you play any instruments? Can you read music? Do you perform in any other groups? Etc.) _____

Why would you be a good candidate for the group(s) you are auditioning for? What can you contribute? _____

FOR MISS TROXEL ONLY:

Sept. _____ Jan. _____

Voice Part:

Range: Low _____ High _____ Break _____

Tonal Memory _____ Rhythm Memory _____

Song: *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*, in the key of _____

Intonation _____ Diction _____

Other comments: _____

Golden Ticket

You have been invited to attend choir on Friday, June 14th
during 6th period as a guest of _____ .

Please notify your 6th period teacher that you will be
attending. *You must bring your Golden Ticket with you in
order to be excused from class.*

We look forward to your presence with us.

Guest's Name

Signature

Vocal Range Chart 2011-2012

Name _____ Grade _____

Date:

Voice Part Assignment:

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|------------------|-------------------|
| | |

Date:

Voice Part Assignment:

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|------------------|-------------------|
| | |

Date:

Voice Part Assignment:

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|------------------|-------------------|
| | |

Uniform Payment

Total cost of uniform is \$70.00, due by October 17, 2012.

Name _____

Money Fundraised \$ _____ (Wolfgang Chocolates - %40 profit)

Money Owed \$ _____

*(Cash must be in a sealed envelope with the student's name on it.
Checks should be made payable to "Clearview Regional Middle School" with
"Account #234" written in the memo line.)*

Any questions, email troxlam@clearviewregional.edu or call 856-223-2740 X3568

Uniform Payment

Total cost of uniform is \$70.00, due by October 17, 2012.

Name _____

Money Fundraised \$ _____ (Wolfgang Chocolates - %40 profit)

Money Owed \$ _____

*(Cash must be in a sealed envelope with the student's name on it.
Checks should be made payable to "Clearview Regional Middle School" with
"Account #234" written in the memo line.)*

Any questions, email troxlam@clearviewregional.edu or call 856-223-2740 X3568

| Last Name | First Name | Wolfgang | Profit | Pee Jay's | Profit | Gertrude Hawk | Profit | Total Profit |
|-----------|-------------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|---------------|--------|--------------|
| Anderson | Annabell | 35 | 14 | 50 | 20 | 70 | 35 | 69 |
| Baker | Bonnie | 100 | 40 | | | 50 | 25 | 65 |
| Callihan | Christopher | 50 | 20 | 35 | 14 | 30 | 15 | 49 |
| Davis | Dylan | | | 100 | 40 | 20 | 10 | 50 |
| Foster | Francesca | 35 | 14 | 150 | 60 | | | 74 |
| Grant | Gregory | 40 | 16 | | | 50 | 25 | 41 |
| Harris | Haley | | | 150 | 60 | 120 | 60 | 120 |
| Johnson | Justin | | | 50 | 20 | 50 | 25 | 45 |
| Lewis | Larissa | 100 | 40 | 40 | 16 | | | 56 |
| Mason | Matthew | 50 | 20 | | | 30 | 15 | 35 |
| O'Neil | Olivia | 50 | 20 | 50 | 20 | 60 | 30 | 70 |
| Peterson | Patricia | | | 100 | 40 | 88 | 44 | 84 |
| Rogers | Ryan | 40 | 16 | 35 | 14 | | | 30 |
| Santos | Selina | 35 | 14 | 40 | 16 | | | 30 |
| Thomas | Tanya | 100 | 40 | | | 120 | 60 | 100 |
| Vaughn | Veroncia | | | 150 | 60 | 40 | 20 | 80 |
| Williams | Wesley | 100 | 40 | 40 | 16 | | | 56 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

If you are skilled at using Excel, you can program the red columns to automatically calculate the profit for each student. In this sample spreadsheet, both Wolfgang and Pee Jay's are 40% profit, and Gertrude Hawk is 50% profit. You can also program the final column to calculate total profit, saving you a lot of time at the calculator and reducing the chance of human error.

Add or subtract columns to suit the particular needs of your program. Once your spreadsheet is set up, you can just cut and past new names in each academic year.