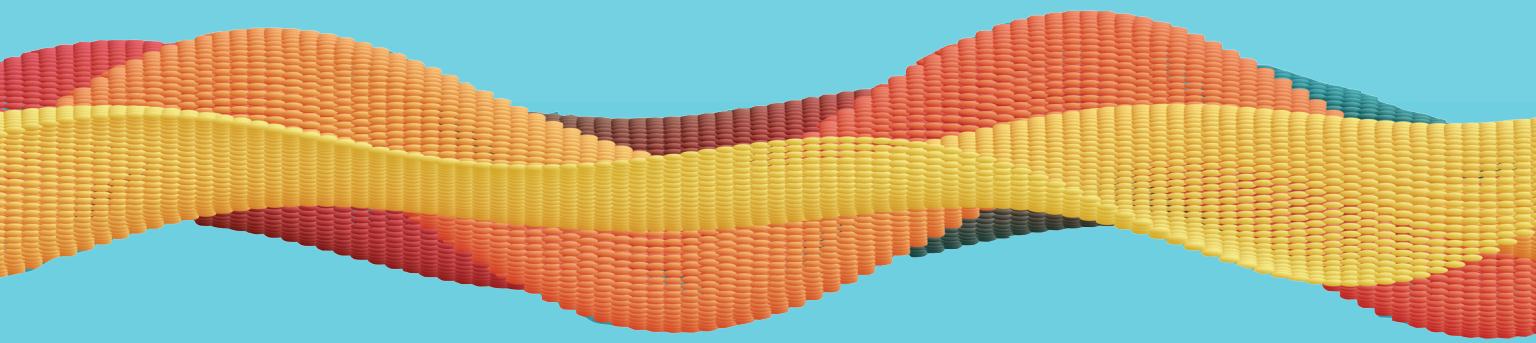
Cultivating Tone with Your Middle School Choir

KAREN GRAFFIUS



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Listening to a choir sing with a beautiful tone can be an extremely satisfying and aesthetically rewarding experience. A strong choral program consisting of high-quality performances can contribute to community and administrative support and serves as advocacy for the choral program. Achieving a good choral tone, however, can be challenging. Especially with middle school choirs, it can be easy to make excuses and give in to the rationalization of "well, that's just how they sound." Helping your middle school

choir develop a good tone can be a daunting task, but it is a challenge well worth the time and effort needed to be successful.

Every choral director has their own idea and philosophy about what constitutes a "good" choral tone or sound. There is variance among choral directors about vocal color, bright versus dark, and straight tone versus vibrato. Additionally, many directors will have their choirs alter or modify their tone based on the performance practice or style of the song being performed. In *Teaching Choral Music*, Don Collins writes, "On several aspects of choral sound, however, most directors agree. Directors want to avoid a breathy sound. They want the pitches to be in tune, the tone to be free, vital (at least to some degree), and supported, and the words to be uniformly pronounced."[1] This article will address several strategies for helping your middle school choir develop a healthy and pleasing choral tone. While the middle school choir is the intended focus as the author's area of experience and expertise, these strategies may also be useful for conductors of elementary and high school choirs.

Choral Tone as a Priority for Performance

In the fall of 2023, I surveyed Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) choral adjudicators regarding their opinion of the importance of criteria for judging the quality of a choral performance. The survey asked respondents to rank seven criteria from the GMEA Choral Large Group Evaluation form in order of most to least important: diction, ensemble, interpretation, other factors, pitch, rhythm, and tone.[2]

Forty-one participants were first asked if they give all seven criteria the same weight when adjudicating a choral ensemble. (This question was necessary due to the design of the adjudication instrument, which gives each criteria the same weight.) Sixteen responded "no" and were then asked to submit their rankings. Eight (50 percent) of the respondents marked tone as the most important criteria for evaluating choral performances, and five respondents (31.25 percent) marked tone as the second most important criteria for evaluating a choral performance (Table 1).

The twenty-five participants who indicated that they did give all seven criteria the same weight were asked to indicate which element should receive the most weight if the instrument was redesigned to give more weight to certain elements (Table 2 on the next page). Tone was selected as the element that should get the most weight by sixteen respondents (64 percent) and as the second most important element by five respondents (20 percent). When combining the results of both questions, twenty-four (58 percent) ranked tone as the most important criteria for evaluating choral performances and ten (24 percent) ranked tone as the second most important component for evaluating choral performances. These results seem to support the importance

Table 1. Element rankings for adjudicators who do not give equal weight to all elements

You indicated that you **do not** give all 7 elements of the performance criteria the same weight in the overall score. Please rank the performance criteria with 1 being the element you think should get the most weight in the overall score and 7 being the element you think should get the least weight in the overall score.

Field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Diction	3	2	1	6	3	1	0	16
Ensemble	0	0	3	3	6	4	0	16
Interpretation	0	0	1	2	3	10	0	16
Other Factors	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	16
Pitch	5	7	1	1	2	0	0	16
Rhythm	0	2	8	3	2	1	0	16
Tone	8	5	2	1	0	0	0	16

of developing good choral tone as a priority for choral performances, specifically when considering choirs who may be judged at festivals or other music association performances.

When I began my career as a middle school choral director, I knew that middle school choirs could achieve a beautiful tone, but I wasn't sure how to make that happen. After attending workshops and conferences and working with veteran directors, I soon found improvement in the choirs' tone by focusing my instruction in a few areas. Integrating these strategies into your teaching may help your choir as well. The following eight strategies are discussed along with suggestions for implementation into lessons and rehearsals:

- Warm up your singers every day.
- Insist on good posture.
- Practice breathing exercises.
- Work on resonance and placement.
- Give significant attention to uniform vowel shape.
- Incorporate consistent sight-reading and ear-training practice.
- Avoid overuse of the chest or belt voice.
- Provide good choral models.

Table 2. Adjudicator element rankings if the scoring instrument included variable weights assigned to elements

You indicated that you **do** give all seven elements of the performance criteria the same weight in the overall score. If the scoring instrument was designed to give more weight to certain elements, please rank the performance criteria with 1 being the element you think should get the most weight in the overall score and 7 being the element you think should get the least weight in the overall score.

Field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Diction	2	3	5	10	1	4	0	25
Ensemble	2	1	3	6	8	5	0	25
Interpretation	1	1	2	2	7	12	0	25
Other Factors	0	0	0	0	0	1	24	25
Pitch	4	13	5	3	0	0	0	25
Rhythm	0	2	8	3	8	3	1	25
Tone	16	5	2	1	1	0	0	25

One.
Warm Up Your Singers Every Day

As singers enter the chorus room each day, they are coming from a variety of activities. Most have been using their speaking voice, and some may be coming from physical education classes or recess where they were using their "outside" voices or even yelling. According to Michele Holt and James Jordan, "The primary role of the warm-up is to provide a transition from vocalism for speaking to vocalism for singing."[3] Additionally, most adolescent students do not take private voice lessons. The choral director serves as the director of choirs and the voice coach, and teaching healthy vocal technique is an important part of the warm-up. The warm-up also helps singers find the mental focus needed to contribute to a successful rehearsal.

In *Choral Music Methods and Materials*, Barbara Brinson and Steven Demorest explain, "The entire sequence of warm-ups should take from eight to twelve minutes."[4] Adherence to a warm-up sequence—which could include relaxation through stretching, posture, breathing, and resonance and placement exercises—will ease the burden of planning the warm-up and ensure that important vocal concepts are being taught.[5] There are many excellent sources for warm-up exercises, and several are discussed later, in addition to a section of "Suggested Resources" at the conclusion of this article.

It is also important to customize warm-up exercises to address specific problem areas in the repertoire being rehearsed. For example, extract the rhythm of a particularly challenging phrase and have the singers speak, clap, or perform the rhythm on a unison repeated pitch before encountering it in the score. If the soprano section has to sing a difficult interval in a high tessitura in one of the selections being rehearsed, create an exercise based on that interval beginning on a lower pitch level and moving gradually up to the pitches in the selection.

Initial exercises should begin in a comfortable key. Tonalities beginning on e, e♭, or f work well for middle school students. (These exercises can be sung an octave apart: e3 or 4, e♭3 or 4, or f3 or 4.) I found the beginning pitches e4, e♭4, and f4 to be especially appropriate for male singers moving through the voice change who have begun singing down the octave. Treble voices may immediately engage the chest or belt voice when beginning on lower pitches such as c4 or d4. They may then carry the weight of the chest voice to the higher registers, causing vocal strain and bad intonation. Take care to warm up the mid-range of the voice first before moving to the extreme high and low ranges. It is important that directors listen carefully to their choirs as they move through the warm-up exercises and correct any issues that arise, such as vocal strain or incorrect vowel formation.

Two.
Insist on Good Posture

Good singing posture does not come naturally to most singers, and this can be especially true for adolescents, who often develop slumped posture with the heavy use of electronic devices. Citing Brinson and Demorest again, "Good posture is the most basic tool for correct singing. Because the body serves as a musical instrument, students should be taught that the way they hold their bodies will affect the sound they can produce."[6] Directors must teach their singers the most physically efficient way to stand and sit for singing.

When standing, the body should be aligned with a raised rib cage and lifted sternum, and the shoulders down and relaxed. The head should be relaxed with the chin parallel to the floor. The feet should be about shoulder-width apart, and some singers may prefer having one foot in front of the other to help with balance. When sitting, singers should be reminded to keep the rib cage raised with their backs away from the chair. Legs should not be crossed; feet should be flat on the floor. The music should be held in front of the body without the elbows or arms touching the legs.

Incorporate strategies and cues to help remind your singers about posture. This can be verbal, such as simply saying, "Posture check!" A nonverbal cue could be holding up two fingers and pointing them down in the palm of the other hand (sitting) or next to the palm of the other hand (standing). Posture assessments can help develop good posture habits. Incorporate posture observation quizzes. Keep a seating chart at the podium

or piano and place tally marks next to singers' names when you see them with incorrect posture. Each tally mark or collection of marks could be a certain number of points off their grade. These assessments can be announced or unannounced, with unannounced assessments being especially effective. If students are unaware of which day (or week) you are observing their posture for a grade, they may be more inclined to consistently exhibit correct posture, which may in turn promote good posture habits. Posture observation quizzes are standard-based and are an alternative assessment to participation-based grades prohibited in some school systems.

Three. Practice Breathing Exercises

Establishing correct breathing habits should occur immediately after establishing an efficient singing posture. As Robert Garretson says, "[Correct breathing] is necessary to ensure the steady flow of the breath to the vocal cords and is fundamental to both tone quality and tone control."[7] As with posture, good breathing techniques are not natural for most singers, so it is important to include at least one breathing exercise in the daily warm-up routine. There are many excellent sources for breathing exercises, including *The Breathing Gym* by Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan. Of particular note are the exercises that mirror phrasing used in singing. It is also helpful to have your singers phonate (produce vocal sounds) while practicing breathing. Lip trills can be a helpful way to begin phonation in the warm-up process, and the gradual release of air while performing the trills helps to develop good breath support.

Other beneficial exercises include instructing singers to inhale for a slow count to four, then count sing to eight on a unison pitch or chord without taking a breath. The count singing can be increased to twelve, sixteen, or twenty. Adolescent singers will enjoy singing patterns or short songs on one breath such as the exercise in Figure 1. Have singers sing the exercise as written then add a repetition of measure two each subsequent time it is sung. As with the count singing exercise, it is important to encourage singers to not "squeeze" out the tone if they begin running out of breath. Lack of airflow during phonation will cause the vocal cords to close. Trying to phonate with closed vocal folds may result in vocal cord strain.

Four. Work on Vocal Resonance and Placement

Resonance can be difficult to define and understand. Brenda Smith and Robert Thayer Sataloff describe it in this way:

> Resonance for singing occurs when the sound waves produced in the vocal mechanism travel through the high structures of the vocal tract. The resonators (the pharynx, the oral cavity, and the nasal cavities) work together to shape the acoustical properties from the frequencies set forth by the vocal folds (voice source signal).[8]

Simply put, resonance is an amplification of the sound as it moves from the larynx into the throat and mouth area (Figure 2 on the next page). Middle school students might understand resonance as "a way to be heard clearly without trying to sing louder." Two focal areas when working toward more resonance are creat-

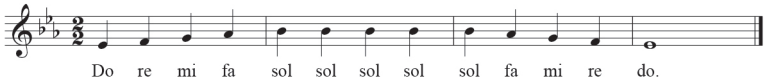

Figure 1

ing space within the soft palate area and placement of the sound to create a "buzz." The roof of the mouth consists of both the hard and soft palates. The soft palate can be found by running the tongue along the roof of the mouth toward the back of the oral cavity until it reaches the softer tissue. This might be an effective way for singers to find their soft palates.

One mistake that many choral directors make is to ask students to "drop your jaw" or "open your mouth wider" in order to create more space. Try it yourself. Drop your jaw by placing two fingers between your teeth. You will easily observe that this causes jaw tension, restricts the pharyngeal area, and does not create the desired space in the soft palate area. A better strategy for creating more space might be to ask singers to feel as if they are about to yawn or experience a "happy surprise." Caution singers to refrain from pulling their tongues back and down when raising the soft palate. Have them imitate you as you speak "aw" in the upper register and then slide down. Speak using your "queen" or "Mrs. Doubtfire" voice and have singers imitate as you say, "Oh my, what a lovely day," "Helloooo," or "How are you today?" Transfer this to singing using a simple melodic pattern such as the one indicated in Figure 3. Have students use movement, such as arching their hands near the eyes and moving them downward or placing their cupped hands near their waists and raising and lowering their hand following the contour of the exercise.

Vocal exercises using "ming," "zing," "meow," "nyah," and "hmm" will help singers learn to feel the "buzz." These can all be sung on descending patterns, stepwise sol to do (5 to 1), or by skips sol-mi-do (5-3-1). A variation is included in Figure 4. Add movement to help students feel the buoyancy of the exercises and to engage the body. Have them pantomime tossing a ball from hand to hand or ringing a doorbell using alternating index fingers.

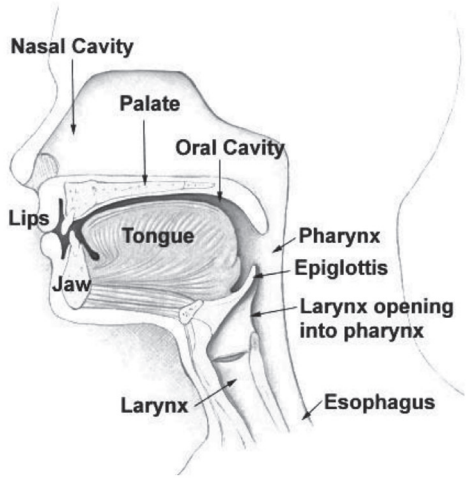

Figure 2. Head & Neck Overview. National Cancer Institute. SEER Training Modules. https://training.seer.cancer.gov/head-neck/anatomy/overview.html

Five. Give Significant Attention to Uniform Vowel Shapes

Uniform vowels that are tall and spacious lead to optimal tone and a unified and blended sound. It is important for singers to "buy in" to the effort needed to create beautiful vowels. Ask for two volunteers. On a unison pitch, have one singer sing an "ah" vowel that sounds more like "uh," and have the other sing an elongated "ah" vowel moving toward "aw." Ask the class

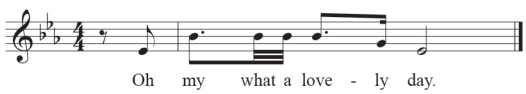

Figure 3

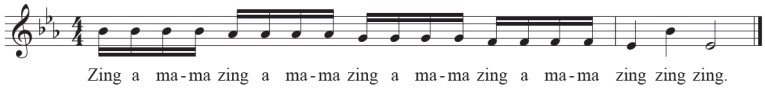

Figure 4

to listen. Have the volunteers sing again, both demonstrating the "uh" and "ah" vowels. This should help students hear and understand the importance of uniform and elongated vowels.

Use the warm-up to begin teaching correct vowel shapes. There are five basic vowels that should be practiced daily, and a commonly used sequence is "ee" /i/, "eh" /ɛ/, "ah" /ɑ/, "oh" /ɔ/, and "oo" /u/. This sequence moves the vowels from the most forward in the mouth to those that are in the back toward the throat. Use the hands and fingers to help reinforce the correct vowel shape. The /i/ and /ɛ/ vowels can be sung with the index fingers touching the corner of the mouth. This will help singers round the lips and helps prevent those vowels from becoming too strident or spread. Have singers touch the back of their hands to their cheekbones for the /ɑ/ vowel. This should help keep the sound more resonant as it is moving toward the middle of the mouth, and this movement also mimics the raised soft palate.

When singing /ɑ/, encourage singers to keep their tongues flat or relaxed, ensuring that the sides of the tongue are not touching the top teeth. For the /ɔ/ vowel, it might be helpful to have students use an index finger and make small circles in front of the lips. This will help to keep the lips rounded. Creating even more rounded lips for the /u/ vowel can be achieved by having singers pantomime pulling a piece of spaghetti out of their mouths. Remind everyone to keep the soft palate raised especially when singing the /i/ and /u/ vowels. Singers tend to equate more closed lips with less internal mouth space, and that dampens their sound. Figure 5 includes examples of typical vowel exercises.

Extract words from songs being rehearsed and create exercises for use in the warm-up. Daily practice of these words out of the context of the song will help create good habits that should transfer to the song. The exercise in Figure 6 incorporates words extracted from Laura Farnell's *Sing with the Lark*. The exercise is written in the key of A♭ to conform to the key of the song. Ask students to sing the exercise (or one you create from current literature) and instruct them on the proper vowel shape. Record the class and have them evaluate. You can also have sections sing alone and let the other sections evaluate.

Six. Consistent Ear Training and Sight-Reading Practice

Intonation affects tone, so consistent work on developing pitch accuracy will certainly help to improve tone. Teaching the choir to sight-read helps them learn repertoire quicker and will give the director even more time to work on tone within the rehearsal. Many directors prefer to place ear training and sight-reading work at the beginning of the rehearsal and include it as part of the warm-up routine. Another suggestion is to relate these exercises to the repertoire being rehearsed and place them before the rehearsed song.

My middle-school colleagues and I had many discussions about the advantages of one method of sight-reading over another. Most of us used either movable "do" or numbers. In moveable "do," the scale degrees from 1 to 8 are assigned the pitch syllables "do,"

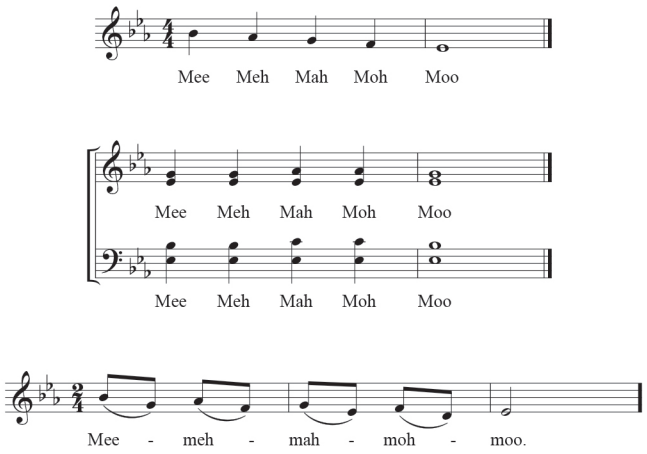

Figure 5

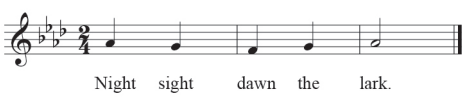

Figure 6

"re," "mi," "fa," "sol," "la," "ti," and "do," referred to as "solfège." "Do" is the tonic, or first scale degree for the key represented by the key signature. The number system is similar but with the use of numbers for the scale degrees rather than syllables. Steven Demorest explains:

> The primary criticism of numbers as compared to moveable "do" is singability. While numbers represent the same relationships as solfège syllables, the vowel-consonant combinations are harder to sing; three instead of mi, four and five instead of fa-sol, and the most difficult, se-ven—two syllables for a single note.[9]

When surveying choral directors about their preferred method of teaching pitch reading, two studies found that movable "do" was the most used system.[10]

Very few students will enter the chorus room with perfect pitch. Before beginning any sight-reading activities from notation, it is important to spend time helping students hear pitch and solidifying their intonation. With inexperienced singers, start with portions of the diatonic scale and have students echo sing three- to five-note melodic idioms. Introduce the Curwen hand signs and have students echo sing and sign simultaneously. Incorporate exercises such as "Follow the Hand" in which students sing the pitches you sign. Continue this process until the entire scale can be sung in tune and a cappella. Next, have students sing from a pitch ladder (Figure 7) as you point to notes of the scale. Continue encouraging everyone to sign as they sing. Begin with stepwise movement only and gradually remove the solfège "words" or numbers from the visual. When the singers have mastered singing the scale using solfège (or numbers) without the written words, transfer the scale to standard notation (Figure 8). Point to pitches from the notated scale, have students sing using numbers or solfège, and then add short sight-reading exercises, such as those in Figure 9.

Over time, add longer and more challenging exercises in various keys, transferring to standard rhythmic notation. Before beginning any new melodic concept (such as singing skips), revert to echo singing, singing from the pitch ladder or notated scale, and playing "Follow the Hand" before introducing the new concept into sight-reading exercises. The introduction of singing the natural minor and chromatic scales should come when students have mastered the diatonic scale. Daily singing of the scales will greatly improve intonation. Directors uncomfortable with teaching sight-singing might find published sequential methods helpful, and several are included in "Suggested Resources."

Seven.
Avoid Overuse of the Chest or Belt Voice

In unchanged voices,[11] the chest voice is the lower range of the voice and typically the voice used when

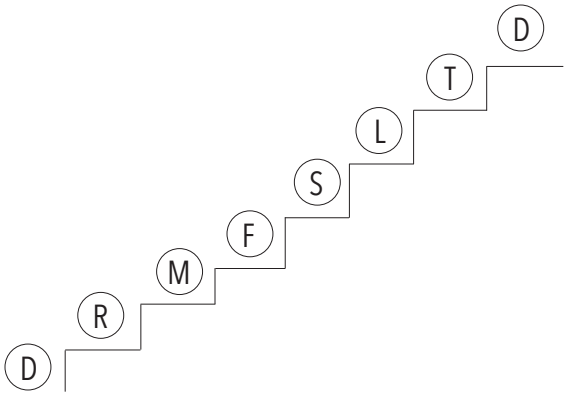

Figure 7

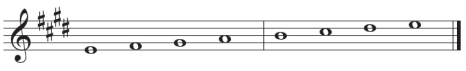

Figure 8

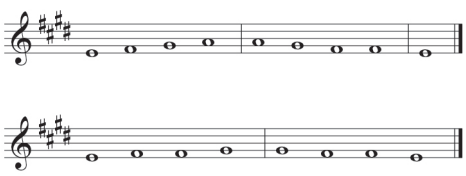

Figure 9

speaking. In changed male voices, the chest voice is the typical singing voice. One common habit among unchanged adolescent singers is to extend the chest voice into the range of the head voice. This is referred to as "belting" and may be a result of the vocal style heard in popular music. According to Kenneth Sipley, "Adopting popular singers as vocal models can have serious consequences for the young singer. It will have the immediate effect of limiting vocal range and the types of music the student can sing."[12] Although some young adolescents can belt with a healthy technique, the louder tones associated with chest/belt voice singing usually do not blend well in choral singing. Helping students develop their head voice using straw phonation (closing the lips around a straw while humming or performing an /u/), lip trills, and the above-mentioned resonance-building exercises will aid young singers in connecting the chest voice to the head voice and developing a more mixed vocal tone.

Straw phonation and lip trills are semi-occluded vocal tract exercises. According to Jeremy Manternach, Lynn Maxfield, and Matthew Schloneger, "All of these exercises create a narrowing and/or lengthening in the vocal tract—the space between the vocal folds (a.k.a. vocal cords) and the exit of the mouth or nose. That narrowing creates an increase in pressure in the vocal tract."[13] This increased pressure helps the vocal cords function more efficiently and can benefit the entire range of the voice. Additionally, have singers perform vocal slides or glissandos beginning in the upper range, encouraging them to ease into their chest voice. Changed-voice singers or those working through the change will benefit from these exercises as well. Encourage them to begin the higher exercises in their falsetto, easing into their chest voice.

Those singers who come from a heavy background in theater or pop singing may have trouble making the transition to a lighter vocal sound or may resist making any vocal technique changes. Educating students about the voice, the benefits of efficient, healthy singing, and providing them with good choral models (discussed in number eight) should help. Proper voice placement of these singers in the choir may also help with choral blend and tone. Rather than having them sing alto, which is a typical placement for belt singers, experiment with soprano. This may prevent them from engaging the belt voice and may help develop their head voices. If these singers resist singing soprano, be sure to include a lot of vocal exercises for the whole choir that extend the upper range. Choose at least one selection per concert in which the altos and sopranos switch parts and/or have them switch parts frequently when sight-reading. Make certain not to place belt voice singers next to each other in the rehearsal/performance arrangement. These singers, who likely do not blend well, may be best placed toward the back of the choir. To help mask their tone quality, put singers who have a more lyrical sound in front of them.

Eight. Provide Positive Choral Models

For young singers to fully understand good choral tone, they need to hear it. It can also be beneficial to have students listen to choirs whose tone is not optimal. Playing only the audio of these examples will prevent students from ridiculing other choirs and will ensure they are listening to the singing and not evaluating what they see. Have students complete an evaluation as they are listening. An example rubric is included in Table 3 on the next page. The use of a three-level rating will be easier for beginner singers and will help them stay focused. Extend the rubric to five levels for more advanced singers. If you choose to show videos, adding "Posture" as one of the criteria might be helpful. Before asking singers to individually evaluate choirs, they should have experience listening followed by group discussions and evaluations. Recording your choirs and having singers evaluate their own singing is certainly beneficial and will help them in their quest to develop a beautiful tone quality.

Closing

Educating and training students to sing with a beautiful tone quality is challenging. It will take encouragement from you and time! In my years as a middle school choral director, I found it important to constantly review and re-teach all music concepts including vocal development and tone building. Bridget Sweet, in her book *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music in Middle School*

and Beyond, discusses the development of the adolescent brain and its retention of information:

> As musical ideas and concepts are introduced to our adolescent students, remember that the adolescent brain protects specific established neuronal connections that are accessed often and perceived as valuable. On the flipside, connections made but rarely accessed will most likely be pruned away by the brain to make room for more important neuronal connections. Again, if you don't use it, you lose it.[14]

Be firm and insist that students use solid posture, employ good breathing techniques, and form vowels correctly. Be persistent and continue using all these strategies consistently. Record a rehearsal at the beginning of the year and the end. This will validate what you are doing, and students will enjoy hearing their progress. CJ

Table 3. Choral Tone Evaluation Rubric

	Superior - 3	Good - 2	Poor - 1
Overall Beauty	The tone quality is beautiful throughout the entire performance.	The tone is generally good, but there are instances of a harsh, pushed, or strident tone quality throughout the entire performance.	There seems to be a lack of understanding of good choral tone, creating an unpleasant sound throughout the entire performance.
Intonation	The choir performs in tune throughout the entire performance.	The choir performs mostly in tune, but there are many instances in which good intonation suffers.	There is a complete lack of a tonal center throughout the performance.
Breath Support	The choir sings with appropriate phrasing throughout the entire performance, demonstrating superior breath support.	There are some instances in which the phrasing is inappropriate, indicating a lapse in good breath support.	There are numerous instances in which the phrasing is inappropriate, indicating major lapses in good breath support.
Vowels	The choir sings with elongated and consistent vowels throughout the entire performance.	There are some instances of incorrect vowel shapes in the performance.	There seems to be no evidence of attention to appropriate and uniform vowel shapes.
Choral Blend	The choir sings with a beautiful blend with no individual voices heard throughout the entire performance.	There are some instances in which individual voices can be heard above others.	There seems to be no evidence of attention to choral blend, as many individual voices can be heard throughout the performance.

Suggested Resources

Albrecht, Sally K. *The Choral Warm-Up Collection: A Sourcebook of 167 Choral Warm-Ups Contributed by 51 Choral Directors* (Alfred Publishing, Co., Inc.), 2003.

Anderson, Dan. *Warm-ups for Changing Voices* (Hal Leonard, 2017).

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Duncan, Dale. *S-Cubed: Successful Sight Singing for Middle School Teachers.* https://inthemiddlewithmrd1.blogspot.com/.

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Pilafian, Sam, and Patrick Sheridan. *The Breathing Gym* (Focus on Music, 2002).

Robinson, Russell, and Jay Althouse. *The Complete Choral Warm-Up Book: A Sourcebook for Choral Directors* (Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1998).

NOTES

[1] Don L. Collins, *Teaching Choral Music*, 2nd ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1999), 304.

[2] The survey was distributed to GMEA choral adjudicators in October and November 2023 to support the content of this article.

[3] Michele Holt and James Jordan, *The School Choral Program* (GIA Publications, Inc., 2008), 186.

[4] Barbara A. Brinson and Steven M. Demorest, *Choral Music Methods and Materials* (Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2014), 257.

[5] Brenda Smith and Robert Thayer Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy* (Singular Publishing Group, 2000), 109.

[6] Brinson and Demorest, *Choral Music Methods and Materials*, 144.

[7] Robert L. Garretson, *Conducting Choral Music.* 8th ed. (Prentice-Hall, 1998), 72.

[8] Smith and Sataloff, *Choral Pedagogy*, 120.

[9] Steven M. Demorest, *Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

[10] Steven M. Demorest, "Choral Sight-Singing Practices: Revisiting a Web-Based Survey" *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* 2, no. 1 (2004): 5; Jane M. Kuehne, "A Survey of Sight-Singing Instructional Practices in Florida Middle School Choral Programs" *Journal of Research in Music Education* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 125.

[11] A full discussion of the adolescent changing voice is beyond the scope of this article. Readers interested in more information about the changing voice and working with middle school students in particular are encouraged to seek out resources such as: Patrick K. Freer, *Getting Started with Middle School Chorus* (Oxford University Press, 2009) or Don Collins, "The Cambiata Concept—More Than Just About Changing Voices" *Choral Journal* 23, no. 4 (1982).

[12] Kenneth Sipley, "Improving Vocal Self-Image and Tone Quality in Adolescent Girls: A Study" *Choral Journal* 35, no. 3 (October 1994): 35.

[13] Jeremy N. Manternach, Lynn Maxfield, and Matthew Schloneger, "Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract Exercises in the Choral Rehearsal: What's the Deal with the Straw?," *Choral Journal* 60, no. 4 (November 2019): 47.

[14] Bridget Sweet, *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music in Middle School and Beyond* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 14.