



## **The Shy Non-Singer— Elementary Teachers, Take Note!**

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Several years ago I had a beautiful little girl in first grade who was so painfully shy that she did not talk or sing in my music class. One of my friends had taught her in kindergarten, so we started comparing notes on how to handle her non-singing. I began to concentrate on activities and strategies, with all my students, to develop their singing voices without creating all the drama that can occur when shy students are forced to sing. I am constantly amazed by the students who tell me they can't sing when, in fact, they have beautiful, light head voices.

Here are a few ideas to help develop young, strong singing voices:

- Do not force a shy child to sing. It takes time to slowly draw out that singing voice...be patient.
- Utilize lots of group singing so a shy child can blend in and not stand out.
- Use manipulatives and puppets to take the focus off the child and onto the object.

### **Activities**

- Mr. Potato Head. I love using this activity! I got the idea from either Denise Gagne or Lynn Kleiner. The class gets so involved with what Mr. Potato Head will end up looking like that they forget they are solo singing! Use this link

to my Dropbox for all the details - <http://tinyurl.com/kcru99b> If that doesn't work, email me at [sallyhobizal@katyisd.org](mailto:sallyhobizal@katyisd.org)

- Lee Gwozdz's Singing Fundamentals Toy Box has helped all of my singers.
- Puppets. My shy singers will actually hide behind the puppet. You don't have to spend big bucks. Also the figures on jumbo craft sticks work just as well!
- Encourage lots of singing-movement games like Hunt the Cows, Grizzly Bear, and Charlie Over the Ocean.
- Songs with movement involving partners are a great way to relax the shy singer with his/her friend right there singing along. "Riding in The Buggy," "Ha Ha This Away," and "Paw Paw Patch" are perfect examples.
- Try call-and-response songs such as "Did You Feed My Cow?"

### **Vocal Exploration**

- Use a Hoberman sphere for teaching high/low sounds.
- Chenille stems (giant pipe cleaners) allow students to design their own vocal shapes. Put students into small groups so each child gets a turn creating a vocal shape for the group to perform.
- My kids love using the IWB activities from Cherie Herring ([www.cphmusic.net](http://www.cphmusic.net)) such as Training a Baby Ghost for vocal exploration. You can also see her activities on [www.TeachersPayTeachers.com](http://www.TeachersPayTeachers.com).
- Canons and rounds are wonderful tools to create a strong singing voice. I tell my students to use a strong singing voice (not loud and ugly) so I cannot "mess them up"

when I walk by them while singing part two of a canon or round. Weak and wimpy singing voices are no match for a strong voice!

Consider using assessments in small chunks rather than an entire class period. The shy singer waiting for his/her turn will have a hard time performing a singing passage. Singing in small groups or even singing into the teacher's ear is much easier for shy singers.

With all of these ideas, remember to gently push but do not force a shy singer to sing. Over time you will see remarkable results. My extremely shy first grader is now a junior high student in the choir. She has auditioned for her school musical! I am so proud of her and her desire to work with other shy students to reach their potential.

### **Making the Connection between Music and Text**

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The strategies listed below can be utilized at all levels of music teaching that involves text: elementary through college, church through professional.

### **Music and Vocabulary Strategies**

- Learning the meaning of new words in lyrics
- Recognition of specific or important words in lyrics
- Reinforcing use of vocabulary during class discussions
- Describing music using specific music vocabulary (e.g., "forte" rather than "loud")
- Identification of literary devices (e.g., alliteration, assonance, metaphor) in texts

### **Music and Comprehension Strategies**

- Anticipating/predicting the type/tempo/dynamics of music based on the title
- Memorizing music using main ideas and summarization
- Identification of the main idea of a work (or section of a work)
- Discussion and analysis of the poetry. Ask singers what was the poet's intent?

### **Music and Fluency Strategies**

- Clapping/body percussion/playing instruments along with lyrics and notation
- Encouraging proper articulation/correct diction/word emphasis to reflect natural speech inflection and expression
- Speaking text out of rhythmic context to feel the natural flow of the speech

### **Before Reading Strategies**

- Establishing the purpose of a work (performance context)
- Surveying text (in musical score)
- Predicting the content of music based on the composer and poet (transfer from music history and literature)
- Identifying important motifs, terms, symbols (reviewing musical knowledge)
- Relating old information to new (making transfers from learned works)
- Relating new music to personal experiences (establishing mood or tone)
- Identifying key music vocabulary (familiar and unfamiliar)