

we ended up with different layers of collaboration. Some of our schools have smaller, younger choirs that do not necessarily have the experience or performing resources to sing a movement on their own, especially in the fall. For some movements, pairs of schools teamed up to create a kind of collaboration *within* collaboration, and they were able to perform with great success. Their students felt comfortable and supported because they had additional peers helping, and the audience saw and heard consistency in the size of the choirs, helping to prevent the judgement about size that sometimes comes with these types of festivals. In essence, collaboration allowed us to take competition out of the equation.

Second, Pine Island has an orchestra that has also traditionally participated in this festival by playing for one of the mass choir movements. This has sometimes seemed to relegate the orchestra to second-class status, as students do not necessarily understand why the orchestra is a participant as well. However, for this performance the orchestra suddenly became vital to the entire production, which dramatically changed the relationship between the choirs and the orchestra.

Choral students understood inherently that the orchestra was an important part of this music. Orchestra students were full participants in the entire concert, and both sets of students had the opportunity to experience playing and singing together. Collaboration allowed us to work better as a community of musicians.

Third, in addition to the adult soloists, we were able to hire a quartet of professional string players to play with our orchestra students. Between the soloists and instrumental quartet, our students were able to see how music can be a lifelong activity, and the side-by-side design encouraged students to take their performance to a higher level. Collaboration allowed us to push the boundaries of what we thought we could do.

When I started teaching at Pine Island, I never would have guessed that my students would have the opportunity to sing the entire Vivaldi *Gloria*. Now, a few months after the festival, I still marvel at what a great experience it was. Because ZED member schools worked together, the end result was highly satisfying for students, directors, and audience members alike. The entire production was much stronger because of our teamwork, and our students felt like they had accomplished something they couldn't have achieved on their own.

Collaboration provides us with opportunities to rejuvenate our singers and choral programs. It gives us a structure in which to be creative, to try things that are different, and to engage our singers and our audiences in new ideas. It allows us to accomplish what we may not be able to do on our own. It builds our communities by placing the focus on working together instead of competition. Every time I have been involved in a collaborative venture, it has been an incredibly energizing experience. I can't recommend it enough.

I Heart (Love) Sight Singing!

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Sight singing is the unbreakable principle, the sacred cow, the "must do," most days, anyway! It is the key to a singer's progression/growth; it breaks the artificial ceiling of rote singing; it gives students independence and musician-ship to get started. It is the key to their success!

In my classroom it takes many forms. I use different books from year to year or throughout the year; write exercises on the board, use portions of songs, have students sing in groups or alone, sing the exercise backwards, switch from line to line, sing portions of a song, have one group clap the beat while another counts/claps the rhythm, anything to keep the brain moving in a musical direction.

For beginning sight readers, I have assigned a pitch to a section (SSA or TTB usually), and they must sing their pitch as it occurs in the exercise, in rhythm. If there are more notes than sections, I sing the leftovers. If they sing on their own, they can choose any exercise in the book for me to sing on the spot. All of these ideas have been stolen from someone else!

As we move toward Common Core standards, documentation of student writing becomes more important. As a bellwork activity, I had my singers complete the following in three or more ways, including the good, the bad, and the

ugly: “Sight singing is...” Their responses fell into five main categories:

1) A definition:

- Singing a song with no knowledge of said song. Basically hoping for the best. —Abby G.
- Making the notes into music. —Maritza G.
- Holding your own and being able to process music. —Consuelo S.
- A brain-busting, hair-pulling technique that all singers should work at. —Gemma L.
- A necessity! —Kimberly C.

2) A warmup activity:

- Not very fun, but a good way to get started. —Messina D.
- A great way to warm up and get in the singing mood. —MacKinzie W
- A good way to warm up your voice and your mind. —Christy K
- You can also use sight singing to help with songs you are learning at the time. —Josh F

3) A tool for teaching rhythms and intervals:

- A great way to get mistakes out of the way. —Kristin G.
- I look for rhythm patterns in my own music now. —Gary H.
- It is skill-building. —Alexandria T.
- It helps one learn common patterns within musical styles. —Victoria N
- It is the ability to do “music” on your own! —Jose V

4) A developmental process:

- It comes naturally to some people but is a struggle for others. —Michael P
- Sometimes it is annoying because I already know most of the stuff. —Rafael D
- It is a LONG process. —Rachel C
- After a while, it gets easier but then you get a harder song. —Kaylen M
- It’s spontaneous. —Jeff B

5) The big picture:

- Sometimes it’s just fun to sing something you’ve never heard before and see how it goes. —Heather B
- It helps me interact with the people around me. —Gary H
- Sight singing can create a singer out of you. —Leah L
- It separates the boys from the musicians. —Haley R
- It makes us really think about what we are actually singing. —Megan S
- It is knowing and understanding not only your part but others’ parts too; it is expressing things the way they are supposed to be expressed. —Erika F
- Sight singing is essential in the music world; for example, when you’re in a time crunch and need to learn a song quickly and perform it with ease. As much as students hate it, including myself, we have to accept it as a part of being in choir. —Nyvia D

I admire my students for their honesty and thoughtful responses. It’s nice to get a peek at what their “real” thoughts are and get a deeper look at their personalities and abilities. I will continue to find new ways to help all of my students create new sight singing wrinkles in their brains and give them the gift of independent music making!