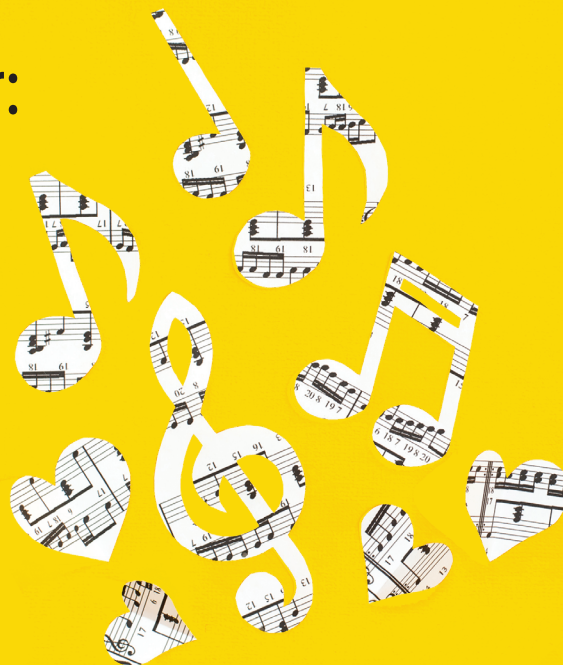


# The Ideal Choral Music Teacher: A Student Description

by Lloyd P. Campbell



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**Lloyd P. Campbell** has ten years' experience as a teacher in the public school system. He was also associate professor of secondary education at North Texas State University.

Describe an outstanding teacher. Not a particular teacher you have known, but the ideal teacher, the one you wish all student teachers could become.

While most prospective teachers want to know what makes an outstanding teacher, the lecture method is possibly the least effective means of telling them. It is far better to permit the learner to inquire, discover, and transfer into their own setting those teacher characteristics which they view as important.

Toward this end, I assigned a class of pre-service secondary school choral music teachers the job of interviewing students in the choral departments of several secondary schools. The teachers in each school had been identified by their colleagues and supervisors as outstanding teachers. The results of this assignment were dramatic! The following is only a partial listing of statements by

these secondary school students about their teachers:

One of the most exciting things about Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s class is the bulletin board reserved for 'Very Important Persons.' Each student's picture appears there at least once during the semester with a profile of their past and present major achievements, and aspirations for the future. Being the VIP is a source of pride for each student.

All semester Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ has made effective use of the tape recorder and video tape player. She has taped each of our performances and some of our rehearsals, then played them back for us six or eight weeks later. It really makes us proud to hear how much improvement we have made. Even then, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ is open to suggestions and ideas of how we can show even more improvement.

Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ had us provide her with information about ourselves. This included our leisure time activities, job experience, achievements, etc. She is interested in what we are doing other than just being a member of her class. I work harder for a teacher who takes a personal interest in me.



Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ must have realized how many of us were afraid of solo work. But the way he eased us into it in a gradual manner made it not so frightening. He started us out as a large choir, then we performed in small groups, and then we sang in duets. By that time I really felt ready for my first solo and I can truthfully say I enjoyed the experience.

Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ is a positive kind of person. She is constantly encouraging us in the classroom, in rehearsals, and in informal contests. I work best in this kind of classroom where there is encouragement coupled with constructive criticism.

It is nice to have a teacher who knows that something exists besides their own class. Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ keeps up with what we are doing and she often expresses an interest and comments on my involvement in tennis, Thespians, and other school activities in which I participate.

I will never forget Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s choral music class. When I began the new semester my voice had started to change and I was worried what might happen and what everyone would think. But on the first day of class, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ explained to all the students how we were going through rapid physical changes, which included change in the vocal range. After that I didn't feel as embarrassed or self-conscious about what might happen because I knew he and the rest of the class understood.

I particularly liked the way Miss \_\_\_\_\_ used designated students as teacher assistants within the classroom. It was helpful to me to be able to seek help from a classmate as well as the teacher in some of the skills we were expected to learn.

The last Friday in each month is something special in Miss \_\_\_\_\_'s class. We have a regularly scheduled chorus talent show, during which time students present their own talent and music. Students can perform both individually or in groups. Some of the interesting presentations have seen students singing as part of a folkdance, dramatize

an opera, play an accompanying instrument, etc. One thing is for sure, it is fun and yet everyone works to present their talent in the best possible way.

Since my voice had not yet taken on a masculine quality, my biggest concern about singing in choir was a fear that I would be placed in the girl's section. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ explained to me that there was nothing abnormal about my apprehension, and explained how he would place me on the end of the boy's section closest to the girl's section in which my voice would best blend. Then as my voice began to change I would be positioned accordingly. Frankly, I would not have stayed in choir except for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ being so understanding.

From the first few days of class I knew I would like Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. He learned everyone's name within a few days, and that makes a difference in my attitude toward the teacher and the class.

The significance of the statements by the secondary school students is obvious. Those teachers identified as outstanding combined three elements essential for successful teaching: 1) a knowledge of subject matter, 2) innovative and creative learning activities, and 3) skills in human relations.

As a result of this assignment, the pre-service teachers who conducted these interviews now understand the attributes of outstanding secondary school choral music teachers more thoroughly than if they had merely heard a lecture. An opportunity to interview public school students who are themselves the product of superior instruction in choral music helped these pre-service teachers learn those traits embodied in the best teachers. **CT**