

NOTES FOR SUCCESS (PART 3)

ADVICE FOR THE FIRST-YEAR CHORAL TEACHER

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*“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken
joy in creative expression and knowledge.”*

—Albert Einstein



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After years of school and at least one semester of student teaching, choral education majors make the transition from student to full-time teacher of their own choral classroom. As the excitement and anticipation of a new school year intersect with the fear of all the unknowns for the months ahead, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. This three-part article is a first for the *Choral Journal*: eleven choral teachers with decades of teaching experience between them answer ten questions on topics geared specifically to the concerns of a first-year teacher. Each question has answers from at least four and no more than six respondents, and answers are listed in alphabetical order by last name. Parts 1 and 2 (May and August 2015 issues, respectively) addressed:

#1: Setting Expectations for the First Year

#2: Classroom Management and Structuring Rehearsals

#3: Balancing a Successful Work and Home Life

#4: Dealing with First-Year Surprises

#5: Relating Choir to Other Subjects/Activities

#6: Assessment in the Classroom

This third and final part will answer the following questions:

#7: Organization

How do I stay organized when conducting multiple choirs? How do I recruit students to my choral program?

#8: Repertoire

Where can I find quality repertoire for the skill/size/balance of my choir?

#9: Voice Building

How do I build a strong choral sound in my choir?

#10: Resources for New Teachers

Where can I go for help?

It is the editor's hope that this article is encouraging, inspiring, and most importantly helpful to *Choral Journal* readers who are in their first few years of teaching. Of course, educators with a decade or more of experience will likely still enjoy reading the comments of their colleagues and perhaps even be inspired and encouraged themselves.

QUESTION #7:

Organization

How do I stay organized when conducting multiple choirs? How do I recruit students to my choral program?



Jennifer Alarcon

Conducting multiple choirs can present challenges because you always have to be evaluating each group's needs. It can be valuable to make rehearsal plans and quickly write some notes regarding the rehearsal as the students are leaving your classroom. The school day can be full of ups and downs, but at the end of the day you have documented where you need to start the next day. Have short-term music and skills goals (weekly) and long-term music and skills goals (grading period or concert unit). These goals will help you make forward progress with your singers.

It is important for the choral program to have a positive and successful reputation in your school and community. It is also true that building relationships with your students can be what encourages them to stay in choir. Maya Angelou's words of wisdom remind us that "people will never forget how you made them feel." Light up when you are greeting your students, get excited when they have a singing break-through, and most importantly, and possibly the most challenging, get out of your classroom and get to know the students in your school.

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Elizabeth Batey

Planning and organization are essential for maintaining a choral program. However, a very wise and successful choral director once told me, “Students don’t join choir for the music; they join it for the choir director.” I think it is a combination of both that has made my programs successful. My personality is inviting and infectious to middle school students. I am weird, I am funny, I am warm, I am genuine, I am unapologetic, and I am welcoming to every student who walks into the choir room. Students who are not in choir come in before school, after school, and on breaks to sing with their friends. Most of the time, those students are in my class by the next semester. It is the environment of being welcome along with the permission to make mistakes and of being a part of something bigger than yourself that draws students into the classroom.

Keeping your students interested and engaged while teaching them essential skills they will need for high school is the more difficult task. This is where planning and organization comes into play. I sit down at the beginning of the year and outline what I think my concerts will look like, including the music that I think my students will be able to sing—challenging but not too hard—based on their skill level last year. I plan a variety of music from around the world from as many time periods as I can include, and I also incorporate cross-curricular elements.

We must always consider the grade level at which we teach when we plan our repertoire. My middle school choirs need to have something they consider fun to sing at every concert. This does not mean that I find a song they like and waste time in class; in fact, it becomes the opposite. Planning for fun songs that are musically worthwhile challenges me as a music educator. On the other end of the spectrum, it is important to make sure that your students are singing quality repertoire that works for their ensemble. The key is that it works for your ensemble. For the first couple of years of my teaching career, I made the mistake of trying to do what I thought I was supposed to do. I watched my fellow choral directors, and I copied them. Unfortunately, I did not have their choirs, and what worked for them did not work for me. Learning from others is not a bad thing, but you ultimately need to find what works for you.

Do not be afraid to challenge your students. There are days where they complain, but deep down they love that the ensemble is becoming better. My choirs sight-sing daily with hand signs. On Mondays we work on music theory; Tuesdays, ear training; Wednesdays, music history; Thursdays, body percussion; and on Fridays, I quiz them on everything they learned that week. Sometimes it’s written, sometimes it’s a game, but our overall music literacy is through the roof for a middle school choir. I appreciate the time I don’t have to spend in class talking about how to read our parts.



Jennifer Sengin

Organization will be one of the keys to a successful first year of teaching. It is challenging to manage multiple choirs, large numbers of students, and various performance demands. Choir directors must be detail oriented and think through each aspect of the class, event, activity, and performance in order for these experiences to be successful. Make lists of things you need to do in order to stay organized and carve out time in your schedule to complete each task on the list. When you are planning a performance, think through all of the required materials. For example, create a concert program that includes piece titles, composers/arrangers, ensemble names, ensemble rosters, vocal soloists, pianists, performers on any additional instruments, administrators (both school and district), sound and lighting technicians, and music teacher colleagues. Allow enough time to work through all the details for the printed program and the actual performance to avoid scrambling at the last minute. In the ensemble roster, make sure to acknowledge students who have been accepted to various honor choirs. Print these rosters out several weeks in advance and ask students to check spellings and initial by their names.

Organize classroom materials in some sort of filing system so students can easily find their folders and other class resources. Sort repertoire into student folders prior to the start of school. Although organizing student folders may be tedious, doing this ahead of time allows for instruction to begin immediately without the chaos of music distribution. Set up the physical classroom before students arrive. This will be challenging if you share a

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space with another teacher, but an organized classroom will allow for more efficient rehearsals since no time is wasted moving furniture.

Another helpful tip is to create a hanging file system in your classroom where you can store extra copies of handouts, choral calendars, permission slips, discipline referral forms, tardy slips, and any other materials you may need to access easily in the middle of class. Keep all of your marked scores in one binder with dividers to separate each choir. Study the repertoire for each ensemble prior to the start of the school year. It will be hard to find the time to do this detailed work once you are already involved in teaching. Score study ensures efficient and effective rehearsals, so make the time to do it.

As far as recruiting, take every opportunity to engage students throughout the school. Greet everyone you see in the hallway and travel to your feeder schools to talk about choral opportunities in your school. Visit other classrooms or the lunchroom to introduce yourself to students. You are the best advocate for your program.



Philip Silvey

It may require some work to build the program at your first job. You may want to increase enrollment, add choirs, introduce new genres of repertoire, and raise the level of performances. On the other hand, you may be replacing the director of a strong, successful program. Each scenario has challenges, but building a program from the ground up allows you more freedom to structure the program you envision. If you do take over a strong program (which in all likelihood was set up by a strong leader), be sure to respect the program and recognize the work it took to establish and maintain it. Seek to understand the history and culture of the current practices and expectations. To alter these will take time, patience, and diplomacy. As talented and as full of ideas as you may be, you are the outsider. Take time to gather information and gain a firm understanding of why things are the way they are. You can more effectively steer the ship in new directions if you win over the students, especially the underclassmen who will be around for additional years as you phase in new policies and initiatives.

If you inherit an under-developed program, you will

have more freedom to institute changes. You will also have some work to do. Again, the history and culture can reveal why the program is not larger or more successful. Research this early by asking questions of your predecessor (if possible), the other music teachers, non-music teachers, the principal, and parents. Tread carefully, since you will be building relationships of trust. Your curiosity should not come across as a desire to criticize or judge. You simply want to know how things have been done so that you can build on this history in an informed way.

You may be a gifted salesperson or recruiter, but the quality of your work (public performances) and the culture of your rehearsals (as perceived by students in your classroom who will share their experiences with family, peers, and teachers) will speak loudly on your behalf and attract students. You can also actively recruit students by talking to them in the hallways, posting notices, or utilizing school-wide announcements. To introduce a new choir into the curriculum can be difficult, since it will impact scheduling and your workload. Talk to the principal and guidance counselors to find out the procedures for doing this.

My first year of full-time teaching, I taught in a Class B public school that graduated around 230 students per year. When I arrived, the high school choir had been reduced to one seventeen-member ensemble. The curriculum had included three high school choirs in the recent past, but two had been eliminated as a way to consolidate music positions in the district (my assignment included junior high and elementary teaching). In order to reinstate these choirs, I had to demonstrate that students wanted to join; however, because the classes were not listed as options in the course catalog, no students could sign up to show their interest—a classic catch 22.

In the fall, I used school records to collect the names and phone numbers of all high school students who had participated in choir at any time during junior high. I obtained permission to start a choir “club” that would meet one evening each week. I called and invited each student on the list to consider joining and gathered enough students to make this happen. This group served to demonstrate sufficient interest for the principal and guidance counselors to agree to add one choir back into the formal schedule for the spring. The following year, a third choir was reinstated. In order for this to happen, I

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had to teach without a planning period for a couple of years (for which I was compensated according to union requirements). My story illustrates that sometimes you may have to volunteer your time and services to demonstrate a need for an additional choir.

Again, do quality work with what you have, look for opportunities to showcase this work publicly (pep rallies, homecoming events), and the word will get out. If you do this, you will not need to “sell” your program—the quality of your work will speak for itself.

QUESTION #8:

Repertoire

Where can I find quality repertoire for the skill/size/balance of my choir?



Jennifer Alarcon

ACDA has an incredible amount of resources to help you select music for your choirs.

Reach out to your divisional and national R&S chair regarding your needs. Additionally, make use of state contest lists such as the Texas Prescribed Music List. These lists have been governed by committees and the literature has been deemed valuable by experienced directors. Additionally, the Cambiata Institute has a wealth of resources for the changing male voice. There are even videos to help you classify boys' voices and repertoire lists for various voicings.

Finally, think outside of the box and use your skills from music theory. Is there a folk song or melody that you can arrange to fit the voicing make-up of your choir? Perhaps there is an SA piece that would be great but you need to arrange to add for some baritones. Be creative and remember that you always want your singers to feel comfortable and confident in what they sing.



Seth Boyd

Finding quality repertoire is very time consuming for me. My choirs are all extremely young, and there is not a lot of material out there targeted at beginning singers. That said, there are some real gems if you know where to look. Find a music store that carries a lot of sheet music in its library and look through songs. Before each year, I go into JW Pepper's store in Minneapolis and pour through the songs in their library. I can look at every page of every song, and because of this, I can find music that my choirs can perform, some of which I might never have found by searching specifically online. Many times, websites will not have full copies of songs available to peruse, which makes it hard to know if your choir can handle a particular piece. Until publishers feel comfortable posting entire songs online, I think looking at the songs in person is a much better option than trolling through websites with partial examples.

Music conventions run by ACDA and NAFME almost always have choral reading sessions. These are fabulous, because songs are usually selected by experienced choral directors; sometimes they offer rehearsal tips, and you get to sing through the music and experience what it feels like to perform the song. Often you walk away with a free copy of the music too! This is a great way for younger directors to expose themselves to high-quality music.



Philip Silvey

No decision you make as a choral music educator has greater ramifications than the repertoire you choose for your ensembles.

To determine the quality and appropriateness of your choices, subject each piece you consider to rigorous review. The book *Shaping Sound Musicians* (O'Toole, 2003) lists nine criteria to gauge whether a composition has artistic merit: uniqueness, form, design, unpredictability, depth, consistency, orchestration/voicing, text, and transcendence. Goetze, Broeker, and Boshkoff (2009) offer six criteria for examining potential repertoire for younger choirs: text, singability, form, part-writing techniques, accompaniment, and pedagogical implications. Use these categories or create your own, but thoroughly examine all

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aspects of any piece you consider programming.

Second, know your singers and their abilities. Match the compositions that pass your pre-screening process with the unique characteristics and particular needs of each choir. Many excellent pieces of music make unsuccessful choices if poorly matched to a choir insufficiently equipped to perform them. Consider this “goodness of fit,” customizing each selection to a specific choir. Last, choose a set of pieces for each concert that provide variety and balance. Consider style, tempo, and key to ensure the collection of pieces works together as an appealing set for students and the audience. Short and varied programs work best.

Once you have settled on your choices, remember that your students might initially resist the new and unknown. You will artfully introduce them to these new experiences and help them grow to value unfamiliar kinds of music. Your students will also have favorites, but these will vary across the individuals in the choir. Ultimately, choose music they will sound good singing. Inherent value arises when students hear how good they sound, especially if it’s a piece they didn’t think they would like.

Discovering repertoire takes a lifetime. Never stop “shopping” for new pieces. Every time you hear a choral performance or listen to works online, make note of the compositions that succeed when sung by school-age singers. Obtain single copies of these works to keep on file for future reference even if you know you will not be able to program them right away. Like sales-rack clothes bought out of season, the day will come when you will break out one of these selections and find it is just the right fit.

You will tend to choose pieces that appeal to you, but do not let personal preference blind you to the primary criteria of well-crafted works specifically suited to the particular makeup of your choir. Consult recommended or pre-selected lists to help you vary from your own natural preferences. R&S-sponsored reading sessions at ACDA conferences constitute these kinds of lists and differ from a publisher-sponsored reading session. Many published books on choral music include annotated lists of recommended repertoire as appendices. Using such a list ensures that the music has already gone through one level of scrutiny. You can also obtain recommendations from colleagues or more experienced teachers you know and trust.

Concerts are the outwardly visible manifestation of your efforts—the public face of your program. Every detail needs to demonstrate your commitment to excellence. Plan carefully for advertising (posters), printed programs, decorations, sound system, ushers, performance attire, and keep students informed of expectations well in advance. Speak to the audience intermittently during the performance to make that connection, but keep it brief.



Jacob Truby

Even with all the resources available to document choral repertoire, I still find it to be a challenge to program appropriate music for kids. Every summer before the school year begins, I put together a repertoire spreadsheet for the whole year, and every year I abandon it by the end of the first concert. It can be difficult to anticipate the ability level of ensembles you may have never heard before.

What I find comforting is how many different directions one can go to get assistance in planning educational, appropriate repertoire. I love seeing questions on the ACDA Facebook page pop up in my newsfeed in regard to repertoire, classroom management, etc., and see a plethora of comments and responses for each question. The repertoire lists that ACDA posts online are a great place to start. I have printed many of these lists out and have often taken an hour to listen to some of these pieces on YouTube and write descriptions for them so I can recall them quickly. The *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir* texts are also helpful, giving you not only a difficulty level for each piece but a description of the piece, background on the composer, and units that could be discussed during the learning of each song.

What I do believe has been the best decision for me in acquiring new repertoire has been the involvement in my state chapter of ACDA. The Wisconsin Choral Directors Association holds two wonderful conventions in January and June—times where I often need both ideas for new repertoire and simply an opportunity to become rejuvenated and refreshed! It is at these conventions that we have reading sessions and “great idea” sessions to share pieces that have been successful in other programs and ideas for the future.

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In Wisconsin, our quarterly publication of *The Voice* has many teachers' recommendations for repertoire for all levels of singing. Many teachers in Wisconsin are working to place their concert programs on their school websites so all teachers would need to do is click on a previous concert to see what was performed at certain times of previous years. Additionally, I am a part of closed music education groups on Facebook and Group Me groups for music teachers where, when I find myself in a rut for finding repertoire, all I need to do is ask. You don't need to reinvent the wheel when selecting appropriate repertoire!

QUESTION #9:

Voice Building

How do I build a strong choral sound in my choirs?



Jennifer Alarcon

A healthy and vibrant choral tone is the foundation upon which a director is able to layer musicality, dynamic contrast, text stress, and more. Thus, it is vital that this tone is fostered and maintained at each choral rehearsal. Helpful tools for building choral tone are modeling, movement, and the use of analogies. The quickest fix is when your students can hear you model exactly what you want to hear. If you are a male teaching a treble choir or a female teaching a cambiata/male choir, it can be helpful to have a student in your choir model as well. My seventh- and eighth-grade boys consider it a privilege when I ask them to be the example for the group. Another idea is to play a recording for them of a similarly aged choir producing the desired tone. When students have an aural context of the proper tone production, they are more likely to be able to work to develop those healthy habits.

In my experience with adolescent singers, analogies and movement also aid a healthy tone production. During rehearsal, I will have my singers move their hands through a pool of jello to help connect and energize tone,

step forward to help sing an ascending skip in tune, step to the macro beat to help feel the "groove" or their unaccompanied piece, or simply tap the rhythm on the back of their hand to aid in rhythmic clarity.

Movement also helps keep the singers engaged and energized throughout the rehearsal. Additionally, since we cannot see our instrument, analogies can help students produce the desired tone. Examples include imagining that you are singing colors (dark violet verses bright yellow), imagine that your sound is filling up a tree trunk instead of a glass of water, or imagine a unicorn and send your tone forward.

Finally, as you are modeling for your choir, leading them through the movement, or offering an analogy to help your singers attain a healthy tone, do your best to be present in the moment. When I'm teaching, it often feels like my brain is going 100 miles a minute, so don't forget to take a breath and listen.



Jennifer Sengin

For most students, choir directors are their only source for vocal instruction. Use the warm-up time to develop healthy vocal technique and apply these concepts to the repertoire. As far as warm-ups, there are several schools of thought. Some agree that warm-ups should be the same for each rehearsal, while others insist on changing warm-ups to encourage student engagement. I try to utilize similar warm-ups at the beginning of each rehearsal to address vowels and vocal technique, which is then followed with a variety of warm-ups that address ear-training and needs of the repertoire. I find that modifying the warm-ups slightly encourages student engagement.

To develop a choral sound concept, listen to recordings of the top choirs in the age range you are teaching. For example, if you teach elementary school, listen to recordings of some of the best children's choirs. Regardless of the age of the group, the fundamentals of singing remain the same. Be prepared to teach students to match pitch. As choral musicians, many of us have never experienced challenges in matching pitch. This may not be true in your teaching position. It is critical to develop strategies to teach pitch matching, and this is especially important

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with students whose voices have recently changed. Many students will be successful with a little extra attention to experiment with their voices. Take the time to meet with these students outside of the rehearsal to provide additional instruction regarding pitch-matching. To introduce the idea of extra help, I tell students who struggle with matching pitch that I want to boost their self-confidence in rehearsal. I explain that if we spend a few minutes working on some vocal exercises, they can become more secure in class. It is challenging for some students to take vocal risks in a class full of their peers. I find the most success when we meet for a few minutes outside of class.

Students need to experience the physical and aural sensation of matching pitch. As far as developing pitch-matching abilities, I start by asking the student to match a pitch in a comfortable area of their voice. I then find the note they are singing on the piano and ask the student to move up or down from there. Once the student can match the initial pitch on the piano, we continue moving from the original note. Throughout this process, I encourage the student to self-assess whether or not he or she is matching the note. I celebrate each step of this process to encourage continued progress. Another pitch-matching challenge occurs when students are asked to sing repertoire outside of their vocal range. It is critical to sing SATB repertoire in middle school, because some boys will not be able to meet the demands of a single baritone part. Regardless of the number of boys in the program, the students will have a better experience, and you will have a better result if you provide music they can sing.



David Burton

I have a few thoughts in regard to voice building. First, I believe that students need to understand the physiology of the voice. Don't just use abstract imagery, which is necessary. When you are teaching breathing, talk to them about how breathing works and what is being used to do it. If they understand how the body works to create beautiful singing, they will be better able to learn to control their instrument. Second, help students learn how it feels to sing correctly. If they learn what their individual bodies feel like when they sing the perfectly formed vowel and how

it feels to use different locations of resonance, they will be able to reproduce that physical sensation in the future.

Third, focus on the basics. It is impossible to over stress the importance of posture, proper use of air, consistent vowel shapes, and control of the resonating space. Also, be cautious that you don't push your singers to create a sound that is not natural according to their age. A junior high choir should not sound like a collegiate choir. Make sure that at whatever age and ability level, they sing with a relaxed and free tone. There is beauty to be found in the sound of the human voice at every age. Finally, make sure that the elements of voice building you use in your warm-up are reinforced and applied in the choral literature. It is curious to me how quickly the beautiful tone I help them find in the warm-ups is forgotten when they begin working on concert literature. Be patient and consistent in making sure that at all times singing is done with solid fundamental technique.



Seth Boyd

I was determined to create that beautiful bel canto children's choir sound in my groups but never seemed to find the time to work on it. Then, one day I was assigned by the director of music at my church to have my children's choir sing a unison "solo" line as part of a service. I really cared about how this particular piece sounded and discovered that it was possible and rewarding to spend just as much time teaching the choir how to build a beautiful unison tone as it was to teach them complex harmony. It was then that I realized my problem: I was a harmony junkie. I was out to prove that my groups could sing complex, challenging music at a high level, and I looked with scorn at anything that I thought was too easy as a waste of my time and demeaning to my students. I still believe that making a majority of a concert program that way is musically unsatisfying, but I have discovered there is a place for music that does not stretch your choir to its limits.

If you really want to develop your group's tone, pick at least one piece that is harmonically, melodically, and rhythmically simple but that you believe has artistic value. You won't need to spend nearly as much time teaching "the notes," but if you spend an equal amount of time

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on the “easy” piece as the challenging ones, you will have the opportunity to really develop their sound and will be pleased when that sound actually transfers to the hard music when you need it to.

It is also important to note that your students do not believe you when you tell them they are singing it with bad tone or that it sounds ugly. Inside their head, it is the richest tone they’ve ever heard because it’s not coming out of their resonating spaces. Also, sometimes they have a different aesthetic than you and do not hear that what works in one song does not work in another. Instead, play a recording of a choir that models the aesthetic you are trying to create and follow that up by recording your choir. They will cringe when they hear the recording of themselves, but if you ask them what they want to fix when you make the recording again in five minutes, they will tell you all the things you have been telling them to fix. Of course, they won’t acknowledge that you already told them all this, but they will hear what you’ve been hearing. Then, in the face of overwhelming evidence that they don’t sound as good as they thought, they will work ferociously to improve. Eventually they will start to trust you when you say that there is something wrong with their sound and try to fix it. It’s kind of awesome.



Brandon Williams

First and foremost, it is important to regularly teach basic vocal technique in the group setting. Teachers must have a working knowledge of the voice in its various stages. This means you can diagnose a problem and prescribe a variety of ways to address it. Teachers should also understand the dangers of mass diagnostic and prescriptive techniques, particularly when dealing with developing voices. Each student comes to the ensemble with an individual set of abilities and challenges, and each will have specific needs. Investment in personal study of the voice can help you become a more effective model and technician and aid in identifying if individual student interventions are necessary.

The vocal warm-up is the most opportune time to address vocal issues. Singing fast scales and arpeggios with no deliberate vocal coordination in mind is not the most effective way to teach vocal technique. I have discovered

it is best to craft warm-ups that work toward a certain vocal coordination based on something challenging in the music. The transition from technique to literature could be seamless and can help facilitate independent transfer of training. It is also helpful to designate some time to explore vocal sounds and the anatomy and physiology of the voice. Design exercises so students can work in pairs or small groups, affording you the opportunity to provide more individualized attention.

Concerning the ensemble, I try to avoid a prescribed ensemble sound that presumably represents any certain age. Such thinking can lead to an imposed sonic ideal, as opposed to working organically from the premise that every sung sound should be natural, free, and vibrant (as much as possible with developing voices).

In the wake of technical considerations, it is important to remember that each ensemble has different needs, and in some cases, the majority of any given rehearsal could be spent empowering singers to be comfortable and confident with what you are asking them to accomplish. This takes a level of trust and an environment where students are free to explore sounds and not feel ashamed. Sometimes the goal is simply to motivate a group, section, or singer to make enough energized sound so you can begin to apply something technical. Therefore, the degree to which we stress vocal technique or stress producing raw sound is in constant flux. Effective vocal music teachers recognize when to be a technician and when to be a cheerleader.

Whether operating in either role, teachers must be relentless in the pursuit of unity. New teachers tend to give up too quickly because they fear they are doing something wrong or their expectations are unattainable. Keep at it; repetition is necessary. Most students only rise to the level that you expect of them, so expect the best from your students.

QUESTION #10:

Resources for New Teachers

Where can I go for help?

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Jacob Truby

It is very easy to feel like you are on an island your first year of teaching. Everyone who is in their first year of teaching is working sixty hours a week just to keep a program afloat while learning so much every day; it makes sense that first-year teachers struggle with asking for help. The irony is that so many people in your school, your district, your state, and your country want you to be successful! Do not ever shy from asking questions on ChoralNet or Facebook pages, email old professors, or ask other music teachers in your conference or district.

One thing I highly recommend is talking to teachers outside of music. Perhaps your science department has a great way to deal with classroom management. Maybe your English department knows a great way to explore poetry. If music, in fact, allows students to identify patterns, to observe, to hypothesize, to analyze, and to be physical, then surely our other partners in education could benefit our musical goals as well! Additionally, the more you work with other teachers in your building, the stronger the community becomes. A stronger community will build in student identity and will immediately assist in establishing trust and safety in your classroom.



Darla Eshelman

First and foremost, talk with other music educators. E-mail them, call them on the phone, visit with them at a convention, and meet them for coffee or whatever your schedule allows. Whether they are in their second or thirtieth year of teaching, excellent choral educators love to share ideas and experiences with new teachers. Further, think back to your time as a choral student and utilize the knowledge of former teachers whom you hold in high regard. Perhaps there is a teacher/conductor who was the motivation for your decision to enter the field of choral music. These teachers have been or presently are in the “trenches” and truly want to be contacted and asked for assistance, suggestions, and sympathetic ears. Each conductor can offer a different perspective along with a wealth of important insights and strategies for working and interacting with your choral students. Along with contacting them and collecting ideas and advice, ask them to visit your school and clinic your choir. For many new teachers, watching a knowledgeable and successful choral teacher in action is worth more than a thousand words. Write down phrases, tips, and any methods they use to communicate with students and refine the choral sound.




David Burton

First, stay in contact with the professors and mentors that you had during your undergraduate time. They will always be willing to continue to offer suggestions and help. The next resource is active membership in ACDA and NAFME. The resources offered by these organizations at the national, state, and local levels are tremendous. Get involved in these professional organizations, and you will find amazing colleagues who will provide you with a limitless amount of knowledge. Reach out to your colleagues who teach in other schools in your district or in other nearby districts. If you are teaching in a rural school, don't succumb to the temptation of saying that there is no one close to reach out to. With the technological resources we have, there is a world of help only a keystroke away.



Philip Silvey

Workshops, conference interest sessions, and summer/evening graduate classes can be a source of motivation to explore important topics or aspects of your teaching. I took a week-long conducting class at a local university the summer after my first year of full-time teaching. This came at a good time since I had been using conducting regularly in my teaching and had a basic sense of my tendencies and abilities going into that week of instruction. Do not be afraid to consult your college professors and senior colleagues. On my request, my principal agreed to pay for a substitute to cover for me so I could spend a day observing two teachers in highly successful programs in a nearby city. Find creative ways to challenge your thinking and expand your repertoire of teaching tools. 

ADVICE FOR THE FIRST-YEAR CHORAL TEACHER

Compilation of Suggested Resources from Article Respondents

Websites

ACDA's mentorship program: <<http://mentoring.acda.org/>>

ACDA Repertoire and Standards: <<http://www.acda.org/page.asp?page=repertoire&rs=1>>

Cambiata Institute (repertoire lists for MS/JH choirs, articles about the changing voice, videos of voice testing to help you classify boys voices): <<https://music.unt.edu/cambiata/>>

ChoralNet: <<http://choralnet.org/>>

Missouri ACDA's online New Teacher Handbook Blog: <<http://moacda.org/student-handbook/>>

National Association for Music Education Career Services (includes online mentoring network for new teachers, job search help, and reading material): <<http://musiced.nafme.org/careers/career-center/resources/>>

Texas Prescribed Music List: <<http://www.utexas.edu/uil/pml/>>

Books

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Goetze, M., Broeker, A., & Boshkoff, R. (2009). *Educating Young Singers: A Choral Resource for Teacher-Conductors*. New Palestine, IN: Mj Publishing.

Kohn, A. (1996). *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Nesheim, P. & Noble, W. (1995). *Building Beautiful Voices*. Dayton, OH: Roger Dean Publishing Company.

O'Toole, P. (2003). *Shaping Sound Musicians: An Innovative Approach to Teaching Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc.

Phillips, K. H. (2004). *Directing the Choral Music Program*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

——— (2014). *Teaching Kids to Sing*, 2nd edition. New York, NY: Schirmer Books.