

Let All Children Sing!

Creating Community Connection Through Youth Choirs

Dr. Erin Bailey & Leslie Walker

Benefits of Group Singing

Physical

- ❖ Choir teaches lifelong beneficial posture and breathing techniques.
- ❖ Choir helps develop better habits of good enunciation.
- ❖ Singing can tone facial muscles, improve posture, open sinuses, release endorphins, boost the immune system

Intellectual

- ❖ Choir teaches the importance of careful preparation in reaching goals.
- ❖ In school, students in choir have been proven to have higher grades than their peers and are more likely to stay in school.
- ❖ Choir provides a healthy cultural and creatively artistic balance in these days of heavily data-based education.
- ❖ Choir can be a college “hook” in the application process, showing well-balanced experience and education.

Emotional

- ❖ Choir develops poise under pressure and a sense of self-efficacy.
- ❖ Choir teaches a sense of responsibility and of setting priorities.
- ❖ Choir reminds singers that there are no short-cuts to excellence.
- ❖ Choir is linked with improved mental health and well-being
- ❖ Choir can reduce anger and anxiety, increase self-esteem, and reduce stress

Social

- ❖ Choir is a fun and engaging way to serve the community.
- ❖ Choir is an easy way to make lots of new friends and feel connected as part of a group.
- ❖ Choir teaches the value of teamwork.
- ❖ Choir develops a sense of culture and sophistication.
- ❖ Choir conveys that leadership, demeanor, and good attitude make a significant contribution to the success of a group.
- ❖ Choir reminds us of the positive, exciting impact a dedicated group can make beyond that which is possible for an individual.

Musical

- ❖ Choir provides the foundation for a lifetime of enjoyment in music.
- ❖ Choir trains participants to be future supporters of the arts.
- ❖ Choir provides direct application for abstract musical concepts (form, articulation, notation, etc.)

Who is Participating?

As of 2019. . .

- ❖ 11 million children sing in a choral group
- ❖ 41,000 K-12 school choruses in the US
- ❖ 15% of all children in the US enjoy the opportunity to sing
- ❖ 54% of adult singers say their love of choir started in elementary school
- ❖ 76% had an experience with choral music by the end of high school

<https://chorusamerica.org/publications/research-reports/chorus-impact-study>

https://chorusamerica.org/sites/default/files/resources/ImpactStudy09_ExecSum.pdf

Your Philosophy and Objectives determine EVERYTHING!

“Singing is a basic means of human expression. Song permits people to experience life as others have found it and to share themselves with others in an expression that transcends the physical and psychological boundaries of life. . . A student who sings learns about life.” -Kenneth Phillips

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.” -Aristotle

“There is no growth in the comfort zone and no comfort in the growth zone!” –Steve Clark

“A ship in a harbor is safe, but that’s not what a ship is built for.” -Unknown

Getting Started: What are my options?

School General Music Extension

6th grade class, usually alongside an instrumental alternative

Rotations or elective class

Before/After School Chorus

4th-6th grade group, self-selected group of those interested

For Profit Community Children’s Choir

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/self-employed-individuals-tax-center>

- ❖ Self-employed individuals (which a For Profit children’s choir would fall under) have to file a return annually and pay estimated tax quarterly.
- ❖ Self-employed individuals pay a self-employment tax (SE Tax) *as well as* their income tax. SE tax is a Social Security and Medicare tax primarily for individuals who work for themselves.
- ❖ You have to file an income tax return if your net earnings from self-employment are greater than or equal to \$400.
- ❖ On the website above there are forms to fill out your quarterly payments and annual return.

- ❖ If you made or received a payment as a small business or self-employed (individual), you are most likely required to file an information return to the IRS.
- ❖ If you use part of your home for business, you may be able to deduct expenses for the business use of your home.

Non-Profit Community Children's Choir

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organization-types>

- ❖ Organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, educational, or other specified purposes and that meet certain other requirements are tax exempt.
- ❖ Other organizations that meet specified requirements may qualify for exemption under subsections other than 501(c)(3). These include social welfare organizations, civic leagues, social clubs, labor organizations and business leagues.
- ❖ Tax exempt organizations are still required to file annual returns. (Form 990). If an organization does not file your annual returns for three consecutive years, they will lose their tax exempt status.
- ❖ If a tax-exempt organization (EO) has employees, the EO is responsible for Federal Income Tax Withholding and Social Security and Medicare taxes.

Advocacy Resources

<https://acda.org/advocacy>

<https://chorusamerica.org/explore/resources>

<https://chorusamerica.org/resource/making-case-tool-comparative-advantages-choruses>

<https://chorusamerica.org/resource/making-case-tool-parents-advocacy-guide>

<https://chorusamerica.org/resource/making-case-tool-build-your-network-worksheet>

<https://chorusamerica.org/resource/making-case-tool-advocacy-powerpoint-presentation>

Outline of Mini-Rehearsals

Developing the Whole Child

Encourage healthy singing and discover the joy of musicking!

- ❖ Physical- kinesthetic connections and active music-making
- ❖ Intellectual- engaged listening and problem-solving skills
- ❖ Emotional- individual and musical expression
- ❖ Social- interact with others and build relationships
- ❖ Musical- of course! :-)

Developing the Singer

Vocal Warmup: (Dr. Clayne W. Robison, Professor Emeritus at BYU, "Beautiful Singing")

APPENDIX B

A SYSTEMATIC BODY/VOICE WARMUP

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE
<p>A —Rotate hips as to hold up a hula hoop —Slither the spine like a snake —Break dance</p> <p>SHORT CUT: Take a whole bodied LEAP as if into freezing cold water</p>	<p><i>Establish watery/fluid structural interrelationships in the body</i></p>
<p>B —Reach for apples Breath falls to the abdominal floor between each fragment of the warmup —Reach for tall, heavy suitcases Chest out over toes; top of neck back over seat, shoulders rolled back</p>	<p><i>Get body structures and breath foundation as far away from the larynx as possible</i></p>
<p>C —Slow "Halloween Lady" count to five "one <u> </u>" "two <u> </u>" etc.</p> <p>Low breath flow motivates all "siren-like" pitch changes</p> <p>—Stage speaking first; then "stage speaking" on 5 note scale: "one, two, three, four, five, five, five, five, four, three, two, wa, ha. . .ha. . .ha. . .han" — (moving successively UP the scale)</p> <p>As pitches rise: REDUCE FORCE as diaphragm continues to fall in the body, but ADD FLOW "spitting" freely through the lips and tongue</p>	<p><i>SPEECH TO SONG: (Shouted speech moving to breath-motivated song)</i></p>
<p>Get the kids quiet quickly in staccato: D —shh shh shh shh shhee he he he he — (5. 5. 5. 5. 5. 4. 3. 2. 1 → (moving successively DOWN the scale)</p> <p>Keep lower pitches "lifting" into your face and spreading your molars</p>	<p><i>Balance FORCE and FLOW of the breath</i></p>
<p>(Alternating staccato/legato rhythmic dancing): E —shay. o—ay—o—ay. o—ay—o—ay. hay. hay! (5. 3—4—2—3. 1—2—7—1. 5. 1.)</p> <p>Dance and interact with other singers in class</p>	<p>—Balance bright and dark vowels —Review body flexibility —Lose yourself in others</p>
<p>Alternating staccato/coloratura Moving UP the scale on various vowels</p> <p>F</p> <p>—she. e,e,e. e,e,e. e,e,e. e,e,e,e,e,e,e,e,e. e,e,e. e,e,e. e . e . e . e (1 . .123. .345. .567. . . 71234321765. . . 543..321..3. .5. .3..1)</p>	<p><i>Establish flexibility with fully breath-motivated pitch changes</i></p>

Intonation Traps (Pitch Traps) (Dr. Cherilyn Worthen, UVU & Dr. Paul Broomhead, BYU)

Mental:

- ❖ Insecurity of the interval to be sung
- ❖ Wrong concept of the vowel to be sung
- ❖ A lack of phrase sense
- ❖ Inattention to downward moving passages
- ❖ Inattention to repeated notes
- ❖ Inability to hear each other
- ❖ Disinterest/ Boredom
- ❖ Failure to listen
- ❖ Inattention to accidentals

Physical:

- ❖ Poor vocal production
- ❖ Lack of adequate breath energy/flow
- ❖ Tension/pushing
- ❖ Poor alignment
- ❖ Incorrect vowel formation (too bright, too covered, ill-placed)
- ❖ Inability to listen due to standing position, room configuration, speaker/monitor feedback
- ❖ External circumstances such as room temperature, weather

Specific Musical Pitch Traps - Melodic:

- ❖ Interval accuracy (analogy: climbing stairs in the dark: big steps up, smaller steps down)
- ❖ Descending lines
- ❖ Repeated notes
- ❖ Accidentals/ chromatic passages
- ❖ Large leaps
- ❖ Half-step, whole-step relationships
- ❖ Problem pitches on problem vowels—double whammy!
- ❖ Neighbor tones (ex: D-C#--the last repeated D will tend to be low)

Specific Musical Pitch Traps - Harmonic:

- ❖ Thirds of chords placed higher
- ❖ Be certain to anchor the root of the chord
- ❖ Watch for part doublings (especially Soprano/Bass) and octaves
- ❖ Fast changes between chord qualities (Maj-min-aug-dim)
- ❖ Inner voices (especially altos and tenors) must watch part writing and sing accurately

Developing Self-Aware & Independent Choral Singers

What habits do I want my students to be able to do without a reminder?

1. Always Clearly Project- send the sound to the back of the room without tension
2. Open Everything- body alignment, chest, throat, eyes, mouth, heart 😊
3. Tall and Non-transforming Vowels- target vowels in diphthongs
4. Energized Consonants- plosives vs. voiced
5. Expressive Musical Choices- crescendo on long notes and to important words, strong-weak word stress
6. Expressive Body and Facial Involvement
7. Intelligent Approaches to Intonation and Pitch Traps- ascending and descending lines, repeated notes, large leaps, 3rd of the chord, dissonance and resolution
8. Balance and Blend- listening skills, knowledge about what part should be most prominent, group dynamics vs individual section dynamics
9. Mixed Voice- elimination of vocal breaks
10. Following a Conductor
11. Marking your Score
12. Rehearsal Etiquette and Concert Etiquette
13. Music Theory and Music History
14. Humility and Growth Mindset
15. Many others!

Other Rehearsal/Warm-up Tips

A Voice Building Sequence (adapted from a Voice Building Sequence used by Dr. Emily Mercado)

Part One: Physical Preparation

- ❖ Focus (relax, energize, focus of attention)
- ❖ Alignment (not “posture”)
- ❖ Breathing/Spaciousness (inhalation and exhalation, stretching)

Part Two: Vocal Preparation

- ❖ Initial Phonation (not note-specific, sirens/sighs)
- ❖ Resonance (not always “placement”)
- ❖ Falsetto Exploration/Register Consistency
- ❖ Range Extension (both high and low)
- ❖ Vowel Purity/Consistency (intonation)
- ❖ Musical Expression (dynamics, expressive markings, diction articulation)

Part Three: Skill Building/Application

- ❖ Musicianship (part-singing, aural skills, intonation exercises)
- ❖ Repertoire Specific Exercises
- ❖ Solfege (no notation) & Sight-singing (notation)

Related Tips

- ❖ In between the categories above, a yawn/sigh may be inserted to alleviate tension.
- ❖ Start high to low; if chest voice is an issue, avoid ascending patterns. Encourage all singers to sing in their entire range.
- ❖ Use a variety of keys and modalities, don't always move by half step
- ❖ Limit piano use unless accompaniment can be valuable as a support to beginning singers or very large ensembles.
- ❖ The "warm-up" can and should be used throughout the rehearsal- it is technique-building
- ❖ Vocally model often and with great specificity.
- ❖ Conduct during warm-ups and encourage kinesthetic movement from singers.
- ❖ An /u/ vowel will encourage head voice and /a/ vowel, chest voice. An /i/ vowel will encourage resonance (if efficiently produced).
- ❖ Try starting the year with short solo excerpts/passages and treating it as a group voice class rather than starting choral literature on day one
- ❖ Do not voice your younger singers into soprano and alto on day one. Instead listen to them individually to hear their strengths and weaknesses. Create even sections from this information and call them Part A and B. Then switch parts on every piece. Part A will be soprano on the first song and alto on the second, etc.
- ❖ Create many opportunities to get peer and individual feedback on their vocal development
- ❖ Remember that one of your most important jobs is to help students learn and develop their individual instrument- the voice.

Creating Community Connection

Building Community WITHIN the Choir

- ❖ Retreat/Kick-off with Team-Building Activities & Games
- ❖ Getting-to-Know-You Games
- ❖ Yearly Theme or Choir Motto
- ❖ Rehearsal Devotional or Quote of the Day
- ❖ Group Goals & Celebrations
- ❖ Buddy System
- ❖ Comfort Zone Expansion
- ❖ Power-Sharing & Choice

Creating Community Connections

- ❖ *Collaborative Concerts with local Universities or other Community Music Organizations*
- ❖ *Adult Community Choirs:* Each choir does part of the concert, and then sings a piece together at the end.
- ❖ *University and Professional Choirs:* The children/youth sing in an oratorio or opera with children's parts, such as Carmina Burana, La Boheme, Mahler 8th, etc.

- ❖ *Children's Choir Festivals*: In many states, organizations such as ACDA, or university based children's choirs have organized children's choir festivals with highly regarded conductors. For instance, In the past few years, festivals in Utah have been conducted by Anton Armstrong, Rollo Dillworth, Henry Leck, Rene Clausen, and Bob Chilcott. Children's choirs from all over the state participate by performing some of their own pieces, as well as the combined pieces rehearsed with the festival conductor.
- ❖ *Commission a Piece*: Composers love it when they are asked to write a piece specifically for your choir. You may have a certain poem that you would like to have set to music, or you can leave it up to the composer.
- ❖ *Choir Sponsors and Donors*: Small businesses love to support the arts (especially if you have 501(c)(3) status! Tax-deductible donations!)

Service Learning Opportunities

- ❖ Caroling at Hospitals & Care Centers
- ❖ Benefit Concerts
- ❖ Virtual Choir Videos
- ❖ Teacher Appreciation Day
- ❖ National Anthem for Races or Games
- ❖ Collaborative Arts Events, Fundraisers, or Auctions
- ❖ Adopt-a-Singer Rehearsal or Performance with Grandparents or Elderly Friend
- ❖ Veterans Day Recognition and Gratitude Concert

How Do I Choose Literature?

TEXT - good poetry, prose, language

SINGABILITY - range, tessitura, leaps and skips, chromatic tones, vowels, etc.

FORM - clear and repetitive will be more accessible

PART-WRITING - mostly stepwise with chordal skips and leaps

ACCOMPANIMENT - a capella, good piano parts

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS - what can be taught from this work?

Repertoire Resources

Santa Barbara Music Publishing- <https://sbmp.com/>

earthsongs- <https://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/>

Colla Voce- <https://www.collavoce.com/>

Henry Leck Choral Series (through Colla Voce)

Doreen Rao Choral Music Experience Series (through Boosey & Hawkes)

<https://acda.org/repertoire/children-and-community-youth-choirs-repertoire>

Rote Songs used for young singers: A Ram Sam Sam- Moroccan Folk Song, Ah Poor Bird- English folk song

****We thank Santa Barbara Music Publishing** for donating There Has To Be A Song, by Andrea Ramsey for use in this session.

****We thank earthsongs** for donating three pieces for our session:
Járbă, Măré Járbă, a Gypsy folk song, arr. by Glen Adkins
S'Vivon, a traditional Jewish folk song, arr. by Valerie Shields
Mayim, Mayim, Hebrew folk song, by E. Amiran, arr. by Valerie Shields

Studies and Articles on the Benefits of Music/Singing

http://www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2013/07/singing_in_a_choir_research_shows_it_increases_happiness.html

<http://www.cmuse.org/psychological-and-physical-benefits-of-choral-singing/>

<https://musiceducationworks.wordpress.com/2016/06/19/a-childs-brain-develops-faster-with-exposure-to-music/>

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1878929315301122>

<http://www.scienceworldreport.com/articles/42317/20160615/childrens-brain-develop-faster-exposure-music-instruction.htm>

<https://dornsife.usc.edu/bci/brain-and-music/>

<http://www.scpr.org/news/2016/06/15/61697/usc-study-continues-to-provide-data-on-music-and-b/>

<http://www.news-medical.net/news/20160616/Music-instruction-improves-cognitive-socio-emotional-development-in-young-children.aspx>

<http://slippedisc.com/2016/06/la-phil-research-learning-music-speeds-up-kids-brains/>

Other Resources

Bolkovac, E. & Johnson, J. (1996). 150 Rounds for Singing and Teaching. Boosey & Hawkes.

Conable, B. (2000). The Structures and Movement of Breathing: A Primer for Choirs and Choruses. GIA Publications.

Haasemann, F. & Jordan, J. M. (1991). Group Vocal Technique. Chapel Hill, Hinshaw. Includes book, video, warm-up cards.

Hemsley, T. (1998). Singing & Imagination: A Human Approach to a Great Musical Tradition. Oxford University Press.

Horstmann, S. (2009). Evoking Sound: The Choral Warm-Up. GIA Publications. Includes exercises, accompaniments, and a DVD.

Jordan, J. (2005). Evoking Sound: The Choral Warm-Up. GIA Publications.

Jordan, J. (2009). Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting (2nd Edition). GIA Publications.

McCoy, S. (2004). Your Voice: An Inside View. Inside View Press.

Miller, R. (1986). The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique. Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning.

Miler, C. C. & McKenna, A. K. (2013). Quick Starts for Young Choirs: Activities and Ideas to Focus Young Singers. Hal Leonard

Leck, H. & Jordan, F. (2009). Creating Artistry Through Choral Excellence. Hal Leonard.

Phillips, K. H. (1992). Teaching Kids to Sing. Schirmer.

Turman, K. (2021). Repertoire & Resources: Children's Choral Repertoire with Highlighted Pedagogical Elements. Choral Journal, 61(11), 57–67.

<https://acda.org/resources-for-k-12-choral-educators> (helpful resources on vocal health and technique, performance anxiety, and music theory that could be adapted to a children's choir setting)

<https://nafme.org/singing-in-early-childhood/>

<https://blog.chorusconnection.com/what-should-a-chorister-handbook-for-childrens-choirs-entail>