

NEW BEGINNINGS

A Handbook for First-Year Choral Directors in Florida

Offered by the Florida Vocal Association

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	PAGE
Introduction	3
Professional Associations	3
General	
National	
State	
Calendar of Activities and Organization.....	3-5
Financing Your Program.....	5-6
Fundraising.....	6-7
Florida School Music Association	8
Recruitment.....	8
Ethical Conduct.....	8
Special Education.....	8
Choral / General Music Program (Secondary).....	9-10
Organization of Materials	
Finance Records	
Choral Music Activities	
Additional Recommended Readings / Lists.....	11
Conclusion	11

This handbook is based on a document prepared for use in Broward County by Elaine McNamara, and edited for state use by Elsie Durrence Augenblick

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of choral music in Florida. The information contained in this handbook was compiled to help guide you through your first year as a choral director. As you “sift” through the next few pages, remember that practices will vary throughout the state. The information provided was chosen as a norm. Topics regarding the various forms, funds available, fundraising, and resources to help answer questions are included. Remember, this is simply a guide—your administrative staff, music supervisor, FVA district chairman, as well as other choral directors in your county can help to answer questions you may have.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are many music organizations with which you may be involved. You are encouraged to support your professional associations. They sponsor many worthwhile activities and publications. The Florida Music Director, an FMEA publication, lists the officers of many of these organizations.

GENERAL (All levels and disciplines)

- MENC – The National Association for Music Education
- FMEA – Florida Music Educators Association (state affiliate of MENC)

NATIONAL (Various disciplines)

- ABA – American Bandmasters Association
- ACDA – American Choral Directors Association
- ASBDA – American School Band Directors Association
- ASTA – American String Teachers Association
- NAJE – National Association of Jazz Educators
- NSOA – National String Orchestra Association

STATE (Various disciplines)

- FBA – Florida Bandmasters Association (K-12)
- FEMEA – Florida Elementary Music Educators Association (Elementary grades)
- FOA – Florida Orchestra Association (K-12)
- FVA – Florida Vocal Association (Secondary grades)

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATION

As a new director, you need to learn to submit activity dates to your principal as quickly as possible. Many schools use a “first-come-first-served” approach for calendar dates, based on facilities needed for these activities. Some off-campus activities may not create this problem; however, most schools require administrative approval. For some activities you may require a substitute. Be sure to let your administration know well in advance so proper arrangements can be made. You will also have to complete a variety of forms. Some forms, along with a brief description of each, are listed on the following page:

REQUEST FOR CALENDAR DATE FORM: Lists date requested, facilities needed, if any, person(s) in charge of activity, if a substitute is needed, if overnight lodging will be necessary, etc.

IN-COUNTY DUTY LEAVE: Should be filed for ANY ACTIVITY WITHIN THE COUNTY. Lists date of activity, if a substitute is needed, a brief description of the activity, request for reimbursement, etc.

OUT-OF-COUNTY DUTY LEAVE: Should be filed for ANY ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THE COUNTY and turned in a MINIMUM OF 2 WEEKS prior to the activity. Lists the same information as the IN-County Duty Form.

BUS FORM: Required by some counties for use of school buses for transporting students to an activity. Other counties simply ask you to notify the secretary in charge of transportation and he/she takes care of the paperwork. If you use a private bus company rather than school buses, call and reserve the date needed as soon as possible, then call and RE-CONFIRM your reservation just prior to the date reserved. Private bus use also requires administrative approval.

FIELD TRIP PERMISSION: Be sure students have completed and signed and that parents have signed. If students miss all or part of a school day, they may also have to complete a PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCE FORM.

PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCE FORM: Secured by the teacher from the administration. Lists date(s) and reason for absence, requires student and parent signatures, and administrative approval. The student then takes this form to his/her teachers. The teachers sign the form acknowledging the upcoming absence. Students should make arrangements with the teachers AT THIS TIME for any make-up work. The form is then returned to you and you turn them into the office.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE FORM: Usually required for overnight trips. This form gives you the right to search luggage and rooms, if necessary. Parent signature is required.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT FORM: Required for all students to participate in ANY after-school activities. This form should be notarized and should include a photocopy of a medical insurance card. You will need to be sure to have these forms with you so if an emergency arises, you will be able to have a student treated.

FSMA HOTEL / MOTEL REPORT FORM: Required for out-of-town trips with students. The report is in triplicate. You give the report to the hotel upon registering. They complete the form and send copies to FSMA and to your administration. This form is available through your administration.

If you have any questions concerning these forms, please ask your administration.

In addition to dates and activities your plan for your students, some dates are set by your county, or by district and state organizations. You need to make it a point to attend meetings where these dates are discussed or get these dates AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! Below is a list of activities that you should get on your calendar as well as your school's activity calendar. Dates throughout the state will vary:

FVA DATES (Available from your District Chairman or the FVA Handbook)

1. Fall District Meeting (Aug/Sep)
2. **Musicianship Test and Sightreading Test for All-State (Oct/Nov)
3. Octet Auditions for All-State (Nov)
4. All-State Clinic/FMEA State Convention (Jan)
5. **District Solo/Ensemble Festival (Feb/Mar/Apr)
6. **District Choral Festival (Feb/Mar/Apr)
7. **State Festival (Sr. High only)
 - South State (April/May)
 - North State (April/May)
8. Spring District Meeting (May)
9. FVA Pre-School Convention (July)

**These activities require application forms located in the FVA Handbook. Please be sure to complete forms carefully and mail in by deadline! Also, due to scheduling complications, some dates listed in the FVA Handbook may be changed after the Handbook has been published. Be sure to check with your District Chairman for ALL FVA DATES for your District.

COUNTY DATES (Dates available through your County Music Supervisor)

1. In-Service Meetings
2. Teacher Contact Meetings
3. All-County Chorus Auditions
4. All-County Chorus Rehearsals
5. All-County Chorus Performance

Your county may have more activities than listed above. Be sure to check with your supervisor for additional information.

FINANCING YOUR PROGRAM

There are numerous ways to help you fund your choral program. These can be divided into 2 main categories: In-School Accounts and Out-Of-School Accounts. An explanation of these accounts is discussed below and on the next page.

IN-SCHOOL ACCOUNTS

TEXT BOOK ACCOUNT: Requests through your administration. A list of all "State-Adopted" textbooks is available. It is best to "preview" anything on this list that you may be interested in to be certain it is what you need for your classes.

INTERNAL ACCOUNTS: The amount of monies given you in this account is determined by your administrative staff. You may have your own internal account, or you may have an internal account that is to be shared by the Music Department. This account may be used to purchase general supplies (paper, pencils, etc.) and to purchase music. Approval is needed to spend monies from this account.

“FLEX FUNDS”: Request from your administration. Music, theory texts, etc., not found on the “State-Adopted” textbook list may be purchased with these funds. Administrative approval is necessary.

LIBRARY FUNDS: Requests through either your librarian or administration. Audio-visual aides needed for your program may be purchased through the library. If materials are purchased through this fund, they are the property of the library and you must check them out for classroom use.

IN-SERVICE FUNDS: Request through your administration. Usually available for educational experiences, conventions, etc.

EMERGENCY FUNDS: Usually handled by the Principal. If an emergency arises, check on availability.

When using in-school funds or accounts, the proper forms must be completed and signed. It is YOUR responsibility to complete these forms and gain approval BEFORE you order any materials. Make friends with your bookkeeper!!

OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACCOUNTS

Many choral programs throughout the state have booster or parent organizations. These groups often help raise monies for your program. They generally have a separate account outside the school. Any money raised through these organizations is deposited in this account. It is recommended that you have 3 parents’ signatures on this account (2 needed to sign checks) and that your name NOT appear on this account. It is also advisable that your organization develop a bookkeeping system to keep up with the expenses, and that you have the books audited yearly for protection. Some counties require that a copy of this account and a copy of the audit be kept on file at the county school board. It is also important to remember that any items purchased by this organization for school use are donated to the school and become SCHOOL PROPERTY. Be sure to add these items to any inventory list your administration requires.

FUND-RAISING

Unfortunately, schools do not provide enough monies to operate your program. Fund-raising can be done as an In-School or Out-Of-School project. Following are some comments on the types of fund-raising you might do.

IN-SCHOOL FUNDRAISING PROJECTS

Fundraising done through the school must be approved by the administration. Monies collected are deposited into your internal account and recorded by the bookkeeper. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

1. Choosing the project (salesman, brochures, etc.)
2. Completing forms for administrative approval (include a copy of the brochure with the form)
3. Securing the date(s) the fundraiser will take place.
4. Ordering merchandise (use purchase order form from the bookkeeper or administrative staff)
5. Storage of merchandise in a secure place
6. Checking the order when it arrives to be sure all merchandise has arrived and is in good order
7. Distributing merchandise to students (ACCURATE RECORDS AND PARENT HELP ARE ADVISABLE. NOT ALL STUDENTS ARE TRUSTWORTHY.)
8. Collecting monies and/or returned merchandise (USE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ENVELOPES, KEEP A RUNNING LOG ON EACH STUDENT. **PARENTAL HELP IS STRONGLY ADVISED.** BE SURE ALL RECORDS ON STUDENT ACCOUNTS ARE ACCURATE!)
9. Report profit/loss (forms available from administration or school bookkeeper)
10. Return of unsold merchandise (NOT ALL COMPANIES TAKE RETURNS—**FIND OUT BEFORE YOUR FUNDRAISER BEGINS!**)

OUT-OF SCHOOL FUNDRAISING PROJECTS

As mentioned previously, you may have a booster/parent organization. If you have a fundraiser through this organization, monies are usually deposited in an account they have outside the school. No transactions go through your school bookkeeper. Most principals **STILL REQUIRE ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL OF OUTSIDE PROJECTS.** Parent organizations often plan and implement all of the duties mentioned in the IN-School Fundraising Projects section of this manual. Procedures are carried out by the officers and parents in the organization. You are still involved in some and perhaps all of the procedures. **BE SURE TO KEEP ACCURATE RECORDS THAT CAN BE TURNED INTO YOUR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF!**

****There are many types of fundraisers that do not involve a product or merchandise (i.e. car washes, sing-ins, etc.). These can be In-School or Out-Of-School projects. Again, Administrative approval is needed.**

PERSONAL REIMBURSEMENT

Many times as directors, we are tempted to pay for items or expenses out-of-pocket, assuming that we will be reimbursed. **PLAN AHEAD!!** Unless you use purchase orders

and/or arrange IN ADVANCE with your administration or parent organization, you may not be reimbursed. Work closely with your administration, school bookkeeper, and/or parent organization to establish a policy or you may find yourself substantially subsidizing your department.

FLORIDA SCHOOL MUSIC ASSOCIATION

The Florida School Music Association (FSMA) is the governing body for adjudicated events in music. Most schools are members of this organization and must abide by their rules and regulations concerning time spent away from school, scheduling, entry fees, late fees, eligibility, etc. Your school MUST be a member by September 15.

A handbook, rules, pamphlets and calendars are sent to each principal who apportions them to sponsors of the activities involved. High school music directors as well as middle school directors are advised to obtain this information for music festivals.

RECRUITMENT

One of your biggest efforts should be recruiting new students into your program. You are encouraged to maintain a relationship with your feeder and/or target schools. COMMUNICATE! Performances by your students, visits, teacher consultation, exchanges, auditions, involvement of your feeder in a concert, etc. are just a few ways to keep in touch. Recruitment within your own school should be a constant consideration. The size and quality of your program is limited only by your own artistic ability and development of support from administration, parents, students and community.

ETHICAL CONDUCT

Teachers in the music profession are often in the public eye. Therefore, they should conduct themselves in a professional, ethical manner at all times. It is unethical for teachers to make statements to pupils, parents, or other classroom teachers which will prove detrimental to the reputation of another teacher. Cooperation among members of the music department is essential to an effective school program. Regarding the music department as a SINGLE FUNCTIONING UNIT in which each member's decision-making process includes the consideration of the effect on other members of the department is most desirable as well as professional.

Conduct and demeanor of the music teacher at concerts, field trips, and overnight tours or conventions should be beyond reproach. Your first concern should be for the educational benefits and safety of the students and the model you provide, NOT personal pleasure.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Public law 94-142 calls for educating handicapped students in the least restrictive environment. This has raised problems in some schools in regard to music education. A list of helpful resources is available from your supervisor.

CHORAL/GENERAL MUSIC PROGRAM (SECONDARY)

You cannot be told how to become a successful choral director or general music teacher. Listed below are many of the things you must consider as you strive toward that goal. The accomplishment of any one or all of them will not guarantee success—but it will help.

ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS

LIBRARY: Organization and inventory are up to you. You may wish to use a ready-made system available on-line or through music companies, or you may devise (inherit) your own. It is essential to know what you have and have a check-out system so you know where all your materials are. Train dependable students to help in your music library.

TEXTBOOKS: You are generally responsible to store and inventory textbooks in your area. Be sure to use a check-out system when loaning these materials out. Your school probably has a system if the textbook(s) were purchased through the Textbook Fund or Flex Fund.

UNIFORMS: If school-owned, you are responsible for the storage, inventory, and maintenance. Use a check-out system and a cleaning schedule. Rental procedures vary from school to school. If school-owned, rental monies should be deposited into an internal account. Cleaning may be handled through internal accounts, parent organizations, or individual students.

INSTRUMENTS: You are responsible for storage, inventory, maintenance and repair. If instruments are rented to students in a general music program, rental contracts and repair records must be maintained. You may have a county fund available for guitar strings and accessories, piano tuning, etc. Check with your county music supervisor. Funds for repair may also be available through a school repair budget. Check with your administrative staff. Any rental fees for instruments may also be used for repair and/or replacement.

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT: Items such as choral risers, speakers, or other equipment are your responsibility to store and inventory. Once a year or more, your department chairman or administrative staff will ask you to inventory all furniture/equipment in your area. Forms are provided by the person requesting the inventory.

There is little standardizing in inventory procedure. If you organize well, you are better able to handle inventory requests as they are made. **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU KEEP A COPY OF ALL INVENTORY LISTS TURNED IN TO ANY AREA.** Remember: The better organized you are, the easier the task of upkeep and inventory. Also, the better your materials and equipment are handled, the longer they will last!

FINANCE RECORDS

BUDGETS: Not all administrations require budgets from choral directors or general music instructors. The fact is that the more organized your thinking in terms of what you need and where your needs are, the better chance you will have convincing any administrator of these needs, and the better you will use funds allocated. It is also good to plan well in advance of your need(s). Some administrators will want the next year's budget request before March or April of the current year.

ACCOUNTING: The school bookkeeper maintains an account record of expenditures and receipts from your internal account. The bookkeeper also maintains a record of expenditures through the county budget. If you do not maintain your own file showing a record of these accounts, you must always consult the bookkeeper for information. Keep a simple record of receipts and expenditures to save time and give you materials from which to plan future budgets. Parent organizations keep their own account records; however, you need to stay in tune with where the funds are going. Ask for periodic updates from your organization.

CHORAL MUSIC ACTIVITIES

In August and September of each year, important meetings are held which orient you to county and district choral activities. The county choral meeting will be announced by the county music supervisor or the chairman of the county choral directors. The district meeting for Florida Vocal Association is announced to members by the district chairman. If you do not know who your chairman is or you are not certain of these dates, please contact another choral director in your county. FVA members will receive a State Handbook, listing all FVA dates. Membership in this organization is strongly encouraged.

Below is a list of choral activities in which you may participate. All are worthwhile. For more information, contact your FVA District Chairman or County Music Supervisor.

- All-State Chorus
- All-County Festival
- ACDA Workshop
- FVA District Festivals
- FVA State Festival
- FVA Pre-School Convention

- University of Miami Honor Choir
- Stetson University Honor Choir
- Masterworks Chorale Festival of Voices (Tampa)

****Check in your area for other colleges or universities that may offer special functions for you or your students.**

In addition to the above list, you may want to submit your group for consideration for performance at state, regional, or national conventions, at the state capitol or at Disney World. Taped auditions are submitted to appropriate officers or sponsoring organizations. Information can be found in various professional journals or by consulting the president of the sponsoring organization.

Another worthwhile activity may be local or out-of-town guest choruses. Many high school and college choruses tour Florida and will schedule performances or workshops at your school. Many times there is little or no cost involved to you. You may also want to arrange “exchange” programs with local groups. Be sure that you obtain administrative approval.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING/LISTS

There is no possible way to cover all topics and/or ideas to help you in your first year of teaching in Florida. We would like to recommend again that you join several professional organizations. These organizations usually have professional magazines which include many valuable articles. These magazines include:

CHORAL JOURNAL (published by ACDA)
FLORIDA MUSIC DIRECTOR (published by FMEA)
MUSIC EDUCATORS JOURNAL (published by MENC)
TEACHING MUSIC (published by MENC)

ACDA has also published a text for new choral directors which gives many outstanding musical ideas, and Music lists that would be a valuable resource for new directors.

GUIDE FOR THE BEGINNING CHORAL DIRECTOR
AN ANNOTATED INVENTORY OF DISTINCTIVE CHORAL LITERATURE
FOR PERFORMANCE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL, Monograph
Nos. 2 & 11

Again, on behalf of FVA I wish you the very best in your first year of choral conducting in Florida. If you have any suggestions to expand this document, or have any questions, please feel free to contact:

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