

WHAT TEACHING BOYS HAS TAUGHT ME!

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I. Boys and singing!

- A. Most boys enjoy singing, especially with other boys!
- B. Most boys - at some point - become self-conscious about singing with girls.
- C. Most boys hear you, even if they aren't listening (or don't look like they're listening).
- D. Generally, boys learn **LOUDER** than girls.
- E. Most boys think specifically when asked. (When they are NOT asked to think specifically, they are usually thinking about girls or sports)
- F. Boys do NOT like to look stupid in front of their friends!
- G. Boys learn best when moving, even just a little.
- H. Boys (children, really) learn **WORST** when in straight lines!

II. Boys like to learn about what they like

- A. They like songs about manly things, i.e. girls, sports, honor, play.
- B. They like funny songs, but not dumb songs.
- C. They like structure! There's safety there...
- D. They DON'T like free time... that's usually when they get in trouble!
- E. They like games and competition... points, candy, blue cards.
- F. They like stories!... funny and important.

III. Warming up boys' voices

- A. Always start in the 'head voice'... even with changed and changing voices. I avoid the term "falsetto"... and always work downward.
- B. Boys often need time and experimentation to "find their voice." (birth - 8yrs - adolescence - adult)
- C. Boys respond well to **DIATONIC** singing... they need to hear this from you because they're hearing it less and less in their music!!
- D. Boys need both consistency and diversity.
- E. Boys need good models... in **EVERYTHING**... especially vocally. Even good recordings would help...
- F. Boys like to 'break up' the rehearsal with some "musical physicals"

IV. Classifying Boys Voices

- A. Try to listen to every boy individually... but semi-privately
Some people use charts / index cards / self-designed forms
- B. Musical TAG on their favorite note
- C. Visual aid: have a staff or keyboard and solfege degrees
- D. Find and let them SEE you WRITE their lowest and highest notes
- E. Tell them what they can do... and what you need them to be able to do and the time frame... it's good to have a goal!

...see attached excerpt from "Working with the Adolescent Male Voice" by J. Cooksey

"It is certain that boys have keen enthusiasm for the things that they really care for - now can we get behind this and see what makes for their enthusiasm? Is it not the fact that a boy knows that he can do a certain thing *well*, and that he is doing it "off his own bat"? What lad can forget the 'joy' of a well-placed hit, or a difficult catch well-held? Yet, if his coach were helping him to hold the bat, or if someone were holding a sheet under the catch, he would probably loathe the whole thing! To have enthusiasm, a boy must feel that it is his own work, that he alone is doing a thing - pulling his weight. Is not this altogether true (albeit fraught with danger)? Yet, when you come to singing, how many boys really feel that the success of the choir as a whole rests partly on him as an individual - that what he is doing when he is singing is all done with knowledge and purpose - that he is not merely making a noise as a parrot might, but that he knows what he wants to do and how to do it? If a boy is simply groping in the dark, being, as it were, always led by the hand like someone blind - and shall we be far wrong in saying that many singers are quite blind as to the structure and make of the music which they try to sing? - can we hope or expect to find this vital enthusiasm which will overcome staleness and, it may be, an attitude of boredom? This necessity of knowing how to tackle a job as being one of the chief constituents of enthusiasm leads inevitably to the fact that the **TEACHER MUST** know his subject, not just academically but personally and physically and intelligently! Singing is essentially a practical thing and the teaching of singing must be, above all things, practical!"

- "The Training of Boys' Voices" by Walter S. Vale