Know Your Children

- Stay current. Read, listen, watch resources to help you learn.
- Observe others who have experience with children. Learn from them.
- Take note of children around you, their habits, their likes and dislikes.
- Evaluate and choose the best and most appropriate experiences for your children.
- Pray for God’s guidance as you prepare to minister to children.

Plan and Organize

- Plan early-arriver and activity groups.
- Include spiritual nurture, worship, vocal warm-ups, singing skills, familiar material, performance skills, body energizers, new materials, musicianships skills, and fun in the choral rehearsal.

Listening Strategies for Teaching Songs

- Listen for specific textual content.
- Listen for specific rhythmic characteristics or patterns.
- Listen for specific melodic characteristics or patterns.
- Listen for the identical, similar and different phrases.
- Identify the word on which the melody stops.
- Listen as melody is sung or played and lip sync” words (magic lips).

Singing and Speaking Strategies for Teaching Songs

- Echo speak phrases of text.
- Echo sing melody on neutral syllables (loo, doot, bah).
- Echo sing melodic syllables (solfege).
- Echo sing phrases of text.
- Sing or speak in question and answer style, or isolated patterns or phrases.
Moving Strategies for Teaching Songs
- Pat, clap, or step the beat.
- Conduct the meter.
- Sing solfège using the body scale or hand signs.
- Sing and draw phrases in the air, or with scarves.
- Create motions to illustrate text, phrases, or melodic direction.

Reading Strategies for Teaching Songs
- Read and speak rhythm syllables.
- Play “Which phrase did you hear” game while looking at notation.
- Read silently, developing inner hearing.

Evaluating Your Rehearsal and Sharpening Your Teaching Skills
- Did you speak clearly?
- Did the choir sing unaccompanied sometimes?
- Did you call each child by name?
- Did you communicate encouragement through smiles and eye contact?
- Did you use a variety of accompaniments for the choir?
- Did you acknowledge appropriate behavior more than negative behavior?
- Did you vary the inflection and tempo of your voice?
- Did your body language communicate the mood and style of the music?
- Did you know the music well before presenting it to the children?
- Did you move smoothly through transitions from song to song?
- Did you hear each child sing alone?
- Were your comments mostly positive?
And the Director Said...

- Chin down, chest up.
- Be a vocal athlete.
- Fall up.
- Don’t let the back of the chair hold you up.
- Reach for the stars.
- Don’t let your body sag!
- Reach for the stars
- Breathe through your feet.
- Feel your body expand around the middle.
- Sing with a yawny feeling, not a swallowing feeling.
- Take a silent breath.
- Dive into the tone.
- Sing north and south.
- Sing with a surprise in your eyes.
- Make the vowels stand up in the back of your throat.
- Sing thoughts, not words. Think spaghetti, not macaroni.
- Curtain up.
- Be a buoyant singer.
- Listen louder than you sing.
- Sing on the top half of the pitch; we are birds, not bats.
- Aim for the basket, and sing the phrase like a three-pointer.
- Hit a home run.
- Sing above the cheekbones.
- Sing like a waterfall. At the end of the phrase, float the foam back up.
- Sing as beautifully as you can.
- Turn up the flame.
- Sing with a fuller sound.
- Fill the room with sound.
- Start singing on the inside before you sing on the outside.
- Is your pitch computer working?
- Make your eyes smile.
Rehearsal Helpers

Visible incentive chart • Children’s notebooks/binders
Engage early-arrivers • Assigned seating (strategic)
Pace that is not too fast or too slow • Name tags
Know the music, and sing more, talk less • Connect with children as they enter the room
Call on singers to sing solos • Senior adult helper
Post rehearsal agenda/checklist • Well-lit, well-ventilated, adequate space
Variety of activities, songs, singing games • Chairs in rows with access to each child
Routine spiced with surprise • Limit visuals, avoid over-stimulation
Purposeful, learning (not rowdy) fun • Space for movement

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How Are You Smart?

**Plays with Words**
- reading,
- writing,
- spelling,
- listening to words

**Plays with Numbers**
- computer games,
- puzzles, problem solving, thinking games

**Plays with Music**
- music,
- rhymes,
- singing,
- playing instruments

**Plays with Nature**
- outdoors,
- animals,
- plants, using natural materials

**Plays with Images**
- visual art,
- painting,
- drawing,
- building

**Plays with Movement**
- sports,
- dance,
- motor skills

**Plays with Others**
- enjoys presenting,
- social and group activities,
- leader

**Plays Alone**
- enjoys independent projects,
- works well alone

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Choosy Director’s
Song Selection
Checklist

choosy adj. Careful in choosing; committed to excellence

Text
☐ Is the text true? Does it present age-appropriate theology?
☐ Is the text worthy of staying in the child’s memory bank for a lifetime?
☐ Does the text offer opportunities for spiritual growth and "teachable moments?"
☐ Does the text have rhyming patterns that will aid memorization?
☐ Does the text avoiding excessive symbolism or abstract concepts?

Melody
☐ Will the melody encourage singing in the head tone?
☐ Is the range of the melody age-appropriate?
☐ Does the melody have lots of repeated pitches or descending patterns which may encourage flatting?
☐ In what range do most of the notes lie (the tessitura)? Are most notes midrange?
☐ Does the melody complement the mood of the text?
☐ Does the melody offer opportunities for rise and fall of a phrase?
☐ Does the melody offer opportunities for children to be expressive and experience excellent musicianship?
☐ Will the song encourage good vocal habits?
☐ Does the melody place appropriate vowels in ranges where they can be sung with beauty?
☐ Is the melody memorable and engaging?
☐ Does the melody have good voice leading, avoiding awkward intervals?
   Where are the half-steps? Where and how are fa and ti used in the melody?
☐ Does the melody provide variety without having tricky similarities?

Rhythm
☐ Do the rhythms fit the natural inflections of the words?
☐ Are the syncopations natural, and seem to fit and flow?

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Accompaniment
☐ Does the accompaniment complement the mood of the melody and text?
☐ Does the accompaniment support the melody at the beginning of the song, and in other strategic areas?
☐ Does the accompaniment support harmony parts?
☐ Does the accompaniment "do its job" with the fewest notes possible? Does the texture support without being overpowering?
☐ Is this anthem within the ability of my accompanist?
☐ Will you use taped accompaniment?
☐ How will taped accompaniment impact the quality of the singing?

Harmony/Part Singing
☐ Is the harmony optional, or is it vital to the success of the song?
☐ How difficult is the harmony to learn and sing with the melody? (Parts like ostinati and rounds are easiest, and parallel thirds and sixths are the most difficult.)

Form
☐ Is the form clear and logical?
☐ How does the form impact the ease or difficulty of learning and memorizing the song?

Overall....
☐ Does the song offer rhythmic vitality and interest?
☐ Does the song avoid excessive chromaticism?
☐ Is there a passage in the song that offers the children a break from singing, to rest vocally and gather their thoughts?
☐ Will the song be easiest caught or taught? How does this song fit the ability of my choir?
☐ What will be the primary challenge of the song?
☐ What will be a greatest value and reward of the song?
☐ Will the song allow you to teach musicianship?
☐ Will the song enrich the worship of the congregation?
☐ What is the dominant musical feature of the song? Melody, rhythm, harmony, form, text, other?
☐ Are you enthused about the song? Has it captured your imagination and the imagination of the children?
☐ Does the song offer something intangible or unique?
☐ In what ways can I make this song appealing to multiple learning styles and modes?
☐ Will this song grow with time, or will everyone be tired of it by the third rehearsal?
A Classroom Management Check-up

Make Discipline a Team Effort
• Discuss your classroom management expectations with your co-workers, so everyone can respond consistently.

Engage Children from the Beginning
• Plan activities for children who arrive early to focus attention.

Maintain a Balanced Pace
• A rehearsal that is too slowly paced will foster restlessness. If the pace is too fast, children can become hyper. Use a purposeful pace to maintain interest and control.

Have a Recovery Plan
• When chaos erupts, have a activity or signal that will refocus attention.

Use Humor
• Healthy laughter can ease many awkward moments, but avoid ridicule and sarcasm. Laugh at yourself! Take your work seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously.

Make Big Projects Seem Small
• Present big projects in small segments so children are not overwhelmed. Give children opportunities to achieve many small successes.

Ignore Some Behaviors
• Use your intuition to determine when you should let a situation run its course. Sometimes, a child just needs a little attention. Ignore the action, and offer some positive attention.

Explain Why
• Help children understand the purpose of an activity. Sometimes, children may not understand why something is worthwhile.

Use Seating Assignments
• Use a seating chart as a part of your classroom management. Allow plenty of space between seats. Move a child when necessary.

Create Purposeful Space
• Make sure your rehearsal space is attractive, well-lit, and well-ventilated to promote successful rehearsals.

Cooperate with Parents
• In a caring, loving manner, ask a parent or guardian for information. Your gentle, concerned approach will offer valuable insight, and let the parent know of your appreciation for their child.

Praise Often
• Praise should be immediate, specific, and sincere.

Be Positive
• A misbehaving child is a discouraged child. Demonstrate Christ-like love. Evaluate your tone of voice and non-verbal signals. Do they affirm children? Do you smile? Ask a trusted friend to help you evaluate your approach with children.

Keep Cool
• Do not take bad behavior personally. Be consistent. We all have undisciplined areas in our lives.

Pray
• Pray for your choir children. Pray for sensitivity to understand your children and relate to them redemptively. Pray that each rehearsal will be orderly, well-disciplined, and affirming.