

It Takes a Thief

To Become an Effective Teacher

Denise R. Eaton

Choral Editor: Carl Fischer Music & BriLee Music
High School Choir Director, 29 years, retired

- I. Your “Was,” “Is” and “Is to Come”
 - a. Past experiences are our “was”
 - b. Ineffective practices
 - c. The present is our “is”
 - d. Our “is” is moving us toward our “is to come”
- II. What brought you here? What kind of changes are you willing to make?
- III. **FORTUNE: Failure is an Opportunity that Repetitively Teaches Us Nearly Everything**
What is the most effective way to improve score study?
LEARN from the things that have not gone well.
- IV. RAP: **R**eflect, **A**ssess and **P**lan
 - a. Classroom procedures /discipline management
 - b. Sequential growth
 1. Sound - warm-up / tone
 2. Sight-reading effectiveness
 3. Fundamental development
 4. Score study
 5. Strategy – lesson plans
 6. Performance readiness - repertoire refinement
- V. Successful Teachers
 - a. Set goals
 - b. Create plans to attain goals
 - c. Are always evaluating: themselves & students
 - d. Recognize personal strengths
 - e. Recognize personal weaknesses - willing to work to improve
- VI. **SMART** Goals
 - S**pecific
 - M**easurable
 - A**ttainable
 - R**ealistic
 - T**imely
- VII. Have a PLAN for everything
 - a. Discipline / classroom management (begins with procedures and routines)
 - b. Every rehearsal (begins with score study and includes skill & tone development)
 - c. Lesson plans (based on score study): include assessment, layering of skills, creative repetition
 - d. Trust the process – always evaluate your plan
 - e. The students need to know the plan
- VIII. Seven Habits of Ineffective Teachers
 1. **Focus on being liked:** focus on being a good teacher your students can respect
 2. **Yelling:** rarely produces positive results, often results in chaotic environment
 3. **Don't address little things:** ignoring condones (delayed obedience is disobedience)
 4. **Inconsistency:** students crave structure and consistency / black & white vs gray
 5. **Failure to prepare:** usually results in unproductive lessons with little direction
 6. **Reacting defensively:** rarely elicits positive result with students, parents or administrators. Proactive is always more effective.
 7. **Approach to teaching is “good enough”:** rarely produces growth / creative teaching / willingness to try new techniques

IX. Always be a Student of your Craft

Resource: Choral Error Detection by Paul Hondorp CMF7 Score study strategies

- a. Challenge yourself to listen in the moment
- b. Challenge yourself to react in the moment
- c. Explore BriLee, Carl Fischer and Theodore Presser repertoire

X. Suggested "Order of Events" for Layering Skills in Sequential Teaching

- a. Teach rhythms before looking at song (including all like patterns throughout)
 1. Extract and breakdown rhythms for better understanding and skill development
 2. Learning rhythm doesn't only include chanting - singing is also encouraged
 3. Include emphasis on strong beats - always keep the text in mind
- b. Add solfegge - always with appropriate, desired tone
 1. Introduce the key of the song through previous sight-reading
 2. Extract only the melodic contour in solfegge (before looking at song) for greater mastery later
 3. Chant solfegge in rhythm - add emphasis on strong beats
 4. Chant text in rhythm to reinforce understanding
 5. Add syllabic and word stress emphasizing desired vowels
- c. Sing on solfegge - with desired vowels and tone
 1. Focus on accuracy
 2. Add in syllabic / word stress
- d. Sing on neutral syllable - with desired vowels and tone
 1. Focus on accuracy
 2. Add in syllabic / word stress
 3. Add in final consonants for rhythmic releases and onset of sound
- e. Monotone chant and sing the text - with desired vowels and tone
 1. If singing in parts, separate to different notes of the tonic chord
 2. Add in syllabic / word stress
 3. Repetition of the release of final consonants will, most likely, be needed
- f. Sing on text - emphasizing desired vowels and tone
 1. Focus on pitch accuracy
 2. Add in syllabic / word stress
 3. Explore combinations of voice parts
 - i. sop 1 / alto
 - ii. sop1 sop 2
 - iii. sop / bass
 - iv. alto /tenor
 - v. alto/bass
 - vi. sop / tenor
 - vii women
 - viii. men

REPETITION IS YOUR FRIEND and the key to successful learning.
(Always emphasize and insist on desired tone and vowels)

XI. Don't know where to start? PICK ONE THING

- a. VOWELS affect everything
 1. vowel glide OH - AH - OO - EH - EE
- b. Rhythmic breathing & final consonant releases: incorporate throughout the learning process

XII. You are only limited to your own creativity, but don't let your limitations inhibit your students' learning

XIV. Use personal and musical STRENGTHS to your advantage

XV. Give yourself GRACE and never forget that HELP is a good four-letter word

