**Philosophy of Vocal/Choral Music Education**

***By S. Andrew Miller***

My philosophy of vocal and choral music education continues to grow as I gain more experience in the classroom. With an ever changing society, I believe it is important to be adaptable. However, my philosophy is grounded on three ways of learning, regardless of societal changes. **1)** **Students learn vocal/choral music aesthetically –** Students develop the appreciation of music, the arts, and humanities. While they may never be a musician or an artist in their later lives, they have an understanding of why the arts are important. **2)** **Students learn vocal/choral music pragmatically –** Students will use the knowledge they have acquired through studying vocal/choral music in a practical sense, which will affect them directly or indirectly throughout their lives. **3)** **Students learn vocal/choral music cooperatively**– Students learn how to work cooperatively and interact socially during a music class. Additionally, I believe the teacher should facilitate students’ social interactions based on their individual needs.

The way I would implement my philosophy is by adhering to three important aspects: student engagement, teacher to student modeling, and focusing on music theory and sight singing. **1) Student Engagement** – It is necessary to teach with a high amount of energy and to incorporate learning activities that build on the strengths of the students in the class. **2) Teacher to Student Modeling –** One of the most effective ways of teaching vocal/choral music is to sing and model the type of sounds you want your students to produce. By demonstrating proper vocal technique at all times, students can mimic and copy the sound produced by the teacher. **3) Focusing on Music Theory and Sight Singing –** Music can be very complex with rhythms, harmony, history, performance technique, etc. Using other subjects like math for rhythm, history for music history, science for music theory and the concept of sound, etc. help students understand music in a more conceptual way. Teaching vocal/choral students to read music is difficult because their voices will produce good quality sounds when learning by rote; however, students will be limited to the amount of repertoire they can actually perform. Teaching sight singing from the beginning to the end of the school year will drastically improve the way students read music.

In conclusion, I believe teaching vocal/choral music to students will enhance all aspects of their education: Math, Science, History, English, Foreign Languages, and even physical fitness. Music is a universal language that every person can relate to in some way. The standards of vocal/choral should be achievable and gradually increase in difficultly.