

Choir Practice for Choral Excellence

White Station Choir

Mr. Massey and Mr. Powell

This is a reference for self-guided development as a choral musician. The two necessary areas of development are MUSIC THEORY and THE VOICE.

MUSIC THEORY

Please send Mr. Powell and Mr. Massey a Remind message when you have worked your way through the 17 lessons and can confidently answer in the appropriate exercises.

Things to do:

1. Utilize <https://www.musictheory.net/lessons> to learn/review necessary concepts for reading music. Work your way through the first 17 lessons, starting with “The Staff, Clefs, and Ledger Lines” and ending on “Interval Inversions”.
2. Utilize <https://www.musictheory.net/exercises> to test your knowledge and mastery of music theory skills*. Work your way through the first 3 lessons, starting with “Note Identification” and ending on “Interval Identification”.
3. Utilize <https://www.musictheory.net/exercises> (same link as above) and scroll down to the purple “Ear Training” section*. Work your way through the first 3 exercises, but IN THIS ORDER: “Interval Ear Training”, “Note Ear Training”, “Keyboard Ear Training”.

***Note for sections 2. and 3.: you can adjust the difficulty for each exercise in the menu on the top right of your screen.

Once you’ve become proficient in all the above music theory areas, you’ll be set up for success for choir at WSHS and will notice and immediate increase in capability in your daily choir rehearsal.

“Play the notes for the student, and the student sings for a day; Teach a student how to read music, and the student sings for a lifetime.” - Mr. Massey and Mr. Powell, ca. 2020

THE VOICE

If you are noticing a marked improvement in your singing, send us a remind and let us know!

Things to do:

1. Pick a time/place and use the same time/place every day for practice.
2. Practice at least 3 times a week and every day if possible.
3. Do not practice if you are suffering from a cold or severe inflammation.
 - a. Your voice will not work properly if you are sick.
4. Stay hydrated
5. NEVER use any type of “magic voice spray” or anesthetics.
 - a. Singing with the above can result in long-term damage to your vocal folds
6. ALWAYS use a starting pitch to practice (know the name of the starting pitch for a song).
 - a. Use an actual piano or a piano app on your phone
7. ALWAYS ask for your parents’ permission before you start making beautiful, controlled noises in the house.

Develop your control of dynamics on any pitch and vowel.

This is a comprehensive exercise not for the faint of heart, but I could only give just one exercise to students, this would be it.

Process:

1. Select a comfortable low pitch and high pitch for your range using the first five pitches of a major scale – (do re mi fa sol)
2. Sing the five pitches on a slow but steady tempo (60 bpm) ascending and descending on a vowel. – (do re mi fa sol fa mi re do)
 - i. Be sure to use all vowels and dynamics in the word bank.
 - ii. Ah+pp, Ah+p, Ah+mp, Ah+mf, Ah+f, Ah+ff, etc...
3. Repeat as many times as necessary to improve.
4. Move this five note exercise up and down on the piano by half step until you’ve covered every pitch you can sing.
5. Record yourself singing the entire exercise using your phone, listen, and analyze.

Word bank of dynamics and vowels:

pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff

Ah, Eh, Eee, Oh, Ooo

***all vowels should be sung with a tall, resonant placement with soft palate raised *always*.

Things to look for/keep in mind:

1. You'll notice that your voice sounds better on certain dynamics/vowels. Use these as the standard for working on improving the other dynamics/vowels. Analyze why these sound better than the others, and apply those things to another dynamic/vowel.
2. Breathe. Try to take in as big of a breath as possible to make this phrase on one breath. If you cannot make the entire phrase on one breath then go ahead, take one, and work on those stagger breathing skills!
3. Singing both **LOUDLY** and *softly* on any vowel should be healthy and not painful.
4. Aim to keep a beautiful tone throughout using a comfortable, non-breathy, placement and ***keep the space in your mouth LARGE – even with softer dynamics!***
5. This is a LONG process. Don't get frustrated if you're not noticing results right away! Track your progress of vowels, dynamics, and vocal range (by pitch name) in a notepad to see how much better you're getting! Write down anything else you notice is improving as well!