

Starting Strong: Successful Preparatory Children's Choir

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1. Why should children sing in a choir?
 - a. 🎵 **Musical Development** – Singing in a choir improves pitch, rhythm, and musical expression while helping children develop their vocal skills.
 - b. 🧠 **Cognitive Benefits** – Learning songs and harmonies enhances memory, concentration, and language skills.
 - c. ❤️ **Emotional Growth** – Singing can be a powerful emotional outlet, helping children express themselves and build confidence.
 - d. 🤝 **Social Skills** – Choirs teach teamwork, cooperation, and communication as kids work together toward a shared goal.
 - e. 🌍 **Cultural Awareness** – Choirs often sing music from different cultures and traditions, broadening children's perspectives.
 - f. 📖 **Discipline & Responsibility** – Regular rehearsals and performances teach commitment, patience, and perseverance.
 - g. 😊 **Fun & Joy** – Singing in a group is uplifting, reduces stress, and creates a sense of belonging. Religious singing has the added benefit of worship.
2. Purpose of a Prep Choir: an introduction to a choral experience.
 - a. Vocal skills
 - b. Posture, breathing, vowels, diction
3. Purpose of a Prep Choir: Literacy skills
 - a. Score reading
 - b. Rhythmic and melodic reading
4. Purpose of a Prep Choir: Ensemble skills
 - a. Watching a conductor
 - b. Listening
5. Purpose of a Prep Choir: General music experience
 - a. Literacy skills
 - b. Music Theory
 - c. Orff Instruments
 - d. Singing games
 - e. Folk dances
6. Foundations
 - a. You want students that are Tuneful, Beatful, Artful (TBA)
7. Tuneful - ability to think tunes and to coordinate their voices to sing those tunes.
8. Beatful - ability to feel the pulse of music and how that pulse is in two parts or three parts.
9. Artful - ability to be moved by music in the many ways music can elicit an emotional response.
10. Foundations 2 -Having these skills being developed at earlier ages (K to 2) will help your choir (3 to 5) have strong musicians.
11. First Steps in Music - 8-Part Workout
12. Pitch Exploration (Vocal Warm-ups) - **TUNEFUL**

- a. Sliding sounds help children engage the vocal muscles used to sing in head voice. These muscles are the preferred muscles to use when singing at this age. Just like an athlete warms up, singers should warm up also.

- b. Slide Whistle

13. Song Fragments - **TUNEFUL**

- a. Provide opportunities to sing short phrases alone. 2 kinds – Echo songs & Call-and-Response. Echo songs are easier. Only have to remember the pattern and sing it back. C&R songs require the child to remember the original pattern.
- b. Echo Songs
 - b. “Oh My No More Pie”
- c. Call-and-Response Songs

14. Simple Songs - **TUNEFUL**

- a. Encourages independent singing while they assimilate the whole song. Limited tonal range, are short and easy to remember.

15. Arioso (Child-Created Tunes) - **TUNEFUL**

- a. Tunes that children spontaneously create. “Just as children develop a repertoire of words and are able to create original sentences to express themselves based on those words, children should be invited to make up original tunes and songs. The more tunes and songs they have learned and the more opportunities they have to make up tunes and songs, the better their Arioso attempts will become. Early Arioso attempts may not sound much like tunes, but with experience these attempts will take on more song-like qualities.”
- b. Songs w/o words (Easiest)
 - a. Conversations: Singing on a neutral syllable: “moo”, “hum”, etc.
- c. With Familiar Words (More Challenging)
 - a. Nursery Rhymes – Create tunes to known Mother Goose rhymes.
 - b. Familiar Story – Sing the words of the well known story.
- d. With New Words (Most Challenging)
 - a. Conversations: Sing while using words: How to make something.
 - b. Show & Tell. Sing me three things about: clothing, family, pet.
 - c. Create a song.

16. SongTales - **ARTFUL**

- a. “Reading to children provides an opportunity to show them how interesting books are. It is important to read high-quality literature to develop sensitivities for the expressive potential of stories. Reading with appropriate expression brings these stories to life. SongTales are used for the same purposes. Because of the many words in a SongTales, these songs are sung FOR children, not by children. These songs should be excellent examples of music literature and should be sung appropriate expressiveness. Not only will SongTales help develop listening skills, but they can provide an opportunity for children to hear the expressiveness music should include.”

17. Movement Exploration (Movement Warm-ups) - **ARTFUL**

- a. Based on movement themes by Rudolf Laban. Develop body coordination as well as expressive sensitivity, especially when coordinated with recorded music. “The Book of Movement Exploration” by John Feierabend and Jane Kahan.

18. Movement for Form and Expression - **ARTFUL**

- a. Help children experience expressive qualities in music through movement.
 - b. Fingerplays
 - c. Action Songs

- d. Circle Games
- e. Movement with Classical Music

19. Movement with the Beat – **BEATFUL**

- a. The beat is the foundation for all later rhythmic development. You can help children feel the beat coincide w/ a song or rhyme by letting them initiate the beat at their own tempo. Later, move to teacher initiated pieces.
 - b. Child-Initiated Songs & Rhymes
 - c. Teacher-Initiated Songs & Rhymes
 - d. Movement with Recorded Music
 - a. Use music in which the beat motions will occur at 120-136 beats per minute.
 - b. Start with feeling the beat in long phrases.
 - c. Work toward feeling the beat in 2 parts and 3 parts.

20. Warm-ups - Stretching

21. Warm-ups - Breathing

- a. Consonants, candles, panting

22. Warm-ups - Pitch Explore

- a. Sirens, slide Whistle (voice, body, both)

23. Warm-ups - Vowels & Range

- a. Indianapolis Children's Choir Warm-ups
- b. Do not get too repetitive.
 - b. Focusing on good vowels and diction at the beginning of rehearsal only
 - c. Always using the same approaches to address vocal challenges.

24. Choral Segment - Repertoire

- a. Unison singing allows the director to focus:
 - b. Group breathing , accurate rhythm & pitch, vowel formation, diction, entrances & cut offs

25. Choral Segment - Repertoire

- a. Harmony
 - b. Ostinato, descants, sustained pitches, canons, partner songs

26. Choral Segment - Repertoire

- a. Word Sheets
- b. Octavos
 - b. Keep it simple
 - a. One line, two lines
 - b. Not a lot of repeats, d.c. al fine, codas, etc.

27. Music Literacy - Conversational Solfege, ICC Prep Theory & Solfege

28. Step 1: Readiness: Rote

- a. Songs and rhymes are learned by rote; they contain rhythm and/or tonal content which will be studied later. Rhythm and solfege syllables are not used at this stage.

29. Step 2: Conversational Solfege: Rote

- a. Rhythm syllables and/or tonal syllables are introduced. Patterns are spoken or sung by the teacher with the rhythm or tonal syllables and students repeat, by rote, those patterns with the syllables. During this stage students bond the sounds of rhythm and tonal patterns with aural labels.

30. Step 3: Conversational Solfege: Decode – Familiar

- a. This stage serves as an evaluation to see if students have bonded rhythm and/or tonal patterns with the correct syllables. The teacher speaks or sings familiar patterns, songs and rhymes with neutral syllables or texts. The students repeat the patterns, songs and rhymes using rhythm or tonal syllables. Patterns

used at this stage have previously been presented with syllables during the Conversational Solfege-Rote stage. Songs and rhymes used at this stage should have previously been presented by rote during the Readiness stage. This stage only requires students to aurally recognize and decode previously learned musical examples.

31. Step 4: Conversational Solfege: Decode – Unfamiliar

- a. This stage serves as an evaluation to see if students have bonded rhythm and/or tonal patterns with the correct syllables well enough to use the correct syllables when decoding unfamiliar patterns, songs and rhymes. The teacher speaks or sings an unfamiliar pattern with neutral syllables as well as unfamiliar songs and rhymes with texts. The students repeat the patterns, songs and rhymes with rhythm or tonal syllables. Patterns, songs, and rhymes used at this stage have not been previously learned. This stage requires the students to generalize from what they know to make sense out of something new.

32. Step 5: Conversational Solfege: Create

- a. This stage develops the ability to think and bring musical meaning to original musical thoughts. Students create original rhythm or tonal patterns or melodies using rhythm or tonal syllables. Reading notation should not be introduced until students have achieved success at this stage. During this stage students begin developing improvisation skills which will enable them to later compose during the Writing-Create stage.

33. Step 6: Reading: Rote

- a. During this stage students are introduced to notation symbols. The teacher reads notated patterns for the students. The students repeat the pattern while looking at the notation. This is much like the introduction of a set of vocabulary words in the elementary grades. While looking at the new words the teacher speaks each word and the children repeat.

34. Step 7: Reading: Decode – Familiar

- a. This stage serves as an evaluation to see if students have bonded the notation for rhythm and/or tonal patterns with the correct syllables. The teacher asks the students to think through notated patterns, songs and rhymes with rhythm or tonal syllables and then speak or sing them aloud using the rhythm or tonal syllables. Patterns, songs, and rhymes used at this stage should have been presented previously. This stage requires students to visually recall the sounds and syllable names of previously introduced material. In learning general reading skills this is like students being able to read vocabulary words the teacher previously presented.

35. Step 8: Reading: Decode – Unfamiliar

- a. This stage serves as an evaluation to see if students have bonded the notation for rhythm and/or tonal patterns with the correct syllables and can generalize that knowledge to unfamiliar patterns, songs and rhymes. The teacher asks the students to think through unfamiliar notated patterns, songs and rhymes with rhythm or tonal syllables and then speak or sing them aloud using the rhythm or tonal syllables. Patterns, songs, and rhymes used at this stage have not been presented previously. This requires visual decoding skills and inference thinking. This stage represents true sight-reading skills and is like students being able to recognize their new vocabulary words in the context of a new story.

36. Step 9: Writing: Rote

- a. During this stage students practice writing notation. Students should copy existing patterns, songs and rhymes and be instructed in proper manuscript techniques. This is similar to early elementary children practicing penmanship as they learn to write letters, numbers and words.

37. Step 10: Writing: Decode – Familiar

- a. During this stage students engage both conversational decoding skills and writing decoding skills. The teacher speaks, sings or plays familiar patterns or phrases from a song or rhyme with neutral syllables or the text. Students think each pattern with rhythm or tonal syllables (Conversational – Decoding) and

then write the notation for the pattern (Writing-Decode). This stage requires aural and visual decoding but not inference thinking. This stage is like students taking a spelling test based on the latest list of vocabulary words.

38. Step 11: Writing: Decode – Unfamiliar

- a. During this stage students engage both conversational decoding skills and writing decoding skills. The teacher speaks, sings or plays unfamiliar patterns or phrases from a song or rhyme with neutral syllables or the text. Students think the pattern with rhythm or tonal syllables (Conversational – Decoding) and then write the pattern (Writing-Decode). This stage requires aural and visual decoding as well as inference thinking. If you can sing it with syllables, you can write it. The syllables tell you what to write. This stage is commonly understood as “taking dictation.” In language development this stage would be the equivalent to children determining the spelling and writing of an unfamiliar word by “sounding it out.”

39. Step 12: Writing: Create

- a. This skill requires students to conversationally create through inner hearing and then Writing-Decode by transferring their musical thoughts into notation. Musical improvisations can now become compositions.

40. Orff Component

- a. Body Percussion, unpitched Percussion (rhythm sticks, hand drums) pitched percussion

41. Games & Movement

- a. Singing Games
 - b. “The Book of Playground Songs & Rhymes” - Dr. John Feierabend
 - c. “The Book Beginning Circle Games” - Dr. John Feierabend
 - d. “The Book of Songs & Rhymes with Beat Motions” - Dr. John Feierabend
 - e. “120 Singing Games and Dances for Elementary Schools” - Lois Choksy
 - a. Out of print. Used books are around \$200!
- b. Folk Dances
 - b. New England Dancing Masters
 - c. Sanna Longden
 - d. Phyllis S. Weikart - Rhythmically Moving
 - e. Marian Rose

42. Resources

- a. “First Steps in Music for Preschool and Beyond” - Dr. John Feierabend
- b. “Conversational Solfege” - Dr. John Feierabend
- c. “Preparatory Curriculum: Theory and Solfege” - Ruth E Dwyer - ICC Publishing House

ICC-Dwyer Warmups

1

ff

1. OO
2. Ee
3. A(Eh)
4. Oh
5. Ah

Exercise 1, measures 1-3. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The vocal line consists of whole notes: Bb4, Bb4, Bb4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a descending eighth-note pattern in the left hand.

4

1-4.

5.

Exercise 1, measures 4-5. Measure 4 continues the vocal line with Bb4 and the piano accompaniment. Measure 5 is a repeat of measure 4. The exercise concludes with a double bar line.

2

Do bi do bi do bi do bi do

Do bi do bi do bi do bi do

Play this in the left hand for more support

Exercise 2. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The vocal line consists of eighth notes: Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, Bb3. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a descending eighth-note pattern in the left hand. The exercise concludes with a double bar line.

3

Do bi do bi do bi do bi do

Continue chromatically

3

p

Mee aw Mee aw Mee aw

Continue chromatically

4

sempre accelerando

Mee aw Mee aw

Continue chromatically

3

Mee aw

Continue chromatically

**ICC Preparatory Program
Lesson Plan Format**

Lesson # _____

Materials: _____

Vocal Technique – Choir Segment

1. **Choral Warm-Ups** Goals: _____
 - a. Singer's posture
 - b. Stretches & Breathing
 - c. Vowels – descending s-f-m-r-d pattern – order: oo-ee-a(eh)-oh-ah(aw)
 - d. Singing Warm-ups – Add Doo Bee – singing ee within oo placement – melodic contour
2. **Building Repertoire** Goals: _____
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

Kodály Class Segment

3. **Folk Song Traditions** *(later lessons this would be where you review known folk songs and introduce one new folk song or rhyme – in this lesson you introduce AND teach a concept)*
 - a. **Title** _____
 - i. Goals: _____
 - b. **Title:** _____
 - i. Goals: _____
4. **Concept Review/Introduction** *(new rhythmic and melodic concepts are introduced)*
 - a. **Title** _____
 - i. Goals: _____
 - b. **Conversation Solfege:** _____
 - c. **Apply New Concept to Known Song: Title:** _____
 - i. Goals: _____

Orff Component

5. **Instruments** _____
 - a. Goals: _____

Game & Movement Component

6. **Learn New Poems and Songs** *(Repertoire development, practice known concepts, discover new concepts through games and movement)*
 - a. **Title** _____
 - b. **Title** _____

Building Artistry Through Active Listening

Goals: *Active listening requires the teacher to provide one or two SUGGESTIONS to the student as to what they should be listening for prior to the first listening. ICC is in the process of developing artistic active listening lessons that will involve the use of choral music and instrumental music examples.*

7. **Title** _____
 - a. Goals: _____

Closing

8. Homework: _____
9. Reminders: _____