Vocal Technique

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s): **Vocal Music**
Time Period: **Generic Time Period**
Length: **36 Weeks (Ongoing)**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Students will learn techniques to enhance vocal quality and health, and strategies for developing the technical skills required to perform a range of repertoire with confidence. In this unit, students will develop a strong understanding of how the body works in relationship to the breathing process and the voice. Though we focus on this unit in the beginning of the year, the study of good vocal technique is the foundation of any chorus class and will be taught throughout the year.

Standards

VPA.1.3.5.B.1	Sing or play music from complex notation, using notation systems in treble and bass clef, mixed meter, and compound meter.
VPA.1.3.5.B.2	Sing melodic and harmonizing parts, independently and in groups, adjusting to the range and timbre of the developing voice.
VPA.1.3.8.B.1	Perform instrumental or vocal compositions using complex standard and non-standard Western, non-Western, and avant-garde notation.
VPA.1.3.8.B.2	Perform independently and in groups with expressive qualities appropriately aligned with the stylistic characteristics of the genre.
VPA.1.3.8.B.3	Apply theoretical understanding of expressive and dynamic music terminology to the performance of written scores in the grand staff.
VPA.1.3.8.B.4	Improvise music in a selected genre or style, using the elements of music that are consistent with basic playing and/or singing techniques in that genre or style.
VPA.1.4.5.B.4	Define technical proficiency, using the elements of the arts and principles of design.
VPA.1.4.8.B.2	Differentiate among basic formal structures and technical proficiency of artists in works of dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

Essential Questions

- Why is vocal health important?
- When is it time to go on "vocal rest"?
- How does proper breathing influence the sustaining of a phrase?
- In what ways does posture enable effective performance?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Excellent vocal technique is essential to communicate the text to the audience.
- Just as an athlete develops the physical body and overall well-being, the vocalist must develop the muscles and overall well-being of the singing voice.
- Proper vocal technique is the foundation of good singing.
- The better we understand how the voice works in relationship to the breathing process, the better we can develop a good technique and a healthy tone.
- The singing voice is a musical instrument affected by many external and internal variables (e.g. allergies, overall physical & emotional health, hormones, etc).

Application of Skills: Students will be able to...

- identify the major structures of the voice.
- match pitch in one's own range.
- recognize, define, and apply good vocal health practices for singing.
- sing with proper body alignment, breath support, free tone, and round/tall vowels.
- sing with understanding through the period of voice change.
- sing with various dynamics and articulations in a healthy manner.

Assessments

Formative:

- Teacher observation of musical performances, participation and understanding
- checklists (student daily evaluation, breathing, singing posture) & solo and ensemble performance rubrics
- audition preparation for regional, state, divisional, and national honor choirs
- student journaling, criteria and goal setting activities.

Summative:

- Anatomy of singing assessments
- written and oral assessment of musical terminology
- vocalise project (working with a partner, students assemble a collection of vocalises that address posture, breathing, tone production, diction, and expansion of range.)
- solo singing performance assessments (based on the solo repertoire required for county or regional honors choir auditions).

Suggested Activities

- Use of anatomy charts and videos showing vocal physiology.

- Basic Anatomy of the Voice http://www.shedlightevents.com/2012/07/the-voice-box-basic-anatomy-of-the-voice/
- Vocal Cords up close while singing http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XGds2GAvGQ
- Singwise website http://www.singwise.com/index.php
- Lessons on speaking and singing voice, physical stretching, muscles, spinal alignment, and tone production. Discussion of vocal problems (breathy, nasal, or throaty tone, shifting of registers, hoarseness, limited endurance) and possible causes and solutions.
- Vocal Cord Nodule video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMpLMdxaNus
- Instructional lessons and practice of a variety of vocalises that address the following: vowel shaping, consonant articulation (percussive and voiced), breath support, pitch accuracy, and phrasing. Vocalise Project: Students assemble a collection of vocalises that address posture, breathing, tone production, diction, and expansion of range to use when they lead the class in warm ups.
- Games for practice and assessment such as "Telephone." Using echoing to teach selections by rote. Individual voice testing.
- Vocalises that will enable the student to develop a "head voice/falsetto" in addition to a "chest voice" in order to develop a greater range potential. Vocalises to expand the range of each voice part. Discussion of the physical sensations that indicate voice change.
- Vocalises/repertoire that emphasize a variety of dynamics and articulations.

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

- Use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles
- peer scaffolding to support learning
- adjusting questions
- peer and teacher modeling for demonstration
- acceleration/deceleration
- hands-on tools (tongue depressors, mirrors, books on abdomen) for reinforcement, rubrics.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Health Literacy:

Physical anatomy and understanding of good & poor vocal habits as well as how the vocal folds work within the breathing process.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

Students compare and contrast singers with good and poor breath support and try to determine what individual changes need to be made for success.

Communication and Collaboration:

Students will collaborate to brainstorm possible causes and breathing solutions for poor vocal quality.

Information Literacy:

Students will learn techniques for different outcomes: energizing the breath, sustaining the breath, phrase attacks and releases.

Resources

The Choral Director's Cookbook: Insights and Inspired Recipes for Beginners and Experts, edited by Alan Gumm. Meredith Music Publications, 2006.

Choral Techniques by Gordon H. Lamb. Wm. C. Brown Publishing, 1988.

Complete Handbook of Voice Training by Richard Alderson. Prentice Hall Trade, 1979.

The School Choral Program: Philosophy, Planning, Organizing, and Teaching by Michele Holt and James Jordan. GIA Publications, 2008.

Sound Advice: Becoming A Better Children's Choir Director by Jean Ashworth Bartle. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Strategies for Teaching Junior High & Middle School Male Singers by Terry J. Barham. Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 2001.

Singing Voice http://www.singingvoice.net/anatomy.html

Time-Saving Warm Ups by Grier and Everson. Heritage Music Press, 1987.

Tools for Powerful Student Evaluation: A Practical Source of Authentic Assessment Strategies for Music Teachers by Susan R. Farrell. Meredith Music Publications, 1997.

Vocal Cords up close while singing http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XGds2GAvGQ

Vocal Cord Nodule Video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMpLMdxaNus

Warm Ups and Work Outs for the Developing Choir by Emily Crocker, Vols. 1 & 2. Jensen Publications, 1990.

Warm-Ups by the Dozen by Russell Robinson, Set 1 & 2. Warner Bros. Publications, 2003.