

# Unit 2: Ensemble Technique

Content Area: **Music**  
Course(s): **Chamber Choir**  
Time Period: **1st Marking Period**  
Length: **7 Weeks**  
Status: **Published**

## Unit Overview

---

Students will demonstrate and apply the musical elements necessary to achieve a uniform, cohesive ensemble sound. These elements are balance, blend, intonation, attacks and releases, communication with the conductor, and small ensemble technique. Students will apply their understandings of individual vocal technique while developing cooperative learning skills during rehearsals and performances of appropriate grade level SATB choral literature.

## Transfer

---

Students will be able to independently use their learning to utilize the ensemble skills from this unit to adapt to their situation in performance with an ensemble.

## Meaning

---

## Understandings

---

Students will understand that...

- 1.1 Every individual's contribution plays a crucial role in the success of the ensemble.
- 1.2 Musicians adjust their performance to help achieve a cohesive sound.
- 2.1 A conductor's role is to communicate the interpretation of the printed musical score.
- 2.2 Musicians must follow conducting patterns and gestures to perform well as an ensemble.

## **Essential Questions**

---

1. What is the individual musician's role in producing an ensemble sound?
2. How do musicians and conductors communicate during a performance?

## **Application of Knowledge and Skill**

---

### **Students will know...**

---

Students will know...

- Balance pyramid
- Differences between solo and ensemble technique
- The effects of vibrato on section blend
- The effects of vowel shaping on section blend
- Flat, sharp, and in-tune
- Pitch tendencies of the human voice
- Ensembles must attack and release together
- Manipulation of text for choral performance
- Basic conducting patterns
- Gestures: cues, cutoffs, dynamics, articulations, etc.
- Differences between small and large ensemble technique

### **Students will be skilled at...**

---

Students will be skilled at...

- Recognizing different voicing and seating arrangements for choir
- Adjusting individual and section dynamics
- Recognizing and solving ensemble balance issues
- Adjusting resonance to unify tone quality
- Controlling and/or eliminating vibrato appropriately
- Producing uniform vowel shapes
- Adjusting individual pitch to account for intonation discrepancies or issues
- Following the conductor and listening actively to unify attacks and releases
- Making necessary adjustments to diction as per demands of the specific repertoire
- Performing repertoire following conductor's non-verbal communications

### **Academic Vocabulary**

---

- Blend
- Sound Pyramid
- Unified Sound
- Open Vowel
- Closed Vowel
- Vibrato
- Controlled Vibrato
- Bright timbre
- Dark timbre
- Balance

### **Learning Goal**

---

Students will be able to apply their individual technique to fit into a cohesive ensemble sound utilizing ensemble singing and blending skills.

VPA.1.1.12.B.1	Examine how aspects of meter, rhythm, tonality, intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions are organized and manipulated to establish unity and variety in genres of musical compositions.
VPA.1.1.12.B.2	Synthesize knowledge of the elements of music in the deconstruction and performance of complex musical scores from diverse cultural contexts.
VPA.1.3.12.B.1	Analyze compositions from different world cultures and genres with respect to technique, musicality, and stylistic nuance, and/or perform excerpts with technical accuracy, appropriate musicality, and the relevant stylistic nuance.
VPA.1.4.12.B.1	Formulate criteria for arts evaluation using the principles of positive critique and observation of the elements of art and principles of design, and use the criteria to evaluate works of dance, music, theatre, visual, and multimedia artwork from diverse cultural contexts and historical eras.
VPA.1.4.12.B.2	Evaluate how an artist's technical proficiency may affect the creation or presentation of a work of art, as well as how the context in which a work is performed or shown may impact perceptions of its significance/meaning.

### **Target 1 - Level 1 Retrieval**

---

Students will be able to identify a balanced and blended ensemble sound from an unbalanced and poorly blended ensemble sound.

VPA.1.1.12.B.1	Examine how aspects of meter, rhythm, tonality, intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions are organized and manipulated to establish unity and variety in genres of musical compositions.
----------------	--

### **Target 2 - Level 2 Comprehension**

---

Students will be able to perform, in SATB, balanced chorale exercises.

VPA.1.1.12.B.2	Synthesize knowledge of the elements of music in the deconstruction and performance of complex musical scores from diverse cultural contexts.
----------------	---

### **Target 3 - Level 3 Analysis**

---

Students will be able to differentiate between resonance styles characteristic of either region, genre, or time period.

VPA.1.3.12.B.1	Analyze compositions from different world cultures and genres with respect to technique, musicality, and stylistic nuance, and/or perform excerpts with technical accuracy, appropriate musicality, and the relevant stylistic nuance.
----------------	--

### **Target 4 - Level 4 Knowledge Utilization**

---

Students will be able to apply the concepts of ensemble singing skills to concert repertoire in a collaborative

manner.

VPA.1.4.12.B.1	Formulate criteria for arts evaluation using the principles of positive critique and observation of the elements of art and principles of design, and use the criteria to evaluate works of dance, music, theatre, visual, and multimedia artwork from diverse cultural contexts and historical eras.
VPA.1.4.12.B.2	Evaluate how an artist's technical proficiency may affect the creation or presentation of a work of art, as well as how the context in which a work is performed or shown may impact perceptions of its significance/meaning.

### **Summative Assessment**

---

- Vocal Recording Assessment
- Benchmark Exam
- Performance assessment (individual & group)
- Written assessment
- Festival/Competition adjudication

### **Formative Assessment and Performance Opportunities**

---

- Teacher Observation
- Individual and peer assessment
- Ensemble performance
- Self-critique
- Written assessment
- Vocal performance assessment

### **21st Century Life and Careers**

---

CRP.K-12.CRP1	Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.
CRP.K-12.CRP2	Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
CRP.K-12.CRP4	Communicate clearly and effectively and with reason.
CRP.K-12.CRP6	Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
CRP.K-12.CRP8	Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
CRP.K-12.CRP11	Use technology to enhance productivity.
CRP.K-12.CRP12	Work productively in teams while using cultural global competence.

## **Differentiation / Enrichment**

---

### **Differentiation**

- Utilize peer assistance.
- Modify pace of teacher demonstration.
- Strategic seating for reduced distraction, enabling better lesson focus.
- Small-group, teacher-monitored learning activities.

### **Enrichment**

- Utilize as peer mentors.
- Expand and extend concepts and ideas with supplemental materials.
- Encourage participation in Honors Ensembles (SJCDA, NJMEA, etc.)
- Student Conductors.

## **Unit Resources**

---

- Teacher designed exercises
- Handouts/Worksheets
- Appropriate grade level choral repertoire
- Exercises from "The Complete Choral Warm-up Book"

- Exercises from "Choir Builders"
- Conducting pattern charts
- Resources from "ThePracticeRoom.net"