Making Choir Their Favorite Class – Foundations for Great Rehearsals

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I. Establishing a Connection with Every Student

- Always warmly greet students on the way into the classroom.
- A fist bump or an elbow handshake are just fine.
- Make every student feel like they are wonderful to you.
- CONCEPT: If you like them, they will like you.
- Learn names quickly.
- Have a healthy adult-to-student relationship.
- Treat all students equally.
- Enforce the rules. Kids can take it.
- See if you can get through the entire year without getting mad.

II. Getting Students into "Expressive Mode"

- Right-Brain activities: Acting. Tell a story. Tell a joke. Invent something.
- In choir, acting out expression in a song gets students into right brain.

III. Helping Students to Become a "Pack"

- Every student should know the name of every other student.
- This is expensive. It can take up to 15 minutes per class over eight days.
- Pass out a seating chart to every student in the class.
- 2-minute interviews are a great way to guarantee all students get to know each other.
- Full directions for 2-minute interviews found at dandavisonmusic.com Workshop Notes.
- Make sure you are the pack leader in hour class. (Calm – Assertive.)
- Take lessons from Cesar Milan – The Dog Whisperer
- Walk tall. Show that you "own" the classroom. Have lesson plans. Keep order.

IV. Understanding the Importance and Power of Affirmation

- Many students go through the whole day without any affirmation.
- When you praise one student aloud, all the other students hear it and desire it.
- If you affirm often enough, the students will start to affirm also.

V. Understand the Destructive Power of Put-Downs

- Your classroom must be 100% free of put-downs.
- Institute a rule: 1 put-down = 2 compliments

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VI. Learn to Manage Boredom

- Boredom is our enemy.
- Learn to identify the early symptoms.
    1. Yawning or deep breathing - Dull face. - Glances at the clock
    2. Non-energetic body language or posture
- Treatments for Bordom
    1. Good energy from the teacher
    2. Stretching or standing up
    3. Inviting a student to the front of the class to help with a demonstration
    4. Telling an interesting or funny story
    5. Minimizing teacher talking during rehearsals
- When you do need to be boring, warn them.
- Don't let discipline "lectures" become extended.
- When possible, let interruptions in singing be 5-15 seconds.

VII. Use Extrinsic Motivators to Get a Tough Class Going

- Grading is a built-in extrinsic motivator.
    1. Be sure to grade on participation.
    2. Posture habits, listening habits, and readiness habits are essential skills.
    3. We would never recommend a student for All-State who lacked these.
    4. There should be a "musical skills" portion of the participation grade:
        Singing Effort - Sight-singing Effort - Posture
    5. There should be a "rehearsal skills" portion of the participation grade:
        Readiness – Focus - Listening
- Use other extrinsic motivators only if you need them:
    1. The "comfy" chair.
        Award the "comfy" chair to the best sight-singing student of the day.
        It may be more convenient to dispense the award the following day.

VIII. Making Your Literature Work for You

- Choosing good music is the most important thing we do.
- "Wanting to sing the music" is the most important motivator for choristers.
- Try to always have 4-7 selections in the folder at all times,
- Try to get three literature selections into each lesson plan.
    1. In the first selection, you can do a "deep dive."
    2. In the second selection, you should not dive as deep.
    3. In the third selections, perhaps just a couple of reminders.
        (Some folks call this the "dessert" song.)
- Don't always start at the beginning. Students will think it's a "run-though."
    1. If you have deep learning to, do it before a run-through starts.
    2. If you do have to stop, start again as quickly as you can.
    3. Use the "end" of the song as a non-frustrating way to stop.
    4. This is the idea behind learning a song "backwards."
        a. On day 1, try to get through the whole song.
        b. On day 2, do a deep dive at letter "H", and run "H" to the end.
        c. On day 3, do a deep dive at letter "G", and run "G" to the end.
        d. On day 4, do a deep dive at letter "F", and run "F" to the end.
    5. This is another reason for having good written lesson plans.