AN ANALYSIS OF THE AMOUNT AND TYPES OF MELODIC SIGHT-READING METHODS USED BY FLORIDA MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORAL DIRECTORS

By

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A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2011
Acknowledgements

Thank you to the faculty of the University of Florida, in particular, Dr. Russell Robinson, Dr. Charles Hoffer, Dr. Timothy Brophy, and Ms. Robena Cornwell. Thank you to Betty Jo Couch with the Florida Vocal Association for all of her help with making this project possible. Thank you to my family, friends, and Brad.
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December 2011

Chair: Russell Robinson
Major: Music Education

Sight-reading is an extremely important skill for singers to learn. There are many methods for teaching sight-reading, and it can be difficult for middle school choir directors to decide which one is most effective. A survey containing questions regarding sight-reading methods used, time spent teaching sight-reading, and ratings in the sight-reading category at Music Performance Assessments (MPAs) was sent out to Florida middle school choir directors who are members of the Florida Vocal Association (FVA).

While there were 71 respondents total out of 363 Florida choir directors who were sent the survey (a 20% response rate), 41 of the respondents met the requirements needed to be included in the study population ($N = 41$). These directors represent 80 middle school choirs, and they all provided useful information regarding the methods they use for teaching/practicing sight-reading to their choirs. After calculating correlations between factors relating to time spent teaching/practicing sight-reading and the use of movable do solfège with or without hand signs, the conclusion is that there are low
correlations between the amount of minutes spent on sight-reading and MPA sight-reading ratings or between the use of solfège and MPA sight-reading ratings.
INTRODUCTION

Teaching melodic sight-reading to anyone can be a challenging task (Killian & Henry, 2005), but it can be especially intimidating for the middle school choir director as middle school students are undergoing many changes during this time (Demorest, The Challenge of the Middle School Chorus, 2000). With so many methods available to teach melodic sight-reading, whether it be through the use of solfège, note names, or different syllable names, it can be difficult to decide which method to use. There is also the question of how much time is necessary to devote to studying melodic sight-reading. It can be difficult to allot enough time to this practice, especially with the limited rehearsal time many school choir directors encounter. These are the important topics that were be examined in this research study.

Research Topic

The topic of this research study is to examine methods of teaching melodic sight-reading at the middle school level, as well as to examine how much time is appropriate to spend on sight-reading during rehearsals. The relationship between the method, as well as the amount of time middle school choir directors spend on melodic sight-reading was compared with the ratings their students received in the sight-reading category and the final rating of their Music Performance Assessments (MPA) district adjudications in the 2010 – 2011 school year.
Significance of the Problem

According to the *National Standards for Music Education*, having the ability to sight-read is mandatory for middle school students who are in choir. This means that it is the duty of all choir directors to teach the skill of sight-reading in their rehearsals (The Consortium of National Arts Education Associates, 1994). Teaching a choir to sight-read will also instill a sense of confidence in each member (Boyd, 1981). What is the best way to accomplish these standards? With so many methods available with which to teach sight-reading, comparing success rates among the methods aids in choosing the most effective ones. There is also the question of how much time should be devoted to studying sight-reading, which was another factor examined in this study.

The Problem of the Study

Sight-reading is a vital skill for singers to have, and very often it can be an intimidating subject for choir directors to approach, particularly in the middle school setting. There are many questions that may enter the heads of some middle school choir directors, such as:

- What is the best way to teach these students how to sight-read?
- How much time should I be devoting to practicing sight-reading?
- Will practicing sight-reading affect my students’ ratings in the sight-reading category at MPA?

The goal of this research study is to hopefully have answers to some of these questions.
The Purpose of the Study

There are two main purposes to this research study. The first is to determine what methods of teaching melodic sight-reading by middle school choir directors in the state of Florida produced higher ratings in the sight-reading category at MPA district adjudications in the 2010 – 2011 school year, as well as to determine if the amount of time spent teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading affected ratings. There are many different strategies available to instill sight-reading skills.

The second purpose is to simply discover what types of methods Florida middle school choir directors are using. There are a number of methods available for choir directors to use, including combining these methods. Discovering what methods are already being used can help new choir directors decide what methods to use, and can also provide useful information for veteran choir directors.

Some choir directors will alter their style of teaching as their MPA adjudication approaches. The Florida Vocal Association makes sight-reading books from past MPA adjudications available for choir directors to use with their students. These books contain rhythmic and melodic sight-reading examples written both in unison and in parts and some choir directors will use them with their students before their MPA adjudication.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What is the relationship between how many minutes middle school choir directors spent teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading with their choirs, and their students’
ratings in the sight-reading category at MPA district adjudications in the 2010 – 2011 school year?

2. What methods of teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading exercises among Florida middle school choir directors with their choirs produced higher student ratings in the sight-reading category at MPA district adjudications in the 2010 – 2011 school year?

3. What methods for teaching/practicing sight-reading are other choir directors in Florida using?

Limitations and Delimitations

Factors that were not controlled for in this study include choir size, any specific challenges the directors face, total weekly rehearsal time, and conditions of the facilities and equipment (such as ensemble room, piano/keyboard, etc.). The type of music normally performed was also not covered in this study, both throughout the school year and for the performance portion of MPA district adjudications in the 2010 – 2011 school year. Attributes of each director as an educator, including years of experience, success in the classroom, as well as the director’s rapport with the students are also limitations. Facts about the choir members’ backgrounds, such as how long they’ve been singing, how many times they were accepted in All-State ensembles, and whether they take voice lessons, will also not be taken into account. These factors affect the success of any program, but are beyond the realm of the study.

All of the data regarding time spent practicing/teaching sight-reading and methods used were self-reported by each choir director. There is no way to control for self-reported information because the researcher has to trust that all of the choir directors are
being honest with their answers. There is also the possibility that they could make errors when reporting data.

Definition of Terms

1. **Music Performance Assessments (MPA)** - Adjudication festivals where choirs throughout the state of Florida receive feedback in the categories of performance and sight-reading as an ensemble (District MPA 2009 – 2010, 2010).

2. **Florida Vocal Association (FVA)** – a division of the Florida Music Educators Association. The FVA’s main purpose is the support of choral music, as well as general music in secondary schools in the state of Florida (Welcome to the Florida Vocal Association, 2010).

3. **Solfège** – the study of singing where syllables such as “Do,” “Re,” “Mi,” “Fa,” “Sol,” “La,” and “Ti” are used to represent notes (Using Solfège in Practica Musica Activities, 2010).

4. **Movable Do** – the study of singing where the tonic note of the key is represented by the name “Do” (Kennedy, movable-do, 2010).

5. **Fixed Do** – the study of singing where the note “C” is always represented by the name “Do,” no matter the key (Latham, 2010).
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The argument over which sight-reading method produces the best results has been taking place since the days of Colonial America. (Demorest, Building Choral Excellent: Teaching Sight-Singing in the Choral Rehearsal, 2001) The very first method of choral singing is credited to Guido d’Arezzo in the year 1030. His method, known as “solmization,” has many similar characteristics as today’s solfège. Slightly different syllables were used: “ut”, “re”, “mi”, “fa”, “sol”, “la”. Guido d’Arezzo also had singers use their hands to delineate each syllable. Since then, more methods for teaching sight-reading have developed, and with these new methods came more disagreements. One can see many common aspects of d’Arezzo’s method of solmization in sight-reading methods of today. The syllables used presently do not differ very much from the original syllables created by d’Arezzo (Hiley).

There are many different methods with which to teach sight-reading today, including singing using numbers, note names, neutral syllables, intervallic reading, and solfège. Curwen hand signs (Rainbow, Tonic Sol-fa) and the Kodály method (Eösze, Houlahan, & Tacka) involve the use of solfège syllables, and are very popular methods among choral directors. Because there are so many sight-reading methods and not many research studies regarding which method produces the best results, many teachers combine aspects of several methods, and the students learn using a variety of systems (McClung, 2001).

The wide range of teaching methods has been a very popular topic on which to develop theories, philosophies, and to study. There are many positive benefits to
examining past ideals regarding education, such as putting these principles to use to become a more effective teacher, reaching students in different ways, and achieving different levels of success. The following two sections contain different views of philosophers and theorists, as well as examples of research studies regarding both education in general and music education.

Why is it important to study sight-reading? According to Demorest, it produces musically independent students (Demorest, 2001). Learning to sight-sing also gives students the ability to learn music more quickly and with greater accuracy. Studying music thus tends to be more pleasurable for singers (Boyd, 1981). According to the *National Standards for Music Education*, having the ability to sight-read is mandatory for high school students who are in choir. This means that it is the duty of every choral director to teach the skill of sight-reading in rehearsals (The Consortium of National Arts Education Associates, 1994). Teaching a choir to sight-sing will also instill a sense of confidence in each member (Boyd, 1981).

Philosophical Rationales

What is the purpose for having a philosophy regarding education? According to Reimer and Jorgensen, adhering to a certain philosophy brings a sense of clarity to those teaching practices followed by an educator (Reimer, 2003) (Jorgensen, 2006). Some follow the philosophy of pragmatism, the key interest being the learning process. The means by which the student learns the information is most important. In pragmatism, the scientific method is often employed to determine outcomes of instruction. Teachers see students as individuals, and educate them on the basis that the world is ever-changing
(Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1984). Using a pragmatic style of teaching, a choir director could take each student individually and teach sight-reading using musical examples from different genres of music, helping the student problem-solve throughout each example.

Other philosophies that are concerned with evaluation are idealism and realism. Idealists are very interested in imparting to students ideals that are long-lasting. An idealist would most likely teach students works that are notable for being popular throughout history, pieces by greats such as Beethoven, Brahms, or Schumann. Realists generally believe that things are what they seem to be. Like idealists, realists would also be more concerned with teaching students works by great composers that have been popular throughout history, as opposed to pieces that have not gained notoriety. A student of a realist teacher would be apt to learn through experience, as opposed to only listening to a teacher speak about a piece (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1984).

One similarity with Elliot’s philosophy of praxialism and the philosophy of realism is that much of the focus is placed on experience. According to Elliot, praxialism highlights the fact that there are many layers involved with the process of fully understanding music. Musicianship and listening are skills at the forefront of praxialism, and the students must be active and actually experience music to fully develop these skills. An example of a teacher using praxialism in the classroom would be having the students clap and sing simultaneously while sight-reading. While the praxialist teacher recognizes the importance of experience, growth and knowledge of each individual is also of priority (Elliot, 2005) (Elliot, 1995).
Should sight-reading be taught with evaluation placed at the forefront of the learning process? Should teachers see students as individuals, or as making up a collective ensemble? These are ideas to be considered by teachers when determining the most effective methods of teaching.

Theoretical Rationales

Different theoretical rationales have evolved throughout the history of education. One such theory is constructivism. The constructivist teacher passes much of the responsibility on to the student (Chaillé, 2008) (Fosnot, 2005). Ideas develop through the students and through this means of learning new ideas are possible. While existing ideals are still considered, the idea that teachers tell students what is true and what isn’t is not a part of constructivism (Fosnot, 2005). In order for the student to fully understand and appreciate a concept the student must experience the concept in some way (Brophy, 2000) (Gagnon & Collay, 2001). Teachers can teach students different examples of sight-reading using any one method, while making the students cognizant as to how this method will help them learn to sight-read (Hunks & Ornstein, 2009).

Behaviorism, popularized by B. F. Skinner, and cognitivism, popularized by Jerome Bruner, are two major theories regarding education. The behaviorist teacher is concerned with observing bodily responses and base explanations for learning difficulties on these responses. The cognitivist teacher is concerned with how the brain functions when students are formulating ideas and understanding concepts. Other theories include Piaget’s Stage Theory, where teachers base their teaching style on the developmental stages of their students, as well as Maslow’s and Rogers’ psychology-based theories that
emphasize the importance of meeting the individual’s needs (Maslow) and functioning capabilities (Rogers) (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1984).

Research Studies

There are many research studies regarding sight-reading, particularly examining the question of what teaching methods of sight-reading produce the most success, and how much time is best to devote to these studies. Some of these teaching methods include “movable do-solfège, movable do-numbers, fixed do-solfège, neutral syllables (e.g. “loo”), letter names, and intervals” (Killian & Henry, 2005, pg. 53). A 2005 study in Texas showed that All-State choir students who kept the tonic pitch in mind while using hand signs to sight-read were more successful (Killian & Henry, 2005).

Should Curwen hand signs (Rainbow, 2010) be used in middle school, or should they only be used in an elementary setting? According to Giles, if middle school students are already familiar with these hand signs, it makes sense to continue to use them and then build on what they’ve already learned (Giles, 1991). Rogers’ 1991 study of using color-coded notation vs. non color-coded notation among 5th and 6th grade beginning band students showed that, while students using color-coded notation preferred this method over non color-coded notation, there was no statistically significant difference between the two methods with regards to sight-reading (Rogers, 1991).

Some teachers believe that movable-do solfège and the movable-do numbers method are the most-used sight-reading methods (McClung, 2006). Results showed that two methods, solfège and a combination of solfège and Curwen hand signs, were the most effective methods for improving nonmusic majors’ sense of pitch in a 1993 study by
Cassidy (Cassidy, 1993). The other methods being compared were the use of note names and a neutral syllable. In part of a 2005 study Henry and Killian were trying to determine which sight-reading method was most effective for 200 high school singers from Texas All-State Choir camps. Results showed that Curwen hand signs were among the most helpful methods in sight-reading practices (Henry & Killian, 2005).

Knowing different sight-reading techniques is important, but how important is it to be a successful teacher of a choir overall? What are the characteristics of a successful choir director? Barresi decided to send questionnaires to choir directors of successful choirs to try to answer these questions. Certain necessary qualities, as provided in the answers by these successful teachers, included having the ability to interact with students, having knowledge regarding teaching styles, musical training needed for the particular age group, general knowledge of the school, self-motivation, as well as other qualities (Barresi, 2000). This list shows that there are many attributes that make up a successful teacher.

Examining past research studies is a very effective way of choosing between the many methods available for teaching/practicing sight-reading. These research studies also have very valuable information regarding qualities of successful teachers, and how one can attain the highest standards of teaching in the music classroom. It is the obligation of teachers to meet their national standards, and examining the facts found in past research studies aids in achieving these goals.
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This is a descriptive research study. A survey with questions regarding sight-reading methods and time spent teaching/practicing sight-reading was sent out to 363 Florida choir directors. (This may not represent the entire population of Florida middle school choir directors as it was not clear whether some schools were elementary, middle, or high schools from their names, and some directors teach at multiple schools.) Forty-one middle school choir directors representing 80 Florida choirs responded to and met the requirements for a survey regarding sight-reading (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Several factors were correlated to determine the strength and direction in certain relationships. The first pair of variables included the amount of minutes per week spent teaching/practicing sight-reading as they related to MPA sight-reading and final ratings. The second was between those choirs that used movable do solfège with hand signs and those that did not or used a combination of methods. These two variables were correlated as they related to MPA sight-reading ratings as well as MPA final ratings. The third was between those choirs that used movable do solfège without hand signs and those that did not or used a combination of methods as they related to MPA sight-reading ratings and MPA final ratings. The last correlation calculated was between those choirs that used movable do solfège with hand signs and those that used movable do solfège without hand signs.
Research Participants

The sample for this study includes the middle school choir directors in the state of Florida who attended MPA district adjudications in the 2010 – 2011 school year with their choirs answered the survey, and met the survey requirements \((N = 41)\). Through a purposive sampling technique, the middle school choir directors from each of the statewide FVA districts in Florida who participated in MPA district adjudications to receive ratings (as opposed to comments only) in the 2010 – 2011 school year (District MPA 2009-2010) were sent questionnaires with questions related to their styles of teaching/practicing sight-reading. These contacts were found through the assistance of an FVA employee (District MPA 2009-2010) (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Data Collection

A questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions was sent to each of the choir directors involved in the study through www.surveymonkey.com. (See Appendix A.)

Reliability and Validity Procedures

While the information for MPA ratings can be found on the FVA website, question number 11 on the questionnaire is for reliability purposes. Asking each of the middle school choir directors their students’ ratings in the sight-reading category at their MPA district adjudications is a way to check the information found on the FVA website. Question number 14 is on the questionnaire for validity purposes. It is the researcher’s hopes that those who answered “Yes” to the question of whether they would like to see
the results of the study will especially take the time to answer the questions with as much
detail as possible, because their answers will greatly impact the results (Johnson &
Christensen, 2008).

Data Analysis

Correlational research was conducted in which the correlation coefficient was
calculated between several factors. The first was between the amount of minutes Florida
middle school choral directors spent teaching/practicing sight-reading per week with their
choirs in preparation for the sight-reading portion of the 2010 - 2011 MPA district
adjudication and the ratings received in the sight-reading category of MPA district
adjudications in the 2010 - 2011 school year.

There were several sets of point biserial correlations calculated, the first of which
was between middle school choirs in Florida that only used movable do solfège with
hand signs and those who did not or those that used a combination of methods when
preparing for their MPAs adjudications. The second set was between middle school
choirs in Florida that only used movable do solfège without hand signs and those that did
not or those who used a combination of methods when preparing for their MPAs
adjudications. The third set was between middle school choirs in Florida that only used
movable do solfège with hand signs and those that only used movable do solfège without
hand signs when preparing for MPA adjudications (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).
RESULTS

One purpose of this research project was to find out what methods middle school choir directors in Florida are using. Out of the 80 choirs representing the 41 choir directors who responded and met the requirements for this survey 32 used movable do solfège with hand signs only (40%), 8 used movable do solfège without hand signs only (10%), 2 used numbers only (3%), 1 used neutral syllables only (1%), and 37 used a combination of methods (46%).

Correlation coefficients were calculated to find the relationship between time spent and ratings in the sight-reading category and the final rating. In addition to the calculation made to determine this relationship, it was also discovered that 61% of choir directors altered the amount of time they spent teaching/practicing sight-reading with their choirs as MPA adjudications approached (see Figure 1 for this data). Point biserial correlations were also used to determine the relationships between certain methods used and sight-reading ratings and final ratings. All of the calculations ranged from -.43 to .25 and yielded no significant results (see Tables 1 – 4 for calculations). All of the calculations made were taken from choir data since there were more choirs than choir directors, and in some cases the data for three choirs represented one choir director.

It was discovered that 91% of choirs using movable do solfège with hand signs received a sight-reading rating of Superior. 59% of these choirs received a final rating of Superior. This is a 41% difference in the sight-reading ratings and a 34% difference in final ratings of the choirs that used movable do solfège without hand signs (see Table 4 for data).
AN ANALYSIS OF MELODIC SIGHT-READING METHODS

Table 1: Correlation coefficients of amount of minutes spent practicing sight-reading per week versus sight-reading ratings and final ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>r for sight-reading ratings</th>
<th>r for final ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Data as it relates to choirs that use movable do solfège with hand signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of choirs</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a sight-reading rating of Superior</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a sight-reading rating of Excellent</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a sight-reading rating of Good</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a final rating of Superior</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a final rating of Excellent</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a final rating of Good</th>
<th>r for sight-reading ratings</th>
<th>r for final ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Data as it relates to choirs that use movable do solfège without hand signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of choirs</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a sight-reading rating of Superior</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a sight-reading rating of Excellent</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a sight-reading rating of Good</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a final rating of Superior</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a final rating of Excellent</th>
<th>% of choirs that received a final rating of Good</th>
<th>r for sight-reading ratings</th>
<th>r for final ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Data as it relates to choirs that use movable do solfège with hand signs versus choirs that use movable do solfège without hand signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of choirs using hand signs that received a sight-reading rating of Superior</th>
<th>Percentage of choirs using no hand signs that received a sight-reading rating of Superior</th>
<th>Percentage of choirs using hand signs that received a final rating of Superior</th>
<th>Percentage of choirs using no hand signs that received a final rating of Superior</th>
<th>r for sight-reading ratings for choirs using hand signs versus choirs using no hand signs</th>
<th>r for final ratings for choirs using hand signs versus choirs using no hand signs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>-.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: The number of Florida middle school choir directors who practiced the same amount of minutes per week throughout the school year versus the Florida middle school choir directors who changed the amount of minutes per week that they practiced as MPA adjudications approached.
Figure 2: Sight-reading methods employed by Florida middle school choirs
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

For this particular set of data, time spent practicing/teaching sight-reading did not have much of an effect on sight-reading in the MPA sight-reading category. The reason for this lack of effect is unknown, but it could be due to several factors, many of which were listed in the “Limitations and Delimitations” section of this report. Out of the 80 choirs representing this study, 64 received ratings of Superior, 15 received ratings of Excellent, and one received a rating of Good in the sight-reading category at MPA adjudications. Perhaps the reason that the time spent practicing/teaching sight-reading did not affect ratings is because the sight-reading group adjudications lack a degree of difficulty that would result in a lower number of choirs receiving a Superior rating.

There were a greater number of choir directors who altered the amount of time they spent teaching/practicing sight-reading as MPA adjudications approached than those who said they spent the same amount of time throughout the school year. This shows that many choir directors are inconsistent with the time they devote to sight-reading throughout the year. This could be for a number of reasons, including a high number of concerts/performances throughout the year, short weekly rehearsals, or possibly some directors might not view sight-reading as an integral part of choir rehearsals.

The low correlation between ratings in sight-reading category versus overall ratings could be for several different reasons. One could be that there is some disconnect between the level of difficulty of the performance section of the MPA adjudication and the sight-reading section. It is also possible that some choir directors are spending too much time on one area and neglecting the preparation needed for the other section of the adjudication.
Very important information regarding sight-reading methods used was discovered as they related to MPA ratings. Of all of the sight-reading methods that were used alone, movable do solfège was by far the greatest. There were 41% more ratings of Superior in the sight-reading category and 34% more final ratings of Superior for those choirs that used movable do solfège with hand signs versus those that used movable do solfège without hand signs. This increase could be due to the visual and kinesthetic cues associated with hand signs that may help students better understand solfège.

There is also a question of whether sight-reading should be taught the same way throughout the school year or there should be some adjustments the closer the MPA adjudication gets. Of all the choir directors who responded to the survey only four stated that they altered their methods of teaching/practicing sight-reading. These four choir directors represent six choirs, four of which received ratings of Superior and two of which received ratings of Excellent (see Appendix B for comments).

Perhaps future research needs to be devoted to whether the key to sight-reading success lies in individual study, rather than group study (as in a choir). It is also possible that none of the factors discussed in the survey truly affect a choir’s ability to sight-read. Perhaps more individual attention paired with a more difficult sight-reading adjudication will unveil the key to sight-reading success.
APPENDIX A

Comparing Methods of Teaching Sight-Singing Among
Middle School Choir Directors in the State of Florida

The purpose of this study is to discover which methods of teaching sight-singing are most effective among middle school choirs in the state of Florida.

1. Did you attend MPA district adjudications with your middle school choir in the 2010-2011 school year?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

2. On average, how many minutes per week did you spend teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading with your middle school choir throughout the entire 2010–2011 school year (not just preparing for MPA)?
   ____________________________

3. Did you spend more minutes per week teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading when preparing your middle school choir for the melodic sight-reading portion of their MPA district adjudication in the 2010-2011 school year than you did the rest of the school year?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

4. If you answered “No” to question 3, please move on to question 5.
   If you answered “Yes” to question 3, please write approximately how many minutes per week you spent teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading with your middle school choir when preparing for the melodic sight-reading portion of your MPA district adjudication in the 2010-2011 school year.
   ____________________________

5. Please check off which method(s) you use to teach/practice melodic sight-reading with your middle school choir. If you use more than one, you may check multiple boxes.
   If you use a different method, please check “Other,” and then briefly describe your method.
☐ Solfège (with hand signs, movable do)  ☐ Using Intervals
☐ Solfège (with hand signs, fixed do)  ☐ Using Numbers
☐ Solfège (without hand signs, movable do)  ☐ Using a Neutral Syllable
☐ Solfège (without hand signs, fixed do)  ☐ Other (please describe below)

6. Did you alter your style of teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading when preparing your middle school choir for the melodic sight-reading portion of your MPA district adjudication in the 2010 – 2011 school year from your style of teaching/practicing sight-reading throughout the rest of the year?

☐ Yes
☐ No

7. If you answered “No” to question 6, please move on to question 8.

If you answered “Yes” to question 6, please briefly describe how you changed your style of teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading when preparing your middle school choir for the melodic sight-reading portion of your MPA district adjudication in the 2010 – 2011 school year.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

8. How many weeks before attending your MPA district adjudication in the 2010 – 2011 school year did you start teaching/practicing melodic sight-reading exercises that were tailored for your adjudication with your middle school choir students?

__________________________________________________________________

9. What is the name of your school? (This information will be made known only to the researcher)?

__________________________________________________________________

10. What is your FVA district number?

__________________________________________________________________

11. What score did your middle school choir receive in the sight-reading category at your MPA district adjudication in the 2010-2011 school year?

__________________________________________________________________
12. How many students are in your middle school choir?

______________________________

13. How many minutes per week do you have of total rehearsal time with your middle school choir?

______________________________

14. Would you be interested in seeing the results of this study? (Names of schools/directors/choir names will not be revealed in the study.)

☐ Yes
☐ No

(Johnson & Christensen, 2008)
I used different preparation materials (examples from previous years' MPAs) and I structured preparation time to feel exactly like MPA, whereas other times of the year I just focused on practicing sight-reading in a more general sense.

At the beginning of the year, I will sing with them. Then I move (around late fall) to only singing to correct them. Right after the holidays I will not sing at all, and I will not use anything more than the beat in my conducting pattern.

I changed from the textbook to FVA study books.

Starting teaching in a structure with how MPA is done - do not open book, look at exercise for a minute, go back and point out skips, give beat and do and then sing.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Originally from Buffalo, NY, Allison Bisco has been involved in music in different ways for most of her life. While much of this time has been spent singing, she had planned to pursue a career as an oboist. Her experience as a member of the 2001 New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) High School All-State Chorus changed these plans, and she changed her career path to one in the choral field.

Although Allison graduated from the University of Miami in 2006 with a Bachelor of Music in Music Business, she returned to her true calling of teaching soon after. In addition to finishing her master’s degree in music education in December of 2011, she is currently Assistant Choral Director at Pine Crest School in Boca Raton. It is while working with the choirs and teaching private voice lessons at school where she instills important sight-reading skills among her students.