

Leadership even in (ESPECIALLY in) children's choirs

There is an article making the rounds again about how singing in a choir can teach valuable leadership skills. The article addresses the various life skills learned by participating in choral singing that can be valuable in training future leaders in management, but it made me think of how we can all give kids actual leadership opportunities within their ensembles right now.

For those of you who have ever worked with young children, you know the value of giving kids "jobs". (How much fun is it to be the "line leader!") We can create all kinds of leadership positions, and we all know in our programs that

Leadership = Engagement = Investment

Here are a few things we do in our choirs that you might want to try with your youngest singers: folder captains, pencil captains, music captains, row captains, and chair captains.

Folder captains are responsible for arriving a little early to bring the music folders from their storage space to the rehearsal room. Depending on the size of your choir, you may need one captain per section, or per row.

Pencil captains are responsible for seeing that everyone in their row or section has a sharpened pencil. They LOVE getting up in rehearsal to deliver a pencil to someone who needs one!

Music captains do the same thing with music, passing out new octavos, etc.

Row captains are responsible for making sure their row is neat and tidy before departure. This is especially important when maintaining good will with the church or other facility that is hosting your rehearsal!

Chair captains arrive early to set up the rehearsal space, and stay a bit later to return it to its previous set up.

As you can see, this potentially gives a *lot* of your youngest singers big responsibilities. These duties can change each semester so more singers can become involved in leadership.

You can also have **section leaders**, even in your elementary choirs. They might not have as big a responsibility as a high school section leader, but they can do a lot! They might stand in front of their section to show the hand signs for a solfege warm-up, demonstrate part of a piece, or even help lead an entire sectional in a practice room.

In high school choirs your section leaders might want to help make rehearsal tracks and even schedule additional sectionals for the group. (If that sounds farfetched, I have had this happen, even when I didn't ask for it!) High school choirs also benefit from having **choir officers**. My high school ensemble currently has a president, vice president, and librarian who is kind of a grown-up music captain, but with the added responsibility of making sure music provided by the symphony or other collaborating arts organizations is properly accounted for.

As your singers get older, but even when they are younger, it is a good idea to let them give you ideas for ways to do their jobs. They are creative people, and many times they think of things you have never considered. And this creates even MORE engagement and investment!

I would love to hear what YOU do in your choirs to provide leadership opportunities!

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