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## The Way We Do the Things We Do: A Survey of Middle-School Choral Educators' Sight-Singing Attitudes and Influences

This study explored the rationale for sight-singing instructional choices of chorus teachers at the middle school level and sought to determine teachers' commitment to teaching music literacy. Three research questions formed the basis of the study: (1) what is the prevalence of sight-singing instruction in choral music classes, (2) what is the rationale for sight-singing instruction, (3) when do teachers first learn the sight-singing method they use. Members of a state music educators' association were asked to complete an online questionnaire. The majority of respondents self-reported the inclusion of sight-singing instruction for all their ensembles for a duration of five to fifteen minutes, which is similar to data previously reported in high school classrooms. When asked where they first learned the method they currently use, most teachers said that it was at the middle school level. The prevalence of this response indicates the life-long impression that early music learning may have on future music educators, though few specified their middle school teacher as an influence on their current methods selection. The data indicates that respondents employed a variety of methods, and that movable Solfège was the most frequently cited primary method. Eachers' personal philosophies were determined to be more important than influences such as curriculum standards, festival requirements or previous methods professors.

The ability to sing music at sight, or sight-singing, is a fundamental skill for developing musical independence in Western music. For example, music reading is included as one of the National Standards for Arts Education (MENC, 1994) and numerous choral method books include music reading instruction as an important part of the curriculum (Bartle, 2003; Brinson, 1996; Collins, 1999; Phillips, 2003; Roe, 1994). Yet research on sight-singing in the choral classroom has identified considerable variability in the amount of time or effort teachers spend on music

reading (Daniels, 1988; Demorest, 2004; Hales, 1961; Johnson, 1987; Kuehne, 2007; Von Kampen, 2003). Further, high school students evince poor sight-singing performance overall (Demorest & May, 1995; Gaston, 1940; Henry & Demorest, 1994). There is an increasing interest in accountability in the music classroom in the last fifteen years, with more time and resources now devoted to performance-based assessment than ever before (Demorest, 2001). Yet few studies have examined sight-singing instructional practices to see what influence these changes might have had on teachers' approaches to music instruction, and research is even more scant relative to sight-singing instruction at the middle school level.

The middle school years represent a time of great physical, emotional and academic development for student singers. The period marks the beginning of adolescence and bridges the formative elementary years of general music to the often performance-based experiences of high school ensemble study. Middle school may provide a further foundation for music appreciation and music skill development. During this time, music-making becomes a part of a personal identity (Gembris, 2006), and students who elect to participate in performance studies gain skills for a lifetime. The examination of instructional practices by choral teachers at the middle school level reveals the extent of commitment to skills such as sight-singing, as well as how influences of a teacher's philosophy, choice of method, and time spent teaching that skill affect instruction.

Most of the literature is devoted to the investigation of sight-singing instruction in high school settings, with emphasis given to sight-singing instruction, methods and Solfège systems, and materials. In surveys, teachers have reported varying amounts of time spent sight-singing at the secondary level, usually reported as between 12-33% of class time (Daniels, 1988; Johnson, 1987) or 5-15 minutes (Demorest, 2001, 2004; Kuehne, 2007; May, 1993; Smith, 1998). However, when Szabo (1992) asked ten teachers to keep a journal at the end of each day for one week about how classroom time was spent, no sight-singing instruction activity in their classes was reported. Researchers have undertaken only limited actual *observation* of time spent sight-singing, and their findings range from teachers that spend no time sight-singing (Fiocca, 1989) to others that spend 52% of class time on the activity (Von Kampen, 2003).

A variety of materials and methods are documented in sight-singing instruction involving middle-school populations. Demorest (2004) surveyed middle school and high school teachers, who reported that choral octavos and self-created materials were used most frequently in order to develop students' sight-singing skills. Another survey of middle school chorus teachers (Kuehne, 2007) evidenced the use of published methods books, software, and unpublished or self-written

materials. While a prevalence for moveable-Do in secondary classrooms has been documented (Demorest, 2004; Smith, 1998), no evidence exists confirming a basis for the use of one system exclusive of any others (Demorest & May, 1995). The use of interval training, scale-degree numbers, moveable-Do, fixed-Do have all been documented (Demorest, 2001, 2004; Johnson, 1987; May, 1993; Smith, 1998).

Two surveys of middle school teacher populations have examined the curricular influences of choral directors. Hamann (2007) found that instructional influences exist within and outside the school and school district. Chorus teacher(s) at the local high school ranked as most influential among possible factors for this population of middle school chorus teachers, followed by the influence of community standards. Categories of influence were divided between within-school, within-school-district, or outside-district factors, and teachers were asked to consider influences within each category. Since those influences were studied discretely, it is difficult to compare influences between categories, and an effort has not yet been made to define the factors affecting personal preference.

In studying middle-school sight-singing practices, methods, and materials, Kuehne (2007) documented the influences on Florida middle school choral directors in their teaching of sight-singing as ranging from their own school experiences to the techniques utilized by their college theory teachers. Like Hamann (2007), a majority of respondents indicated that their undergraduate music education methods professor had limited influence, while of those teachers with graduate school experience, most indicated that their graduate school professors were not influential, suggesting teacher attitudes are stabilized by the end of graduate study. Kuehne suggested the possibility that some teachers were not educated about sight-singing pedagogy or that exposure was limited due to the multitude of other necessary methods topics. However, teachers have not yet been asked to report a primary reason for their method selection.

The multiple influences that affect the instructional processes involved in the acquisition of sight-singing skills demonstrate the complexity of teachers' decision-making in developing curricula and specific lesson plans. Therefore, this study explored the rationale for sight-singing instructional choices of chorus teachers at the middle school level and sought to determine teachers' commitment to teaching sight-singing. Three research questions formed the basis of the study:

- (1) What is the prevalence of sight-singing instruction in choral music classes?
- (2) What is the rationale for sight-singing instruction?
- (3) When do teachers first learn the sight-singing method they use?

## Method

The target population for the survey was those middle school choral teachers registered with a state-level music educators association ( $N = 161$ ). Their names and contact information were provided in a query from the online database available to all members of the association. State music educator association membership was chosen because teachers must be registered in order to participate in the annual in-service/conference, junior all-state activities, adjudicated festivals, to receive the quarterly bulletin, mentoring and advocacy support, and to join the National Association for Music Education (MENC).

The survey instrument was adapted from Kuehne (2007). Changes were made in order to accommodate state-specific characteristics. For example, during adjudicated middle-school festivals in the selected state, teachers choose whether the sight-singing component is included in the final rating or used for comments-only, thus a state-specific question was added to address this option. In addition, the state-specific response “Rank 1” (30 hours above a master’s degree) was added to the demographic question regarding education earned. Since the purpose of this study was to examine teachers’ rationales for sight-singing curriculum decisions, unrelated questions were eliminated and questions specific to teacher influences were added.

The adapted instrument contained six sections with a total of fifty-five questions, including Background/Demographic, Sight-Singing Instruction Frequency and Time, Teacher Philosophy, Sight-Singing Practices, Influences, and Methods. Question types included multiple-choice, ‘choose all that apply,’ Likert-type scales, and open response. Additional questions were designed to ask respondents at what academic level they first learned the method they currently employ, to indicate a primary system of instruction (Solfège, numbers, etc.), and to indicate a primary rationale for its use.

The questionnaire was formatted as an online survey at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) and piloted with two in-state retired teachers and eight out-of-state active chorus teachers. Once necessary corrections were made to the online survey, an email was distributed to potential respondents. The researcher was introduced as an in-state colleague and subjects were assured that data such as teacher and school identifiers would not be associated with the survey results. Additionally, a reminder email was sent two weeks later. Participant names and school information were collected to ensure teachers were not contacted with a follow-up reminder once they had completed the survey.

Questionnaire links were emailed to the population ( $N = 161$ ). Nine emails were returned as undeliverable through the state school email system, indicating

the educator was no longer employed in their registered school district. Thirteen teachers replied that they were not actually teaching at the middle school level and 15 replied that they were not currently teaching any choirs. Using an adjusted *N* of 124, 95 questionnaires were received, resulting in a 77% response rate. In initial email contact, teachers were asked to participate even if they did not teach sight-singing to any of their choirs. However, it should be noted that teachers who feature sight-singing exercises in their classes may have been more likely to respond to a sight-singing questionnaire than those who do not.

## Results

### *Demographic Information*

Seventy-seven percent of the population responded to this survey of middle-school chorus teachers' sight-singing instruction and attitudes. These teachers represented a variety of instructional settings. Over half of the respondents (60.0%) taught in middle schools with between 501-1000 total students. Of all respondents, 8.4% had less than 25 students in choir; 15.8% had 26-50 students; 12.6% had 51-75 students; 24.2% had 76-100 students; 15.8% had 101-150 students; 15.8% had 151-200 students; and 7.4% had over 201 students. These music teachers taught between zero and seven choirs during the school day (at least one had after-school ensembles only), and 50.5% of respondents led either 2 or 3 total choir classes during the school day. Some teachers met with up to four ensembles outside the school day, though 61.1% taught no extracurricular ensembles.

In this state, a spring assessment festival is administered by the music educators' association, and middle school choral directors can choose whether their sight-singing score counts towards the final rating. Of all respondents, 50.5% chose for their sight-singing adjudication to count as a part of their overall score at festival; 34.7% generally do not attend festival; 10.5% sight-sing for comments only (no rating); and 4.2% of respondents indicated that adjudication depended on the specific ensemble. Of respondents who attend festival, 76.3% sight-sing for a score; 16.9% for comments only; and 6.8% choose differently for each ensemble. A comparison of means yielded a non-significant result for differences between time spent sight-singing and whether the teacher attended festival ( $p > .05$ ). Nearly 9 out of 10 (89.5%) responded affirmatively to teaching sight-singing to all their middle school choirs; those remaining teachers cited a lack of time or a lack of time and materials as the reason for not including this part of the curriculum.

**Research Question 1: Frequency and Importance of Sight-Singing in Middle School Choirs**

Respondents were asked to indicate the *frequency* with which they provided sight-singing instruction. In this sample, 53.3% of respondents taught sight-singing during every rehearsal; 20.7% percent had no specific schedule for sight-singing instruction; 17.4% one rehearsal per week or less; and 8.7% did not teach sight-singing. Regarding *duration* of instruction, 55.4% of respondents taught sight-singing between 5-10 minutes each time they provided sight-singing instruction; 22.8% taught sight-singing between 10-15 minutes; 8.7% did not teach sight-singing; 7.6% between 15-20 minutes; 4.3% less than five minutes; and 1.1% more than 25 minutes. Expressed differently, 78.2% of teachers self-reported the delivery of sight-singing instruction to last between 5-15 minutes when it is taught.

Teachers were asked to respond to statements about sight-singing philosophy (Table 1). Teachers agreed that students should learn to read music in addition to learning performance skills (standard deviation in parentheses),  $M = 9.18$  (1.92), and that middle school students should be taught sight-singing,  $M = 9.26$  (1.72), but based more on a personal philosophy than national standards,  $M = 7.01$  (2.67), or because of festival requirements,  $M = 6.14$  (2.76). Teachers were less influenced by external factors such as high school teacher expectations,  $M = 2.78$  (2.45), or because the state or school district required it,  $M = 3.60$  (2.45).

**Table 1 - Agreement Ratings for Sight-Singing Philosophy Statements**

	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
Choral teachers should teach sight-singing to middle school choral students.	9.26	10	10	1.72
Middle school choral teachers should teach sight-singing because students should learn how to read music in addition to learning how to perform it.	9.18	10	10	1.92
Middle school choral teachers should teach sight-singing because of MENC's National Standards.	7.01	7	10	2.67
Middle school choral students should learn to sight-sing because they have to go to sight-singing contests.	6.14	6	5	2.76
Middle school choral teachers should concentrate more on teaching the students to perform and less on teaching them sight-singing.	4.15	3	3	2.56
Middle school choral teachers should teach sight-singing because their state and/or school district require it.	3.60	3	1	2.45
Middle school choral teachers should only teach sight-singing because their high school teacher who recruits their students expects it.	2.78	2	1	2.45
If middle school choral students do not go to sight-singing contests, their choral teacher does not need to teach them to sight-sing.	1.87	1	1	1.78
If their state and/or district do not require it, middle school choral teachers should not teach sight-singing.	1.59	1	1	1.33

$n = 84$

Note: Respondents rated each using a range of 1 to 10 where 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

*Research Question 2: What method do teachers use and why?*

When asked to indicate just one *primary* method of teaching sight-singing, teachers responded: moveable-Do without Curwen hand signs (40.2%), Curwen hand signs with a form of Solfège (23.0%), scale-degree numbers (14.9%), neutral syllables (10.3%), fixed-Do (6.9%), and letter names (4.6%). When asked to indicate all factors involved in sight-singing method selection, 72.5% chose “I believe my students will sight-read better if they use this method compared to other methods”; 27.5% selected the response that the method was the first the teacher ever experienced; 20.0% of respondents chose the response “Because I believe the research best supports it”; 20.0% replied that the method was the one with which the teacher was most comfortable; 7.5% because the high school in the area uses the method; and 6.3% chose based on their predecessor’s method. Eleven respondents chose “other.”

*Research Question 3: Occurrence of first exposure to method & methods attitudes*

Teachers were asked when they first learned the method they currently employ: middle school (24.0%), college methods course (14.7%), “from other teachers” (14.7%), college choir (13.3%), college theory course (13.3%), professional development (9.3%), high school (8.0%), and from the previous director at the school (2.7%). When responding to statements regarding Sight-Singing Practices (Table 2), there was strong agreement on the efficacy of the moveable-DO method,  $M = 8.35$  (2.18), but little agreement on the efficacy of Fixed-DO,  $M = 3.67$  (2.82). The mode for each of these responses was ten and one, respectively. Teachers were neutral on whether rhythm and melody should be taught separately or together,  $M = 5.39$  (2.74). Teachers were asked to rate a variety of influences on current sight-singing instructional practices (Table 3). The strongest response for influences was ‘undergraduate aural/theory professor,’  $M = 6.23$  (3.29) and the lowest-rated influence was ‘teacher’s own middle school choir director,’  $M = 3.00$  (3.08)

Table 2 - Agreement Ratings for Sight-Singing Practices

	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
The Movable-DO method (where <i>do</i> changes to the tonic of the key signature) is an effective method to use.	8.35	9	10	2.18
Students should learn staff notation and aural patterns together.	8.03	9	10	2.20
Students should learn sight-singing using Solfège syllables.	7.99	9	10	2.47
Solfège syllables should be used during choral warm up activities.	7.91	9	10	2.36
Movement activities are very useful.	7.85	9	10	2.48
Students should learn to sight-sing in two or more voice parts.	7.06	7	10	2.47
Students should learn by using the Kodály (Curwen) hand signs.	6.81	8	10	2.81
Rhythm and melody should be taught separately.	5.39	5	5	2.74
Students should learn staff notation first.	5.29	4	5	2.60
Using the piano is necessary.	4.64	5	1, 5	2.61
Students should learn melodic patterns aurally first, before seeing staff notation.	4.59	5	1, 5	2.69
The piano should only be used for the weaker reading voices.	3.95	4	5	2.41
The Fixed-DO method (where <i>do</i> = C) is an effective method to use.	3.67	3	1	2.82
The piano should never be used.	2.99	2	1	2.55

*n* = 84

Note: Respondents rated each using a range of 1 to 10 where 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

Table 3 - Influences on Sight-Singing Instructional Practices

	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
The professor(s) who taught you basic aural and theory skills when you were an undergraduate.	6.23	6	10	3.29
Music in-services/workshops you have attended.	5.82	6	7	2.83
The professor(s) who taught your teaching methods or other music education courses when you were an undergraduate.	5.75	6	10	3.19
Other teachers who do not teach in your school district.	5.14	5	1	3.37
Other middle school choral directors in your school district.	4.95	5	1	3.14
Other music teacher(s) who taught you when you were in high school.	4.46	4	1	3.39
The professor(s) who taught you teaching methods or other music education courses when you were a graduate student (masters and/or PhD).	4.18	3	1	3.46
Other high school choral directors in your school district (not where your students will attend high school).	4.17	3	1	3.28
The teacher(s) who taught you when you were in high school choir.	4.16	3	1	3.28
The teacher where your students will go to high school.	4.00	3	1	3.41
The teacher(s) who taught you when you were in middle school choir.	3.00	1	1	3.08

*n* = 84

Note: Respondents rated each using a range of 1 to 10 where 1 = no influence at all and 10 = very strong influence.

## Discussion

The goal of this survey was to gather information on the basis for sight-singing instructional choices by middle school chorus teachers, and the results indicate a variety of influences and challenges. The questionnaire asked teachers to cite a *primary* instructional method and to indicate a rationale for its use. When asked, “Where did you first learn the method you use?” more teachers (24.0%) responded that they had acquired the method in their own middle school experiences, indicating the possibility of a lasting impression that early music learning may have on future music educators. This finding refutes earlier reports (Kuehne, 2007), and also elsewhere in the present results, that few teachers named their own middle school music teachers as influential of their current methods selection. The meaning of this contradiction is unclear and it is unknown whether teachers rate recent experiences as more influential than early experiences. Alternatively, current institutional influences like the music educator association structure and school curriculum may be a more salient influence than the teacher’s own early educational experiences.

Of teachers who responded, 72.5% claimed that their students sight-read better as the result of using a particular method, and the next most frequent response was that the selected method was the one first experienced by the teacher—at whatever level or context of their education. As already indicated, many teachers are first exposed to formal sight-singing while in middle-school, thus music learning at this level may have lasting effects. Twenty percent of respondents indicated their method selection was based on a belief regarding the current research, though there is little research demonstrating the superiority of any single method. That most teachers reported that students perform better using a particular method (the one chosen by the teacher) conflicts with evidence that no method is necessarily superior to others (Demorest, 2001). Because the focus of this study was the influences of middle school choir directors, no questions were designed to test the suggestion that specific sight-reading strategies may be more important than the method used (Henry, 2008; Killian & Henry, 2005), though it may be useful to examine classrooms where more than one sight-reading system is employed.

### *Why Respondents Didn’t Teach Sight-Reading*

To explore factors that discourage the teaching of sight-singing, the 10.5% of teachers who reported they did not teach sight-singing to all of their ensembles were led to an open-ended question asking which choirs did not practice sight-

singing. All of these respondents cited either a lack of time or a lack of time and materials. Some choirs were not curricular but rather met once or twice per week or met as a part of a curricular rotation for a limited number of weeks during the school year. Teachers of these choirs may have determined that they were meant as recreational rather than as educational ventures. While these ensembles serve an important and sometimes specific performance purpose, teachers of these choirs may feel forced to choose between performance and music literacy instruction. For students in extracurricular ensembles, literacy instruction may already be received as a part of a curricular choral class, which illustrates the complexity in terms of planning instruction for multiple ensembles. This diversity of possible scenarios also spotlights the difficulty in asking teachers to report which students receive sight-singing instruction and for how much time.

### *Sight-Singing Instruction*

A majority of respondents (89.5%) taught sight-singing to all of their choirs, which differs from Hales' (1961) and Daniels' (1988) earlier findings that only some ensembles experience sight-singing instruction. Most teachers report between 5-15 minutes on sight-singing instruction, which supports more recent research that found sight-singing instruction to 5-15 minutes in duration in middle school settings (Kuehne, 2007) and in high school settings (Demorest, 2004; May, 1993; Smith, 1998). Since it could be beneficial to teach sight-singing skills contextually and throughout rehearsals (Bartle, 2003) rather than isolated to a small beginning part of class, future questions could be designed along these lines in order to determine how much time is spent teaching music literacy throughout the rehearsal. This may prove difficult for teachers to estimate.

As a motivating factor for the teaching of sight-singing, festivals underscore the significance of music literacy when they include group sight-singing assessment, and honor choir auditions can reinforce the importance of music reading when they employ sight-singing assessment. The literature implies the inclusion of sight-singing assessment in adjudicated festivals and honor choir audition processes may motivate high school teachers to spend more time on sight-singing instruction (Wine, 1996), though these middle school teachers did not indicate the festival requirement was a strong curricular influence. Additionally, teachers who did not attend festivals reported teaching sight-singing as much as those who did, which is consistent with teachers' low rating of the influence of festival requirements. In other words, the students of these teachers may receive the same sight-singing instruction regardless of festival requirements.

Middle school teachers participating in this study agree with previous high school samples that using movable-Do is an effective method (Demorest, 2004; May 1993; Smith 1998). Teachers may have strong feelings about their preferred method, which is demonstrated by the result that many teachers indicated a belief in using one method compared to another. Teachers did not indicate that the local high school teacher(s) exercises a strong influence on their sight-singing instruction, which can conceivably be challenging for students. The teaching of multiple sight-singing systems at the middle school level could be promoted to facilitate the transition for singers from middle school to high school since the universal use of an instructional method is arguably less important than the universal teaching of music literacy.

In-service training ranked second among teacher influences in this survey, suggesting that in-service development could be an important opportunity for teacher development. Participation in sight-singing-specific professional development sessions is generally self-selected, but the continuation of opportunities for in-service teachers to learn and share efficient techniques and materials for all areas of music literacy instruction is necessary. Hamann (2007) suggested current influences were more important to teachers than previous undergraduate or graduate education. Therefore, to accommodate the needs of middle school students more professional development should be devoted to developmental and remedial materials for teachers of middle school choir teachers.

## **Conclusion and Future Research**

The findings presented here are relevant for three key audiences: practicing educators who wish to compare or refine their allocation of instructional time, organizations who seek to determine the impact of festival and honor choir requirements, and teacher-training institutions who study instructional efficacy in the context of other influences. There were more common instructional practices than instructional differences found, and this was expected since overall these results replicate findings from a previous population (Kuehne, 2007) and affirm middle school teacher populations may be more similar than different. While it is possible that those teachers in the population who did not respond to the survey allocate less or no time to sight-singing instruction, the respondents indicated a wide range of influences and teaching behaviors. It can be noted that even if each of the teachers who chose not to respond do not teach any music reading skills, more than half of teachers in the population would still include sight-singing as a part of the curriculum.

Of all instructional influences, external factors like school or district requirements were less important to teachers than national standards or festival requirements; however, 17 years after the promulgation of national standards, teachers were still not teaching sight-singing to all their choirs. When they do, teachers overwhelmingly believe in the superiority of the chosen instructional method. Teachers demonstrated notable engagement in sight-singing instruction, having committed to a method and devoting significant portions of rehearsal to music reading. Future research should explore the role of sight-singing within teacher's understanding of what levels of music literacy students can achieve.

Data indicate middle school teachers may share instructional practices with high school teachers in some ways, (i.e. in their time spent sight-singing and in having a positive attitude toward Moveable-DO). However, they cannot be assumed to share all attitudes with high school teachers. The relationship between feeder schools and their respective high school programs was insubstantial as indicated by teachers' mean agreement rating for influence. Future research should be developed to examine the effect on student learning of coordination of curriculum or methods between elementary and middle school and between middle and high school. Teacher education specialists may be interested in investigating the role of music literacy in school programs, including the impact of state curriculum and national standards on teacher definitions of music literacy, within the context of a comprehensive K-12 vision for curriculum.

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## Appendix - Survey Questions

### Background Data (please fill in or circle response, where applicable)

1. Completed years of full-time school teaching in music:  
0-4    5-9    10-14    15-25    25+
2. Highest level of education earned:  
a. Bachelors    b. Masters    c. Rank I    d. Doctorate
3. What institution(s) granted your degree?  
a. Bachelors: \_\_\_\_\_  
b. Masters: \_\_\_\_\_  
c. Rank I: \_\_\_\_\_  
d. Doctorate: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the size of your school?  
a. Under 100 students    b. 100-500 students    c. 501-1000 students  
d. 1000-1500 students    e. 1500-2000 students    f. More than 2000 students
5. What is the total number of students in your choir(s)?  
a. Less than 25    b. 25-50    c. 51-75    d. 76-100    e. 101-150    f. 151-200  
g. 201- 250    h. 251- 300    i. 301-350    j. 351-400    k. Over 400
6. Number of choral ensembles that meet during the school day:
7. Number of choral ensembles that meet outside the school day:

### **Sight-Singing Instruction Frequency and Time**

8. What is the schedule you see your students during the school day?  
a. Regular schedule- every day for approximately 45-60 minutes each class meeting.  
b. Block schedule- every other day for approximately 80-90 minutes each class meeting  
c. Other, please specify:

Contributions to Music Education

9. How often do you teach sight-singing in your middle school choir rehearsal(s)? (Check one)
  - a. I do not teach sight-singing
  - b. One rehearsal per month during school day rehearsals
  - c. One rehearsal per week during the school day
  - d. Every rehearsal during the school day
  - e. No specific schedule
  - f. One rehearsal per month during the school day or during extra/after-school rehearsal
  - g. One rehearsal per week or during the school day or extra/after-school rehearsal
  - h. All rehearsals (during school day and extra/after school rehearsals)
  - i. Other – please specify:
10. When you teach sight-singing, approximately how many minutes do you spend in each rehearsal teaching sight-singing?
  - a. I do not teach sight-singing
  - b. less than 5
  - c. 5-10
  - d. 10-15
  - e. 15-20
  - f. 20-25
  - g. more than 25
11. At festival, do your ensembles sight-read for a rating or comments only?
  - a. Ratings
  - b. Comments only
  - c. Different for each ensemble
  - d. Generally do not attend festival
12. Do you teach sight-singing to all of your middle school choir(s)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. no
13. If you checked no, which choirs do not receive sight-singing instruction and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Teaching Philosophy*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree	Disagree			Neutral			Agree		Strongly Agree

14. Middle school choral teachers should teach sight-singing because students should learn how to read music in addition to learning how to perform it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

15. Choral teachers should teach sight-singing to middle school choral students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

16. Middle school choral teachers should teach sight-singing because of MENC's National Standards.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

17. Middle school choral students should learn to sight-sing because they have to go to sight-singing contests.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

18. Middle school choral teachers should concentrate more on teaching the students to perform and less on teaching them sight-singing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

19. Middle school choral teachers should only teach sight-singing because their high school teacher who recruits their students expects it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

20. Middle school choral teachers should teach sight-singing because their state and/or school district require it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

21. If middle school choral students do not go to sight-singing contests, their choral teacher does not need to teach them to sight-sing.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

22. If their state and/or district do not require it, middle school choral teachers should not teach sight-singing.

*Sight-Singing Practices*

23. The Movable-DO method (where do changes to the tonic of the key signature) is an effective method to use.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

24. Students should learn to sight-sing in two or more voice parts.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

25. Students should learn sight-singing using Solfège syllables.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

26. Solfège syllables should be used during choral warm up activities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

27. Movement activities are very useful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

28. Students should learn by using the Kodály (Curwen) hand signs.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

29. Students should learn staff notation and aural patterns together.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

30. Rhythm and melody should be taught separately.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

31. Students should learn melodic patterns aurally first, before seeing staff notation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

32. Using the piano is necessary.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

33. Students should learn staff notation first.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

34. The piano should only be used for the weaker reading voices.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

35. The piano should never be used.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

36. The Fixed-DO method (where *do* = C) is an effective method to use.

37. Please check all of the items below that you use when teaching sight-singing to your middle school choir(s) (check all that apply):
- a. Solfège syllables while sight-singing
  - b. Kodály (Curwen) hand signs
  - c. rhythm syllables
  - d. Fixed-DO method
  - e. Solfège syllables during warm-up activities
  - f. Kodály (Curwen) hand signs during warm-up activities
  - g. Physical movement (other than hand signs)
  - h. Moveable-DO method
  - i. none of these

*Influences*

38. Music in-services/workshops you have attended.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
39. The professor(s) who taught you basic aural and theory skills when you were an undergraduate.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
40. The professor(s) who taught your teaching methods or other music education courses when you were an undergraduate.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
41. Other middle school choral directors in your school district.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
42. The teacher(s) who taught you when you were in high school choir.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
43. Other teachers who do not teach in your school district.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
44. Other music teacher(s) who taught you when you were in high school.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
45. Other high school choral directors in your school district (not where your students will attend high school).
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

46. The professor(s) who taught you teaching methods or other music education courses when you were a graduate student (masters and/or PhD).
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
47. The teacher(s) who taught you when you were in middle school choir.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
48. The teacher where your students will go to high school.
- 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

*Methods*

49. Which is your primary teaching method for reading pitches? Choose one...
- a. Fixed-DO Solfège syllables
  - b. Moveable-DO Solfège syllables
  - c. Kodály (Curwen) hand signs (Solfège syllables plus hand signs)
  - d. Numbers for pitches (1,2,3 etc.)
  - e. Singing on letter names
  - f. Neutral syllables
50. What is your primary teaching method for reading rhythms? Choose one...
- a. By rote
  - b. Ta's & ti-ti's
  - c. Hale System (Down-Ups)
  - d. Other:
51. Why do you use this method? Check all that apply...
- a. I believe research best supports it.
  - b. I believe my students will sight-read better if they use this method compared to other methods.
  - c. My predecessor used this method.
  - d. It is the only method I am comfortable using.
  - e. It was the first method I ever experienced.
  - f. The high school in my area uses it.
  - g. Other:
52. Why do you believe this method is superior to others?

53. Where did you first learn this method? Choose one...
- a. Used it in middle school
  - b. Used it in high school
  - c. Used it in college choir
  - d. Used it in college methods course
  - e. Used it in college theory course
  - f. Learned it in a workshop/professional development
  - g. Learned from the previous director
  - h. Learned from other teachers I know
  - i. Other:
54. What of the following do you teach as a part of literacy skills: check all that apply...
- a. Melodic intervals by ear
  - b. Staff notation
  - c. Reading pitches
  - d. Reading rhythms and pitches together
  - e. Interval practice
  - f. Rhythm dictation
  - g. Melodic dictation,
  - h. Students design their own sight-reading (as a form of composition)
  - i. Any Others:
54. Teachers differ greatly regarding their values of sight-reading and music literacy. How do you balance (integrate?) instruction in music literacy, sight-reading, and performance in your classroom?