

A few smart ideas I have figured out after many years of teaching that work especially well for me

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The best part of being an adult (and I've been one ever since I turned 30) is that you realize there is always something new to learn. (Remember, before you became an adult, you already knew it all.) One lesson I keep learning over and over is that you can't please everyone. After my last NW-Notes effort, I was informed by a Wyoming colleague that "publishing news that does not "inform" makes Wyoming appear to be chorally cultureless, when nothing could be further from the truth." So...I am here to tell you that Wyoming is NOT

chorally "culture deprived," by a long shot! I am, in fact, extremely proud of the many individuals and groups in Wyoming who keep the art alive and well. Elementary music, children's choirs, secondary schools, Jr. colleges, the University of Wyoming, church choirs, and community choirs all abound within our state under the guidance of many wonderful individuals. Anton Armstrong, the 1999 Wyoming All-State conductor, said (of our high school students), "this is the finest finished product that I have ever had at an All-State." Believe me, he's done a few!

I leave my presidency with a short list entitled "A Few Smart Ideas I Have Figured Out After Many Years of Teaching That Work Especially Well for Me." (I know what you're thinking...hmmm, catchy title!)

1. PORTFOLIOS – Provides instant access to all work of each individual student. Buy paper folders and a plastic box to put them in. Get different colors for each choir. Number them. Assign each student a number. (I use choir folder numbers.) Put all their paperwork in those folders throughout the year. Record any other information or documentation you may want to go into that folder. Easy to haul to parent-teacher conferences.
2. PARTICIPATION ALTERNATIVE FORM – When they are "too sick to sing." Students filling out this form sit facing the choir and practice listening skills. They answer questions such as "what does my section need to work on?" "What does the choir as a whole need to work on?" "What are some suggestions for the conductor?" "What have I improved upon in the

past year?” “What do I need to improve upon or learn more about?”
(Helps fill that “Writing Across the Curriculum” requirement.)

3. “TERM”FORMS – filled out by students preparing solos and ensembles. Individuals preparing solos and ensembles must identify and define all musical terms and symbols in their music on a “term” form before they can practice with the accompanist.
4. NUMBER THOSE MEASURES! All students must number all measures in every piece of music. What an incredible time saver when referring to a place in the music. Every choir person on earth should do this! Musicians connect with “measure 24” MUCH quicker than “page 4, second score, third measure.”
5. EXTRA CREDIT CARDS – Points used to make up excused absences. Students keep a 3x5 card in their folder. As they gain extra credit points, they write them on the card and I initial it. At the end of the quarter, they turn them in to me. I record the points, and then put it in their portfolio.
6. WARMUP CARDS – Which warmups should I do today? I have fifteen (plus) 5 x 7 note cards with different warmups on them. When I am in a hurry, I have an instant set of varying warmups to use at a moment’s notice. It’s also easy to mix and match them for what I need on a particular day.
7. GO TO AN ACDA NATIONAL CONVENTION – “If you want to be an eagle, you can’t just roost with the chickens,” or whatever that saying is! The point being, I just attended my first national convention in Chicago. I hope I never miss another! For example, my choir (and probably a zillion other choirs) was working on Morten Lauridsen’s “Dirait-on,” and whose name tag (attached to a body) do I run right into! You guess it! OF COURSE I asked him to sign an autograph for my students. Was that cool or what!