

Teaching Music

Reasons Why Teaching Music Is Important

- Music is something eternal, something worth putting time and energy into. There aren't many things that all age groups in a community can do together, but music is one of them.
- Music is essential in the kingdom of God, not optional. It connects to God's heart, drives out darkness, speaks truth, and draws us to worship.
- Songs impact us and stick with us. They shape our loves and desires. They are powerful influences in our lives.
- Singing is a joyful, embodied experience—a way to love God with the whole self.

General Advice and Teaching Tips

- Teach students to sing with their tongues up against their bottom teeth. This creates more resonance.
- Start music classes with regular pitch-matching exercises.
- Teaching students systems like takadimi and solfege hand signs is helpful in giving students concrete ways to work with music.
- If singing is a struggle, consider doing it in smaller segments to keep everyone's mood from deteriorating. If you are frustrated and it's showing, it will undermine the good feelings and joy that singing is supposed to promote.
- Consider trying to achieve the following goals through music class:
 - Students will have proficiency in reading music.
 - Students will have basic singing skills such as accurate pitch, the ability to blend to a unison choral sound, and experience in participating in group harmony.
 - Students will be able to lead singing.
 - Students will have an understanding of baseline theory (i.e. note names, rhythms, time signatures, key signatures, and accidentals).

Elementary

- Help elementary students gain confidence in singing solos by making a game out of it. Have a few finger puppets and have students sing "as the puppet." Another option is to toss a ball or beanbag to various students while standing in a circle. Whoever is holding the object sings a phrase of the song, then tosses it on to another person, who sings the next phrase.
- Especially for younger students, incorporate motions and movement with singing. Singing is a whole-body experience.
- Tips to help monotone singers:
 - Recognize that this is very normal in young students, and many will outgrow it by third grade.

- Daily practice (very few people are actually tone deaf; many who struggle to match pitches just haven't had enough exposure to singing).
- Place struggling students near confident singers.
- Have students match a pitch you sing on a hum, then note discrepancies ("You sang __. Try a little higher like this __.") You can do this in pairs to make students feel less singled out.

Junior High and High School

- Be aware and empathetic of the voice changes that students encounter through grades 6-9. Boys' voices change, drop unpredictably, crack, and have a limited range. Girls' voices often have a breathy quality during these years. Change your expectations during these years, perhaps focusing more on building rhythmic skills than in doing a lot of pitch-matching.

Recommended Resources

- Practical vocal training tips: [Music Gold: Vocal Training for Children in Every Grade - The Dock for Learning](#)
- Video example of a *With Glad Voices* music class: [Ta, Ta, Ta-Di Ta: Music Class Exercises for Rhythm and Beat - The Dock for Learning](#)
- Practical advice for music class: [I'm a Music Teacher. Now What Do I Do? - The Dock for Learning](#)

Sources

- Music Gold: Vocal Training for Children in Every Grade by Jeff Swanson [Music Gold: Vocal Training for Children in Every Grade - The Dock for Learning](#)
- How Can I Get My Students to Sing? Positive School Culture, Engaging Music Practices by Anthony Hurst [How Can I Get My Students to Sing? Positive School Culture, Engaging Music Practices - The Dock for Learning](#)
- I'm a Music Teacher. Now What Do I Do? by Yuriy Kravetz [I'm a Music Teacher. Now What Do I Do? - The Dock for Learning](#)
- Teaching Music by Brandon Mullet [Teaching Music - The Dock for Learning](#)
- Why Teach Music by Lyle Stutzman [Why Teach Music? - The Dock for Learning](#)
- Elementary Music Culture 3 by Regina Troyer [Elementary Music Culture \(3 of 3\) - The Dock for Learning](#)