

## Delaware Model Unit Gallery Template

**Unit Title:**           **Singing Fundamentals**  
**Designed by:**       **Chris Celfo, Innovative Schools**  
**Content Area:**       **Music**  
**Grade Level(s):**    **Grade 8**

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### Summary of Unit

Singing is a main focus in the choir. Students will be able to sing using various techniques and understand how these techniques change the expression of the song. By using proper breathing and vocal techniques they will keep their voices healthy and know how to keep their vocal chords safe.

## Stage 1 – Desired Results

What students will know, do, and understand

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### Delaware Content Standards

#### Music Standards

- 1.2 Sing on pitch within the appropriate singing range
- 1.3 Sing on pitch in rhythm while applying a steady beat
- 1.4 Sing demonstrating proper posture and breathing
- 1.5 Sing demonstrating proper vocal technique
- 1.6 Sing expressively utilizing dynamics and phrasing
- 1.9 Sing in groups in response to gestures of a conductor
- 1.12 Sing music in 2 and 3 parts
- 1.13 Sing in groups and blending vocal timbres
- 5.4 Read a single line of an instrumental or vocal part
- 5.7 Notate symbols and terms referring to dynamics, tempo, and articulation
- 5.8 Read an instrumental or vocal score
- 5.10 Read simple melodies in 2 or more clef
- 6.1 Express changes and contrasts in music through movement
- 6.3 Identify and classify voices by range and quality
- 6.6 Express through verbal and nonverbal means various styles/genres of music
- 6.7 Identify the elements of music within a musical composition

#### Theatre Standards

- 6.2 E Observe different forms of communication and transfer them into usage in performance (verbal, nonverbal, ASL, written, iconic, etc.)
- 6.3 E Incorporate elements of dance, music, and visual arts to express ideas and emotions in improvised and structured scenes
- 6.4 P Compare and contrast story lines presented through different artistic media

(theatre, dance, literature, music)

6.5 D Analyze the contributions of various art forms within a theatrical production (scenery, lighting, music, dance, costumes)

### Big Idea(s)

Musical Expression

Theatre integrates and encompasses all the arts (dance, visual arts, music, literature)

Performance skills are transferable to real-life situations

Technology and its application continually transform the capabilities of live theatre

### Unit Enduring Understanding(s)

Singing in a choir is different from singing as a soloist.

Choirs must listen to each other as they sing to ensure blend and balance.

Expression of a song is demonstrated through the use of tone and changes in vowels and dynamics.

### Unit Essential Questions(s)

What does proper breathing look/feel like?

Why is it important to breathe correctly while singing?

What are the physical characteristics necessary for good breath support?

How are balance and blend achieved within a choir?

How do dynamics affect the mood of a song?

How do expressive elements communicate an idea and/or feeling in a song?

Are the masks we wear, or the roles we play, a form of theatre?

What real-life skills can be learned through theatre?

What makes a form of communication effective?

### Knowledge and Skills

#### Students will know...

The definition of balance, blend, dynamic, and dynamic symbols

How to breathe properly while sitting and standing

#### Students will be able to...

Exhibit proper breathing while singing

Perform with proper balance within a choir

Perform with proper blend within the choir

Sing with dynamic contrast

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Evidence that will be collected to determine whether or not Desired Results are achieved

Suggested Performance/Transfer Task(s)

Teacher will choose 15-20 measure sections from selections currently being studied. The teacher will listen to the students’ perform these sections in groups of 4-6 students. The groups will have the opportunity to select a section of the piece that they are comfortable with. The teacher will also have each student sing the selection individually. The following rubric will be used to assess each student.

Vocal Performance Rubric-					
	Unacceptable	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
	0 pts	1 pt	2 pts	3 pts	4 pts
<b>Tone Quality</b>	Tone is never focused, clear, centered throughout the dynamic range, significantly detracting from the overall overall performance.	Tone is rarely focused, clear, centered throughout the dynamic range, detracting from the overall performance.	Tone is mostly focused, clear, centered throughout the dynamic range, detracting from the overall performance.	Tone is usually focused, clear, centered, and ringing tone throughout the dynamic range without detracting from the overall performance.	Tone is consistently focused, clear, centered, and ringing tone throughout the dynamic range enhancing the overall performance. Professional tone quality.
	Dynamics, blend, and balance is never accurate within the ensemble, significantly detracting from the overall performance.	Dynamics, blend, and balance is rarely accurate within the ensemble, detracting from the overall performance.	Dynamics, blend, and balance is mostly accurate within the ensemble, detracting from the overall performance.	Dynamics, blend and balance is usually accurate within the ensemble without detracting from the overall performance.	Dynamics, blend, and balance is consistently accurate within the ensemble enhancing the overall performance. Professional level dynamics, blend, and balance.
<b>Dynamic, Blend and Balance</b>	Correct posture and breath mechanics are	Correct posture and breath mechanics	Correct posture and breath mechanics	Correct posture and breath mechanics	Correct posture and breath mechanics

	never employed, significantly detracting from the overall performance.	are rarely employed, detracting from the overall performance.	are often employed, but detract from the overall performance.	are usually employed, without detracting from the overall performance.	are consistently employed enhancing the overall performance.  Professional level technique
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### Other Evidence

Responds to questioning during whole group instruction  
 Informal assessment during class when students are rehearsing

### Student Self-Assessment and Reflection

A great deal of reflection will occur throughout the unit as the teacher guides the students to discuss the fundamentals of singing in a choir  
 Students will be asked to complete exit tickets to reflect their thinking on the lesson's content and their grasp of the enduring understandings and essential questions.

## Stage 3 – Learning Plan (Design learning activities to align with Stage 1 and Stage 2 expectations)

Key learning events needed to achieve unit goals

### **Lesson One: Breathing**

Have students place a hand on their belly button.

As they breathe, explain that this area should expand first when they breathe in and then spread upwards until chest is expanded.

Observe and make sure students don't lift their shoulders or push their stomach out.

Have the students lay flat on their backs, and place their hands on waists, fingers pointing towards your belly button. (If you have access to the stage at your school, this is a great place to do this exercise.)

Tell them to focus on filling up your stomach from the bottom to the top taking a slow deep breath.

Inform them that the aim is not to fill themselves to bursting but to inhale enough air so that you can feel the difference between a shallow breath taken when breathing from the chest.

Make sure that their stomach rises and their hands rise gently up and outward until they feel their chest expanding.

Indicate that the expansion is not only at the front of the body but also to the sides and back as well.

Have them breath out in slowly for a count of 8, hold for a count of 4, and then exhale slowly for a count of 8.

Repeat the exercise 10 times

Observe each student and correct any issues you may see.

Tell the students that the next step is to practice breathing while singing.

Have the students stand up tall with proper singing posture (previously taught).

Explain that when breathing standing up, they should have the same feeling they had in their lower body while lying down.

Have them breath out in slowly for a count of 8, hold for a count of 4, and then sing the "oo" vowel for a count of eight.

Repeat the exercise several times, observing for proper posture and breathing.

Repeat the exercise, but increase the counts they are singing to 16. Have students raise their hands when they run out of air.

Eventually try to work up to 24+ counts with students continuing to raise their hands when they run out of air. This will help you to assess who needs extra-help.

These breathing exercises should be continued throughout the year, and the technique should be incorporated in each piece being studied.

## **Lesson Two: Dynamics in music performance**

Teacher will explain the definition of dynamics and talk to students about how the degree of loudness or softness of music affects the mood of the music. Play examples for the students. These examples should "catch their attention," so make sure to choose examples that they will enjoy.

As the students listen to each sample, have them write down a word or two to describe what they are hearing. Then go around the room and have each student share his/her word.

After listening to the examples, lead discussion with students on how they think the dynamics affect the music. Tell them to get out their musical selections that they are working on and sing the pieces, dividing them into sections of dynamic contrast.

After singing each section, have the students discuss how these dynamics effect the mood of the music and why they think the composer used these dynamics in these sections.

Go back to the music and have individuals sing specific sections of the music to individually demonstrate the varying dynamic levels. To differentiate, with the more experienced singers, pick the more challenging sections; for the less experienced singers, pick a section that they are capable of performing effectively to demonstrate the dynamic contrast.

Alternatively, let the students pick which section they want to sing and this will lead to "volunteers" singing individually. After allowing time for individuals to sing, have the choir sing through the piece and record it. Have class listen to the recording.

Have students reflect on the performance by completing the "dynamic" section of the rubric above.

### **Lesson Three: Balance/Blend**

Teacher will provide class with an overview of the topics of Balance and Blend.

Teacher will instruct the soprano section to sing one or two short phrases from a selection in unison and then ask other choir members for a response.

On a piece of paper, have students answer the following questions

- Was the section in tune?
- On which notes - specifically - could a subtle beating sound be heard, suggesting that one or more players was a little off pitch?
- Was the section breathing properly?
- Did they demonstrate good posture?
- Did they blend well, or did one or two players dominate the section?

Teacher will do the same with the alto, tenor, and bass sections individually.

Teacher will then have the sopranos and altos sing together. Then ask the male voices, was there an acceptable balance, or did the alto section dominate the others?

The process will then be repeated with the boys performing, and asking the ladies the same questions.

Because the above approach risks embarrassing weaker singers, it is usually best to avoid singling out particular students, even when their shortcomings are obvious. Focus instead on the need for the section as a whole to overcome any weaknesses, and encourage those listening to give positive as well as negative comments.

By moving systematically through the choir in this way and summarizing the findings of the group in a kindly and encouraging manner, the choir director can do much to raise awareness within the ensemble of the basics of intonation, breathing, balance and blend. It will also help produce a much better sound from the choir as a whole.

### Resources and Teaching Tips

#### **Resources:**

Various repertoire of musical selection chosen by teacher

#### **Differentiation:**

Work in small groups and pairs to support learning.

When dividing up students to sing some students with learning disabilities may benefit from being in a group with stronger singers.

Students use the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles during this unit.

Students choose which passages to sing during evaluations.

### Technology Integration

The ability to responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, and access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information

As written, this unit does not make use of a great deal of technology. However, if the teacher wished to extend the unit, students could certainly go online and search for samples of music that exhibit proper balance/blend. The teacher could also download a video of a choir singing and talk about the singing fundamentals being used.

### Content Connections

Content Standards integrated within instructional strategies

Math – Dividing time with measures, beat, syncopation