

“When You’re Not their First Love”
Taking Over a New Program

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..So you can
relate

- ◆ 2004 BME UMKC in 2004
- ◆ 2005 Taught Band & Choir at Hoover High School and built the program from scratch
- ◆ 2006 MM in Choral Conducting from UCLA
- ◆ 2007 Began Conducting Towne Singers
- ◆ 2009 Married my Husband, Pat
- ◆ 2012 Began Fostering Children in LA County
- ◆ 2013 Adopted our Daughter
- ◆ 2015 Adopted our Sons
- ◆ 2015 Moved to Overland Park, KS
- ◆ 2016 Took over an Amazing Choral Program



I tell you these things so that you know I wasn't coming in cold to teaching. I had taught for 11 years in an urban school. I had many tools and professional success.

This presentation is primarily about taking over a program from a successful and loved director. If you take over a failing program, you will be seen as the hero. However, you're going to have those very loyal students that will not see your behavior as such.

Join this Padlet!



Before we learn some new techniques, let's just acknowledge what our “gut” reaction might be to some situations. We're not perfect, we're human beings. But through sharing each other's honest feelings, we can realize we're not alone.

I'm going to give you 2 common situations, and I'd like you to post how you'd react in this padlet:

- 1) We didn't walk on the risers that way. This is ridiculous. If something's not broken, don't fix it. I hate this.
- 2) Concert Order- Chamber Singers ALWAYS close the concert. ALWAYS. You are trying to tear us down.

Nuts & Bolts: Your Interview

- ❖ What's the vibe from admin?
- ❖ Be very clear that you're not the buffer teacher
- ❖ Truth: You CANNOT replace a veteran teacher

How do you know you should take the job

Do you get the vibe: We're here to support you? Can the administration articulate to you what they want for the program? Does that align with what your goals are as a conductor?

Administrative Support: Young Teachers - have a really transparent relationship with your administration. Ask for their HELP! You can say: these are my skills - and I've tried "this".. But it's not working

the new gig!



- 5 Choirs, 200 students
- Incredible talent and previous teaching
- They adored their previous director
- Accompanist left with him, new accompanist
- The previous school year, they lost a choir member to a tragic car accident
- Within the first month of school, a beloved voice teacher of many students passed away from cancer

Before school began

- ❖ Visited for a day to see routine
- ❖ Principal introduced me to department
- ❖ Meet the new teacher night
- ❖ Promise of a Coke!
- ❖ Notice Kids at the Door
- ❖ Survey of Students
- ❖ Survey of Parents

Husky Choral Musician Survey (Google, Survey Monkey, etc..)

Please just take a few moments and answer these quick questions so that I can plan the best Choral experience for you!

1) What would be the best form of communication for YOU in regards to the choral program? *

- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Group Text
- Physical Letter Home
- Other:

2) What is the one thing (concert, traditions, music style, etc.) that you would always want to keep in the Choir tradition? *

3) What is the one thing (concert, traditions, music style, etc.) that you would like to see change this upcoming year? *

4) Which choir/choirs are you singing in next year? *

- Concert Choir Treble Voices
- Choralliers
- Chorale
- Chamber
- Concert Choir Bass Voices

5) What is your name? *

6) Is there anything that I should know about YOU before the year begins?

7) Do you have any questions for me before the year begins?

8) Is there anything else you want to tell me before school begins? I very much want to make this year incredible, and that comes from your input. :)

You Take Action & Respond!

-Husky Showcase Pictures

Choral Music Parent/Guardian Survey. (Google, Survey Monkey, etc..)

Please just take a few moments and answer these quick questions so that I can plan the best Choral experience for your family.

1) What would be the best form of communication for your family in regards to the choral program? *

- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Group Text
- Physical Letter Home
- Other:

2) What is the one thing (concert, traditions, music style, etc.) that you would always want to keep in the Choir tradition? *

3) What is the one thing (concert, traditions, music style, etc.) that you would like to see change this upcoming year? *

4) Would you be willing to receive email requests for parent help throughout the year? *

- Yes
- No

5) What is your name?

6) What is your email address?

7) Who are your students in the choral program?

8) Is there anything that I should know about your choral musician before the year begins?

9) Do you have any questions for me before the year begins?

Then you TAKE ACTION & REPLY



Tell them something on the first day of school that will COME TRUE!

If your choir was giving you a credit rating based upon your spoken word, what would your score be?

“See their behavior as their pain”

—Parenting kids with Trauma

When I took this job, this mantra kept coming into my mind. “See their behavior as their pain” My principal kept saying “this is going to be a tough year” and at first I didn't see that, but I kept thinking “see their behavior as their pain”. Why don't you repeat that with me!

These stories from the padlet were mine:

- 1) We didn't walk on the risers that way. This is ridiculous. If something's not broken, don't fix it. I hate this.
- 2) Concert Order- Chamber Singers ALWAYS close the concert. ALWAYS. You are trying to tear us down.

In that moment, they miss the way things were. We saw that with our foster kids - they missed the way things used to be. “See their behavior as their pain”. When everyone was able to gain their composure, we were able to talk about it. I can never fill the hole in your heart; all I can hope for is to create new memories with you.

Student's Loss = same as foster child loss

Some behaviors are going to seem odd or strange - kicking holes through your walls - “See their behavior as their pain”

“The Day of the Padlet”

So you know this can happen to you



“Padlet” - tell the story-

If you'd like to hear the story, visit the Choir Ninja podcast that is linked on my website www.bethrichey.com

Turn to your neighbor and tell them how you'd react.

“As an artist, you must have the skin of an elephant, and the heart of a butterfly.”

—UMKC Opera Director

Practice and repeat

“If you can’t say it with love
(respect), then wait until you can.”

-Love & Logic

Can we simply acknowledge that it’s REALLY tough not to take things personally?

When the behaviors began of eye rolls, and arms crossing, etc. the tape in your head plays, but what comes out of your mouth is more important!

I never raised my voice! Admittedly, that takes longer than yelling at kids. It’s a long game.

I’ve vented to my friends - but that’s different then what’s coming out of my mouth in front of my students.

Continually repeat, “I will always treat you with respect so you know how to treat me”

The tape in your head
vs.
your words

“I will always treat you with respect
so you know how to treat me”

-Love and Logic

It’s super important to be able to put yourself in their shoes, because this change is really hard for them!

Emotional Intelligence:

The capability of individuals to recognize their own emotions and those of others, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, and manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments or achieve one’s goals.

Dictionary of Psychology, Oxford University Press

On the rough days...

❖ These days are GOING to happen!

*It's not you.
*Is there any truth to what the students are saying?
*Did you show empathy?
*Did you treat them with respect so they know how to treat you?
*Are you having integrity around your craft?



Tell Alex story in LA

It's similar to when foster kids say, "I miss my Mom and Dad." You say, "I know you do" and, "I can't imagine how much that hurts you".

Birth Parents often criticize foster parents. Their criticism really isn't about the foster parent, but about their own pain

Let's Practice Saying

It's not you.

Is there any truth to what they're saying?

Did you show empathy?

Did you treat them with respect so they know how to treat you?

Are you having integrity around your craft?

Practice Empathy

Through the consistent model of emotional intelligence, your students are able to grow

I received multiple senior letters at the end of the year, apologizing for the behavior of their peers, and even their own behavior. Our goal as an educator is for them to come to the conclusion THEMSELVES that they had made mistakes. I could have gotten mad, but that wouldn't have done any good. I gave them my very best musically. I tried to model respect for them always.

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

-John Wooden

GO BRUINS!

Resources - What You Can Do

Advice from my Principal

- ✦ Invest in your Freshman -Juniors
- ✦ Don't take enrollment personally

End of the Year

Administrators said, "invest in our freshman through juniors"; it will pay off. My initial reaction was, "No, but these Seniors deserve greatness too." Yes, they do. But the long term, relational investments happen in your underclassmen. My investment did pay off!

Don't take kids not coming back personally - You're going to make new connections with kids. IT'S OK!

We had a very successful first year.

43 Seniors Graduated

LA Trip - Perfect Scores from all 3 Judges

Enrollment - Exact Same Number of Kids!

Choir Dreams - Underclassmen didn't want to make the mistakes of their peers

Your ACE score

Trauma Sensitive Teaching:

What's your ACE score?

<https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>

Please take this quiz on your own, and understand that the students' loss can often trigger things that you've experienced in your childhood and/or past. This is heavy work, but you can do it. Actually, we must do it. The transformation in my family has been monumental when each individual person acknowledges their triggers and where their pain comes from.

Also, acknowledge that each of your students has their own ACE score, and while the loss of a director may not seem to be a traumatic situation to you, it can trigger emotions of loss and pain in your students.

"Just one caring, safe relationship early in life gives any child a much better shot at growing up healthy."

-Shonkoff's Research Center at Harvard

Back to the Padlet

1) We didn't walk on the risers that way. This is ridiculous. If something's not broken, don't fix it. I hate this.

2) Concert Order- Chamber Singers ALWAYS close the concert. ALWAYS. You are trying to tear us down. You do not respect us.

Go back and look at your own gut reactions. What did you originally say?
Can you now react with emotional intelligence and use your skills? Practice!

These are things you need to actually practice saying in a mirror before you take over this new program.

"You don't need a book or a lecture, you simply need a yellow legal pad, a pen, a glass of iced tea, and time under a big shade tree. You have the answers."

-Don Neuen

How I plan my rehearsals
How I dreamt by program in CA
How I dreamt my new program in KS

Do it! You have the answers!

GOOD LUCK as you DREAM your new program!

www.bethrichey.com
