

Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice:
A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs

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Abstract

My personal experience as an elementary music teacher had afforded me the opportunity to build a thriving choral program in my school, but I had reached a stale mate in my ability to facilitate maximum progress for my students to achieve a sound that my administrators, colleagues, and audience would recognize as masterful. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how master teachers of elementary children's choirs approach teaching in order to emulate their results. By observing and interviewing masterful choral educators and reviewing the literature on the pedagogical approaches recommended for successful choral programs, it was hoped that I could apply this knowledge to inform and transform my practice.

The review of the literature is discussed according to themes that emerged from my reading. These themes included: 1) Planning and Organizing Rehearsals; 2) Repertoire Selection; 3) Teaching Vocal Technique; 4) Seating Arrangement; 5) Audition Versus Non-Audition; and 6) Effective Choral Teaching.

An action research methodology was employed in this study and involved collecting data from three sources: a pre- and post-observation of my practice by a jury; observations of master teachers; and interviews with master teachers. Observations and interviews were conducted with the same group of master teachers. Data were analysed using a qualitative approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Mills, 2007). Data from the observations and transcribed interview data were reviewed and coded according to key findings that emerged on a repeated basis (Stringer, 2008).

The findings of the study revealed several themes that dominated the pedagogical approaches of master choral teachers. These themes included: planned and organized rehearsals

with flexibility to address learning needs that arise unexpectedly; choosing high quality repertoire with inspirational text and good musical construction, and considerations to appropriateness of range with a preference to up-tempo selections; vocal techniques that encompassed strong listening skills and their appropriate application, good posture, proper breath control, face and jaw alignment, use of kinesthetics and imagery, attention to unified vowel and consonant production; seating arrangements that considered non-musical criteria such as height, behaviour, and grade level; and teaching demeanour that was positive and nurturing, with a penchant for a quick pace, delivered in a lively, animated manner, punctuated by good eye contact and supported by significant score knowledge. Master choral teachers were found to have personal experiences that contributed to their success and were found to be passionate about their teaching. Recommendations for further research and personal study are given.

Chapter I: Introduction

Rationale

As a practicing elementary school music teacher, an important part of my curriculum includes singing experiences for children. Singing provides an easily accessible way to participate in the experience of music making. From a pedagogical perspective, student participation in the process of singing provides music educators with an opportunity to teach the basic elements of music to young students. All essential learning areas of the music curriculum can be encompassed by the learning experienced by participating in a choral music program or ensemble including: 1) music language and performance skills; 2) creative expression in music; 3) understanding music in context and; 4) valuing music experience (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2008).

Unencumbered by the coordination issues involved in making music with an instrument, the singing voice is discovered and utilized to develop an understanding and enjoyment of music making. When students learn to sing they develop the ability to perform and understand the basics of music. Choral singing assists in the development of individual listening skills, group-singing skills, and instrument readiness, as well as providing an opportunity for students to participate in a group activity. Music making through singing develops an appreciation for music and the aesthetic benefits of learning through an art form.

The draft document for the Manitoba Arts Curriculum, *Kindergarten to Grade 8 Music: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes for Arts Education*, (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2008) states that students who learn to be musically literate become “the kind of citizens who truly enrich their own lives and the lives of their future communities” (p. 4).

This statement echoes the intrinsic value of music education. This new vision incorporates the paradigm that “rich, meaningful, hands-on music making experiences” lead students to an appreciation and understanding of music inherent to the art form (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth 2008, p. 4). The exposure and development of attitudes and skills acquired by singing, studying, and performing quality choral repertoire is a substantial part of realizing these goals. Participating in choral programs provide our students with valuable music experiences that contribute to learning in the four essential learning areas: “music language and performance skills, creative expression opportunities, valuing musical experience and music experienced in context” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2008, p. 6). More precisely, grade specific outcomes as outlined in the curriculum draft document can be fulfilled by providing choral experiences for our students. Examples of such outcomes include: “match pitch and sing with accurate rhythm and expressive qualities, using increasingly complex textures;” “sing expressively in tune, using proper breath support, vowel sounds, consonants, and tone production;” and “sing in tune with increasing control and accuracy, a sense of phrasing, and musical expression, while maintaining own part within an ensemble, demonstrate understanding of balance and blend in an ensemble, and demonstrate correct posture . . . breath control, articulation, diction, intonation, and appropriate technique and control of . . . voice” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2008, p. 8 - 9).

In addition to the inherent values of music learning, countless interdisciplinary studies have extolled the instrumental virtues of singing including: the development of language and reading skills, the enhancement of cognitive skills, and the retention of mathematics concepts. Hood-Mincy (2005) “concluded that participation in singing activities has a positive effect on

reading and mathematics achievement...” (p. 110). Cruz-Cruz (2005) concluded that music and songs could be used to improve grammar and vocabulary skills. Johnson’s (2000) study findings suggested that “cognitive skills may be enhanced through music instruction” (p. 122).

A natural extension of teaching a music curriculum through singing is to offer additional opportunities to develop singing skills outside the regular classroom setting. Extra curricular choir offers students a venue to participate in more advanced singing opportunities by enhancing the music curriculum with more in depth experiences. Belonging to a choir also provides a positive social setting for students and rounds out school-based lunchtime options for students that go beyond intramural sports, sketch clubs, and gardening clubs.

As a music educator, my expertise and training encompass many years of individual vocal training and performance. A natural extension of this knowledge is to share it with my students. Singing is a joyful pursuit for me and so it seems an appropriate way to offer my students music enrichment.

Having taught for several years, my practice has adapted and evolved. These changes have improved the quality of my teaching and personal enjoyment of my chosen profession. The quality of my choir program, and my students’ enjoyment of extracurricular choir have also been positively affected by furthering my knowledge and skills. Experience and positive feedback from students and peers continues to empower me as an educator.

Purpose

It is heartening to find I now have disciplined and eager choristers willing and eager to learn singing skills. However, I find myself at a turning point; in order to become a master teacher in the choral genre, I must change my teaching process. My students are ready for growth

and change and I must decide how to best meet their needs. At this juncture I find I am limiting the progress of my choristers; we have reached a point wherein I am uncertain how to proceed in order to take my choir to the next level. I question what changes need to be made in order to facilitate positive growth and change in my students. I want to maximize their progress as singers to achieve a sound that my administrators, colleagues, and audience recognize as masterful. I recognize the need for growth as an educator and the importance of moving my students ahead musically to reach their potential. Nonetheless, I find myself at a loss as to how to proceed and enable my singers to advance their musicianship.

To address my dilemma, I will look beyond my classroom to find solutions by becoming a researcher. "Remaining an active researcher throughout one's career is an integral part of being a productive choral music educator" (Grant & Norris, 1998, p. 48). A study conducted by Butke (2006) demonstrated that "choral educators who engage in a reflective process can better understand the individual experience of teaching and can benefit from the possibility of change and improvement" (p. 66). These ideas have inspired me to seek personal growth and change in a way that will best benefit my students. As suggested by Phelps, Ferrara and Goolsby (1993), I will allow my teaching problems to guide my choice of experimental procedures and research methodology.

Practitioner research is used when an educator wants to use an approach "to do what he or she does better" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 208). Kurt Lewin is credited for coining the term "action research" to describe work that "did not separate investigation from the action needed to solve problems" (McFarland & Stansell, 1993, p.14). Adelman and Kemp (1992) believe "reflective, participatory action research can help to make desirable changes in practice,

...including the pedagogical...” (p. 115). Action research begins with the awareness of a persistent problem in one’s teaching, which seems to be an impediment to getting things done as well as they could be. Adelman and Kemp (1992) define this as an awareness of a gap between desirable and actual practice. Mills (2007) believes action research, by definition, exists so that teachers can bring about change to their personal practice often by becoming part of the research team.

I have often admired the skills of master choral teachers whose rehearsals are purposeful and enjoyable. Their endeavors produce children’s choirs with beautiful tone and expression. Their efforts win them recognition such as medals and accolades, and reputations of experts in their field by audiences, colleagues, and adjudicators. Joppe (2004) states when a researcher needs to gain greater insight into a particular problem, he or she “is likely to question knowledgeable individuals about it” (p. 1). These individuals are found in the “top ranks” or amongst professional staff (Joppe, 2004, p. 1). By observing, interviewing, and questioning teachers in the “top ranks,” I will attempt to find what contributes to their success. An action research format best suits the needs of my study because I wish to change my practice by incorporating the artistic, pedagogical skills gleaned from observing, questioning, and interviewing master elementary choral teachers in their field. The “action” of applying the acquired information to my practice will initiate the changes I hope to make in my teaching, helping to inform and transform my practice.

In keeping with the aims of action research, I wish to reflect on my current practice and its problems, and investigate ways to initiate change that will improve the quality of sound of my extracurricular choir. At present there is a gap between desirable and actual practice, and the

sound my choristers produce is in need of refinement. Two specific questions arise from these perplexing problems:

1. How do master choral teachers of elementary children's choirs teach and guide musical learning in their classroom?, and
2. How can the new pedagogical insights gleaned from master teachers inform and transform my choral teaching process?

Data collection will include completed questionnaires obtained by conducting interviews with master teachers that focus on the teaching strategies and essential resources they use to guide their practice. Additional information will be gleaned from observing their rehearsal techniques and strategies and recording these activities for analysis. Videotaping rehearsals will provide visual data on the teachers' style and demeanor and chorister's reactions to the teacher's delivery method.

The purpose of my research will be to familiarize myself with the pedagogical practices of master elementary choral conductors. I will compare the practices of master elementary choral conductors and attempt to find commonalities and differences in their pedagogy. By observing and talking to master choral teachers, I hope to glean some insight and knowledge into what makes their choral teaching practices produce quality sound and superior musicianship amongst their choristers. The information attained from my study will be linked to existing literature in the field. Hendricks (2006) believes, "reviewing educational research is an important and necessary activity for practitioners' professional development" (p. 36).

Literature outlining good choral practice and "sound" advice on teaching a choral program is abundant. There are also several scholarly papers and research documents that

identify the qualities inherent in successful choral programs. Do the master teachers participating in this study demonstrate the qualities identified in the literature? Do they employ the skills and techniques found to be effective tools in achieving choral excellence?

My final source of data will be obtained by asking a sub-group of master teachers to observe my practice while I conduct a typical rehearsal with my choristers. They will be asked to provide me with feedback on their observations. I will facilitate their task by providing written guidelines for their reflections of my practice. They will assess my practice and record observations and feedback for me. I will use their recommendations when developing an action plan for my professional growth and change.

Findings from all data sources will then be applied into the development of an action plan to improve my practice. Phelps, Ferrara, and Goolsby (1993) state action research “is conducted and reported in such a way that the investigator includes practical suggestions for applying the data of a study to a teaching situation” (p. 4). I will then proceed to implement my action plan to improve the quality of my choir’s sound and the musicianship of my choristers. With new insight gained, I will design and implement refined procedures and expert methodology that has the potential to positively change my teaching. Adelman and Kemp (1992) describe this procedure as a self-prescribed intervention in one’s current practice to bring about desired change. When the final data collection processes are completed, the sub-group of master teachers will observe my rehearsal techniques again, taking note of any changes to my practice. My ultimate goal will be to improve my students’ musicianship and to improve the quality of their sound by increasing my teaching capabilities and becoming a master elementary choral conductor. It is hoped that other music teachers will find this research applicable to their own teaching situations.

Definition of Terms

The following definition of terms will bring clarity to the study.

Extracurricular elementary choir a choir that is implemented outside the regular K - 6 music program scheduled during the school day.

Master teacher as defined in *Webster's New World Dictionary* (Guralnik & Friend, 1968) is a "chief, leader...a person whose teachings one follows...a person very skilled and able at some work, profession etc; expert" (p. 904).

Delimitations

There is an abundance of literature published suggesting how to develop an elementary choir that has a desirable tone and how to train children to be knowledgeable singers. This pool of information is constantly being added to and it would be impossible to review all pedagogical texts, theses, and journal articles written on the subject. Therefore, I have concentrated on the most current texts and journal articles most relevant to my study. The majority of my references are delimited by the time frame from 1995 to 2010.

Another constraint of this research design is the homogeneous nature of my participants (Calabrese, 2009). Due to the time and cost factor of conducting thesis research, I will only focus on music teachers in my city. Because I am currently teaching, traveling out of the city to collect data is impractical. The participants chosen will be recommended by their music administrators and music coordinators, provided they are willing and available to participate.

A characteristic of action research is a spiral approach to a research question, often consisting of several layers of inquiry wherein one discovery may lead to yet another question (Mills, 2007). Only one cycle of research will be completed in this study due to time restraints. I

must limit my observations to the school year. By nature, extracurricular choir rehearsals are frequently only once or twice a cycle. My participants will all be in-service teachers, who will have limited time to be interviewed.

Chapter II reports on the literature reviewed relating to the teaching skills and common practices important in creating a successful extra-curricular elementary choir. This information provides a strong foundation for my research study. Chapter III details the action research methodology used in this study. A discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter IV. And finally, conclusions, plans for further action and inquiry are summarized in Chapter V.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The literature describing the pedagogical principles important to achieving a desired choral sound is extensive. There is a large number of books and a body of academic research devoted to the study of what type of practice produces a good choral sound. Also, articles can be found in music education journals and on-line that review pertinent research. Other resources offer strategies for achieving good choral sound by including systematic plans from master choral educators from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

In reading the related literature six recurring themes emerged. These themes overlap and intertwine but can be categorized as follows for the purpose of presentation and discussion. These themes include: 1) Planning and Organizing Rehearsals; 2) Repertoire Selection; 3) Teaching Vocal Technique; 4) Seating Arrangement; 5) Audition Versus Non-Audition; and 6) Qualities of Effective Choral Teaching. One of these major themes, teaching vocals techniques, encompasses five sub-categories: Warm-ups, Posture and Breathing, Use of Movement, Sight Reading and Solfege, and Vocalization and Imagery. A literature map was constructed to “build a visual picture of existing research” and clarify themes that were identified in the literature (Creswell, 2009, p. 33). I will use the thematic structure illustrated in Figure 1 to organize a discussion of the literature.

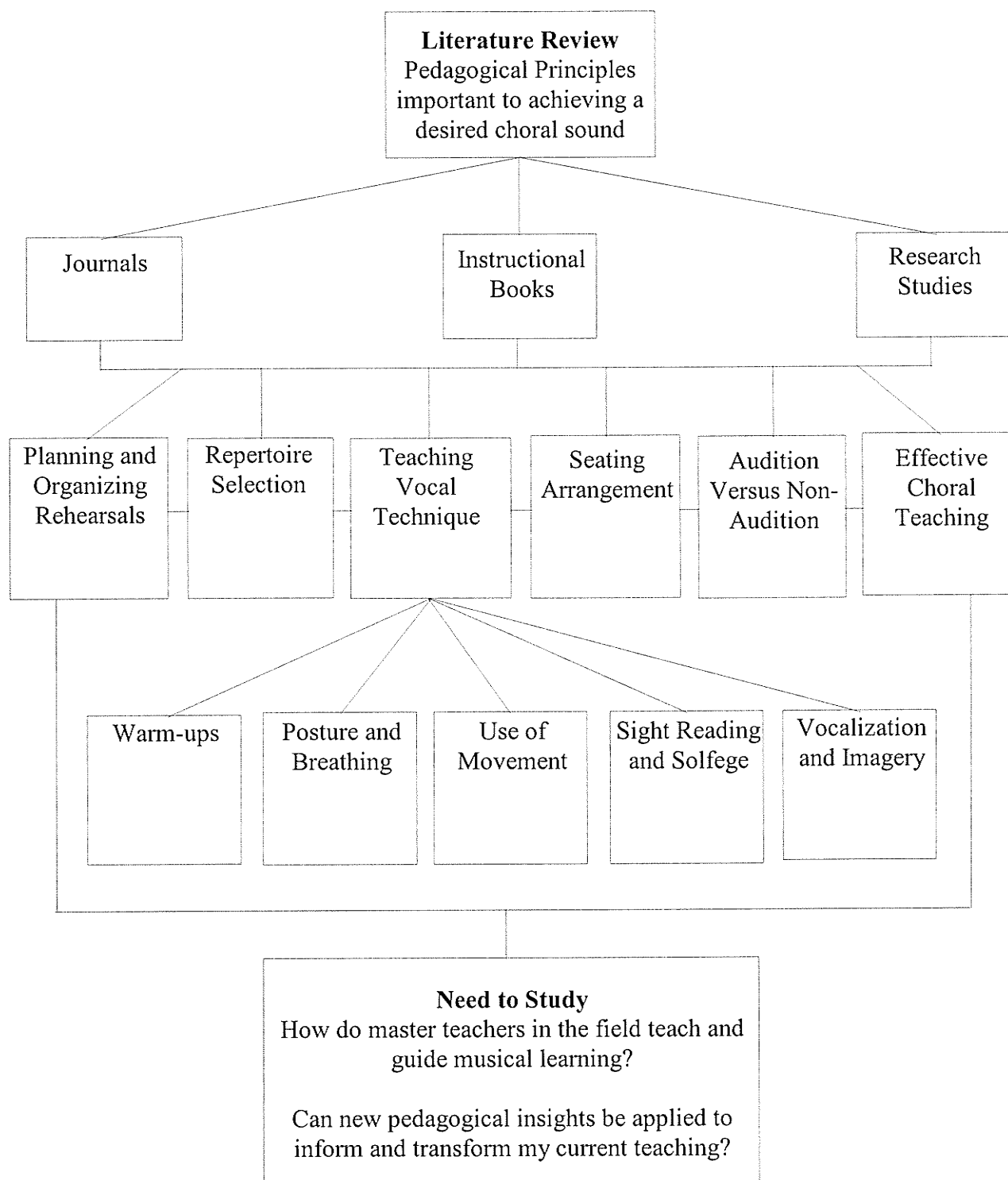


Figure 1

Planning and Organizing Rehearsals

Bartle (1988), Brunner (1996), Countryman (2007b), Grat (2006), Hammar (1984), Swears (1990), Woody (2001), and Zielinski (2005) believe successful rehearsals are planned and organized. Routines begin before the children walk through the door. It is important for students to see that you are prepared for them by having chairs set up, music folders on their seats and a list of accomplishments for the rehearsal outlined on the board. Countryman (2007a) also keeps a written rehearsal plan on her music stand to help her stay focused on planned objectives. Swears (1990) and Zielinski (2005) write out objectives for each rehearsal in the form of lesson plans. Grat (2006) reiterates that “preparation done ahead of time will pay off tenfold. There is no substitute for knowing the score” (p. 56). These rehearsal objectives should be specific and attainable within the rehearsal period. Zielinski (2005) designs his rehearsal “much like a coach would in preparation for an athletic event” (p. 44). When preparing a rehearsal it is good practice to review your rehearsal routines. One “can benefit from re-inspection from year to year” (Brunner, 1992, p. 35).

Hammar (1984) believes choral directors should have specific long and short term goals for themselves and their ensembles to ensure masterful instruction. Long term goals include: improved tone quality and intonation, correct phrasing, clear enunciation, and improved sight reading ability. He identifies short term goals as rehearsal techniques that perfect the performance of repertoire such as: finding correct notes, solving specific vocal problems, dynamic ranges, and teaching theoretical concepts present in the repertoire covered.

Rehearsals should be sequential and build on each other. A director’s rehearsal plan should anticipate subsequent rehearsals (Brunner, 1996). Chivington (1998) and Bartle (2003) agree that

good organization and a long-range plan help achieve success. Chivington (1998) and Yarbrough and Henley (1999) believe brisk pacing will also keep choristers engaged, on task, and motivated, creating a good choral sound (Grant & Norris, 1998). Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) found that a slower-paced rehearsal with fewer activity changes had a lower performance rating and more off-task behavior.

Kohut and Grant (1990) agree that a rehearsal outline is important to ensure best use of time. Organized rehearsals “based on clearly defined short and long term learning and performance objectives result in ...superior performances” (p.104). Roe (1983) suggests selecting a rehearsal procedure. Decide if your rehearsal will target basic note learning or the fine tuning of vowels, rhythms, and expression. Each rehearsal should have a goal, but keeping in mind everything does not have to be perfected at once (Gaston, 2003). Grant and Norris (1998) and Hildebrand (2006) found that student-centered classrooms promote “the highest levels of achievement” (Grant & Norris, p. 36). When a rehearsal plan is contemplated, leave time for unforeseen questions that may lead to unplanned rehearsal activities. Unplanned activities initiated by student comment or question can be beneficial, supporting the student-centered model.

Demorest (1996) and Lamb (2005) believe a conductor will achieve good results if score preparation is completed prior to rehearsal, making appropriate markings identifying such features as form, structure, and phrasing. Demorest (1996) and Hildebrand (2005) often include listening to a recording of a piece to convey the style and character of the work.

Brunner (1996) uses a “synthesis-analysis-synthesis model” when rehearsing (p. 2). Synthesis refers to the “big picture” or broad musical concepts of a piece of music. This ideal

would be achieved by singing through a piece or a large section of a piece to “gain an overview of the work” (p. 2). Analysis would involve drilling or rehearsing small segments of music which are difficult or troublesome. Brunner would complete the rehearsal by putting the piece back together before rehearsal completion. Grant and Norris (1998) found that a similar ABA rehearsal format achieved success. Their survey found that the most successful rehearsal structure began and ended with familiar, enjoyable repertoire. The B or middle section of the rehearsal was spent on what Brunner refers to as “analysis” or attention to details.

The pacing of a rehearsal is critical and “the conductor must emit much positive energy, while the singers should feel a sense of accomplishment and well-being” (Bartle, 2003, p. 33). Hammar (1984) quotes Thorpe describing pacing as “...the intelligent distribution of work and rest periods in the mastery of new materials or problems on the part of the learner” (p. 171). Both Hammar (1984) and Bartle (2003) agree that a rehearsal should end on a “high.”

Repertoire Selection

Apfelstadt (2000), Forbes (2001), and Small (2006) consider repertoire selection to be one of the most important tasks before entering into rehearsal activity. Cox (2006) believes “literature provides the skeletal basis for teaching objectives, rehearsal planning, vocal techniques, rehearsal techniques and final programming for the overall choral experience” (p. 1). Brunner (1992) reported that, “students’ musical understanding and aesthetic enjoyment are proportional to the quality of the music studied and performed” (p. 31). In his study, Forbes concluded that the choirs judged to have the most outstanding sound and the most masterful directors selected more classical, folk, and non-Western music than popular music. Roe (1983) believes music selection should be based on “the teaching of musical taste to the students. “When this is the goal trashy

literature is unthinkable...” (p. 53). Johnson and Johnson (1989) caution choral directors to “avoid arrangements of pop tunes...They are apt to get your students on the wrong road vocally...” (p. 42). These sources conclude there is superior pedagogical substance in classic repertoire compared to poorly constructed music that is written to appeal to the less discerning or knowledgeable. Gackle (2006) believes conductors “select music that they love, about which they too, are passionate” (p. 53). Leck (1995) chooses music on a pedagogical basis but, reports it must also be music that he loves! He believes both accompanied and unaccompanied music have merits. “Young students usually have a greater aesthetic experience when doing music with instrumental accompaniment. Unaccompanied music is essential to building integrity and self-confidence of an ensemble” (p. 6).

Teaching quality music literature needs to incorporate the teaching of skills required for a choir to produce a good quality of sound. Kohut and Grant (1990) and Zielinski (2005) believe that quality choral literature translates into good repertoire and will help choirs develop the better vocal production that results in a better choral sound. Kohut and Grant believe a good piece of music will stand the test of time. One could interpret this as a piece that is often performed by master directors or a piece from the classical genre. Kohut and Grant also suggest that “acknowledged quality of the composer or arranger... expressive quality of the music exemplified by musical tension and release...good craftsmanship” (p. 85) are critical criteria for selecting repertoire. Zielinski suggests thoroughly analyzing music selections before making your curriculum selections. Broeker (2006) suggests quality repertoire can be found by discussing choices with colleagues and local composers who also conduct children’s choirs. Cited in Bartle (1988), Zoltan Kodaly asserts, “Children should be taught with only the most musically valuable

material. For the young, only the best is good enough. They should be led to masterpieces by means of masterpieces” (p. 138).

When choosing repertoire, Bartle (1988), Broeker (2000), Brunner (1992), Cox (2006), Swears (1985), and Zielinski (2005) believe establishing guidelines, a checklist, or building blocks are an effective way to ensure a positive learning experience. Cox’s checklist (2006) includes the following: a) exhibits quality in construction and composition; b) facilitates vocal development; c) encourages musical development; d) utilizes quality, age-appropriate texts; e) engages the mind and the spirit of the singer; and e) provides experiences with various styles, genres, languages, or cultures. Bartle (2003) believes a fine crafted piece of music literature worthy of study should have musical interest, marriage of text to music, worthwhile text, and “composer’s knowledge and understanding of the child’s voice” (p. 150). Spurgeon (2002) and Swears (1985) articulate many of the same ideals citing lyrics, tessitura, range, melody, harmony, level of difficulty, accompaniment and suitability to your group as important considerations when selecting repertoire. Broeker (2000) shares some of the same criteria when evaluating “a piece’s potential success” (p. 27). These criteria are: text, singability, form, part writing, accompaniment, and pedagogical implications. Brunner (1992) begins selecting repertoire with an alternative approach; know your singers, know your objectives, and know yourself. His checklist then mirrors that of Bartle and Broeker including text and musical elements. Zielinski’s (2005) building blocks echo a similar selection process but also include performance and programming considerations. Countryman (2007b) considers the difficulty level of a piece in relation to age, ability, experience and maturity of the singers, the amount of rehearsal time available to the group, and the size of the group. She recommends canons, melodic ostinati, echo songs and partner songs

as an introduction to part singing for young singers (Countryman, 2008). Packwood (2005) cautions teachers to choose fewer pieces of literature, affording time to concentrate on producing a quality sound rather than overwhelming choristers with an abundance notes and text.

Harvey (2007) and Morphy (2007) echo the sentiments of these published experts. Harvey (2007) believes that for children to sing well, they must be given music which helps develop their emerging musical skills. Both Harvey and Morphy are of the opinion that music must have text that the children understand, something worthwhile, and inspire them to sing. Master teachers successfully find the balance within pieces that are approachable, but also have the potential for challenge. Morphy recommends getting to know the composers and publishers one can count on to produce quality repertoire. Furthermore, he believes that “children can be led easily to respect quality, and often sense it instinctively” (p. 1).

Broeker (2000) and Wilson (2003) agree that foreign language texts offer opportunities for achieving quality choral sound because there are no bad habits associated with the pronunciation of foreign text. Packwood (2005) also supports the use of foreign language repertoire to obtain the unified vowel sounds that contribute to a desired choral sound. He reiterates by stating that “first timers will sing the way they talk,” often employing undesired vowel pronunciation, hampering the production of good choral tone (p. 27). When a language is new to choristers one can encourage unified vowel production. Students will pronounce and “sing foreign-language words exactly the way you teach them” (p. 27). Morrison (2004) believes that incorporating culturally diverse repertoire choices “can inspire us to become better choral directors, vocal teachers, and music educators” (p. 34).

Edwards (2004) emphasizes the importance of finding repertoire “that is appropriate to the

age and stage of your singers” (p. 41). Johnson and Johnson (1989) and Wilson (2003) also stress the importance of considering a choir’s age level and ability and the importance of selecting music that is appropriate to students’ level of development. Hammar (1985) recommends repertoire that reflects the personality of one’s choir and should be chosen carefully with this in mind. Perhaps the best advice when considering repertoire is Edward’s (2002) observation that it is always prudent to have a “Plan B” if the pieces you have chosen turn out to be too difficult or just “not working” for your ensemble (p. 35).

Teaching Vocal Technique

Much of the literature reviewed supports the premise that the overall quality of a choir’s sound is only as good as the sound of each individual member. Stressing good vocal technique during rehearsal ensures singers are producing sound in a way that cultivates vocal development and fosters healthy vocal production. If this paradigm is supported during choral warm ups and applied to repertoire, quality choral sound can be achieved. The discussion of teaching vocal techniques that follow include: warm up techniques, posture and breathing, use of movement, sight reading and solfege, and visualization and imagery.

Warm-up techniques. Edwards (2001a) cautions conductors to always have specific foci and goals in mind when choosing warm-up activities. Kohut and Grant (1990) cite three purposes of the warm-up: a) to physically awaken the body parts engaged in singing; b) to focus each singer on a common goal; and c) to provide a group technique lesson. Packwood (2005) dedicates fifteen to twenty percent of rehearsal time to warm ups. He maintains rehearsals should begin with regular, varied, and meaningful warm-ups that will train and stretch the vocal folds. He includes three basic categories: physical and vocal warm-ups, ear training warm-ups, and harmonic warm-

ups. Faroese (2002) engages the body, mind, ear, and face to prepare choir members for singing. Barefield (2006) suggests that we teach our choristers to self-evaluate their execution of rehearsal warm-ups to help foster their own optimal vocal production. Bartle (2003) believes warm-ups should also “warm up the mind” (p. 35). Briggs (2000), Larson (2003), and Roberts and Quinn (2006) vary warm-ups slightly so they do not become a series of boring routines. Roberts and Quinn (2006) subscribe to a popular Kodaly practice of teaching hand signs corresponding to each note of the scale while employing the idea of moveable “doh.” They conduct the warm up without the piano, especially when concentrating on pitch refinement so that their singers can develop vocal independence and hone their listening skills.

Warm-ups should be done before practicing repertoire and should have goals related to improving overall sound and addressing challenges present in the repertoire (Edwards 2001a). Rosabal-Coto (2006) believes, “A purposeful, carefully planned warm-up session featuring exercises that address meaningfully the vocal or musical challenges involved in the repertoire, promotes vocal development towards a common musical and interpretive goal, while providing life-long physiological vocal and musical benefits to the singers” (p.60). Radionoff (2007) uses recurring melodic patterns from the repertoire as a warm-up for the ears, brain, and larynx prior to singing songs. She deconstructs a song and uses the recurring melodic phrases as warm ups. She breaks the phrases down into three or four note patterns and chooses the consonants b, p, f, sh, or m. She stays in a comfortable range and moves the pattern up and down by half steps. A survey of choral music education research by Grant and Norris (1998) confirms that “warm-ups derived from the music at hand were more effective than traditional patterns” (p. 32).

According to Karna and Goodenow (2006), the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet

(IPA), a phonetic notation system developed by linguists to represent all sounds used in spoken human language, helps to stress the “vowel and consonant articulation in our choral work” (p. 30) and should be part of a choir’s warm up repertoire. Furthermore, they report that using the IPA in warm up exercises can achieve unified vowel sounds and significantly improve a choir’s singing.

Posture and breathing. Roe (1983) explains that the body is an instrument; the only instrument that is player and instrument combined. Just like an instrument player must learn to hold their instrument correctly, so must the singer (Swears, 1990). This analogy helps legitimize the importance of warm-ups that focus on correct posture and encourages singers to realize the correlation between a healthy body and good singing technique.

Skoog (2004) explains that energized singing begins with “erect, unforced posture and deep, breathing...slight stooping will weaken the sound of an ensemble considerably” (p. 44). Problems with intonation are often caused by excess tension in the jaw, neck and shoulders, poor posture, and poor breath management (Powell, 1991). Edwards (2001b) notes that singers cannot be expected to produce an optimum sound if correct posture and breathing techniques are not employed. To promote good singing posture, Countryman (2007a) lifts up a chunk of her hair and asks her students to do the same. Then she asks them to imagine that the hair is attached to the ceiling. Miller (1986) refers to correct singers stance as “noble” posture (p. 153). In correct posture the “chin is in, head up, back flattened and the pelvis is held straight” (Hammar, 1984, p. 71).

Gaston (2003) and Spurgeon (2002) suggest tension in the singer’s body and poor body alignment will hinder the production of good phrasing and tone. Spurgeon refers to the Alexander Technique as a way to help remedy this problem. In addition to the Alexander Technique,

Edwards (2001b) and Kuhn (2006) report that basic Yoga principles including strength, flexibility, alignment, body awareness through breath control, and concentration, enhance both breathing and resonance in singers.

Use of movement. The use of movement in choral rehearsals plays an important role in preparing choristers for singing, helping them focus on a productive rehearsal. Apfelstadt (1996) noted that gesture and body movement can be effectively used in the teaching of musical skills and concepts in a choral rehearsal. Warming up the body can be as simple as incorporating arm and leg movements compatible to each vocal warm-up. Leck (1995) successfully uses movement to achieve an energized sound with his choirs. Large muscle movement is augmented by the use of facial expressions including eyes and eyebrows and the use of hands on the face and cheekbones. A study by Wis (1993) concluded:

a) movement activities make use of the choral singer's natural inclination towards bodily-based learning and allow for the freedom and energy inherent in everyday activities to be metaphorically transferred to the singing process; b) movement activities may encourage more active participation on the part of the singer and can provide a visible accountability system for the learning that goes on in the choral rehearsal; c) movement activities are less subject to misinterpretation than words and are better able to capture the ineffable qualities of music (p. iv).

Studies examining the use of movement as a rehearsal technique by Hibbard (1994), Holt (1992), and McCoy (1987) were summarized in Grant and Norris (1998). They found that using movement in rehearsal was superior to using conventional verbal instruction. Both Hibbard and Holt used the techniques espoused by Rudolf von Laban. There was an increase in rehearsal

efficiency, singer confidence, and increased learning “by employing multi modal instruction through the movement’s kinesthetic, visual, and aural effects” (p. 40). In a similar study, Liao and Davidson (2007) reported that there was a link between children’s singing voices and their use of gesture. They concluded that gesture techniques helped the children improve their vocal techniques and correct their vocal faults. While attending choral rehearsals at the Children’s Festival Chorus of Pittsburgh, Bailey (2007) noted that “kinesthetic exercises in the choral rehearsal strengthen vocal technique and musicianship skills and enhance artistic expression” (p. 2). All of these factors positively impact the quality of choral sound and develop “a logical rationale for using movement to reinforce choral concepts” (Apelstadt, 1996, p. 74).

Rao, Perison, and Flossie’s (2007) review of a *Circle of Sound Voice Education: A Contemplative Approach to Singing Through Meditation, Movement, and Vocalization*, reports that co-author Perison applies the principles of Eastern martial arts to Western bel canto vocalization. He uses martial arts techniques to calm the spirit with “a balance of soft and strong movements that are smooth, continuous, and circular” (p. 1). He believes these movements encourage freedom of the body, mind and spirit that prepares the voice for singing.

Sight reading and solfege. Giles (1991), Keating (2005), Kohut and Grant (1990) and Swears (1985) believe in incorporating solfege patterns in warm-up exercises, helping to develop the relationship between sound and syllable. Eventually these concepts can be transferred into repertoire learning. Phillips (2004) uses solfege to sing through difficult passages of new repertoire to solidify note learning before introducing lyrics. Incorporating the Kodaly system of hand signs offers a visual representation of the relationship between notes of the scale and improves intonation (Roe, 1983). A study by Kuehne (2007), found that sight singing proficiency

served as a first step towards performance skill. The teacher/participants of the study reported that “Kodaly hand signs, solfege symbols and moveable *do* should be used” (p. 121). Conversely, Bennett (2005) cautions that musicality should not be forgotten when teaching literacy and that focusing on intervals rather than groupings of notes or phrases interferes with musical meaning. Bennett disagrees with the Kodaly practice and questions the use of “sol-mi” as the universal interval when teaching children to sing. Hammar (1984) reminds his readers “there are no shortcuts to sight reading proficiency...it requires time, repetition and...patience” (p. 125). He believes it is time well spent because the result is more independent, self reliant choristers. Bartle (2003) believes that if children learn to read music well, much time is saved in rehearsal and more advanced work on repertoire can be accomplished.

Davis (1998) conducted a study to provide music teachers with the ability to recognize and demonstrate rehearsal behaviors related to desired performance outcomes. She reviewed the work of Yarbrough (1988) and Doane (1992) whose research concluded that effective teacher behaviors and communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal, contribute to the overall quality of a choir’s sound. Conductors in Davis’ study used fewer verbal instructions as overall student competency improved, finding non-verbal communication more efficient and productive.

Visualization and imagery. Lavender (1991), Roe (1983) and Swears (1985) offer practical warm-up exercises to help choristers achieve desired breath control including imagery and visualization. These warm-ups include panting like a dog or chanting, “Ho, Ho, Ho” like Santa Claus to engage the diaphragm. Other techniques include taking a breath as if you just saw a ghost or pretending to fill an invisible inner tube around your waist. Edwards (2001a) successfully uses the analogy of the garden hose with a kink in it and the difficulty one would

have washing a car or watering the garden successfully with this kink. Bailey (2007) observed choristers at the Children's Festival Chorus of Pittsburgh imitate the action of taking a breath by imagining their hands were their diaphragms. Students started breathing while placing their palms together, one hand on top of the other, and then slowly opening their hands vertically as they inhaled. The vertical motion was to remind them to take a deep, low breath. A slinky toy was also used to demonstrate the expansion and contraction needed for both placement and management of breath (Bailey).

In Skoog's article (2004), Ware is quoted as saying, "Since singing involves the mind's ability to re-imagine and replay pitch, rhythm, tone, word, and emotion, the power of mental imagery in singing cannot be over stated" (p. 43). Grant and Norris (1998) found that verbal imagery works well in choral rehearsals for a variety of musical styles. They believe young singers will benefit from use of analogy or visual images. Stegman (2003) likes to have students pretend they are puppets with strings attached to the sternum, the back of the head, and the upper forehead. This allows him to correct posture by pretending to manipulate the puppet strings.

Leck (1995) achieves a variety of timbres necessary to convey diverse stylistic interpretations in repertoire by using the imagery of colors and textures to describe the sound he wishes to achieve. Singers may be asked to "sing like purple velvet." This would illicit a rich, full-bodied sound. "Sing like sunshine" would encourage singers to strive for a bright, warm sound.

Thomasson (2007) compares the quality of the singing voice to the quality of hamburgers to give young singers "something very tangible with which to draw a correlation" (p. 4). She asks why one hamburger is better than another and then asks why our voice sounds better when we sing one way versus another. For example, she believes when students have the

opportunity to experience the difference between breathy chest singing compared to singing with supported head tone, they are able to determine which one sounds better. The imagery provided by the hamburger analogy serves as a valuable tool when students are asked to judge the quality of their tone.

Seating Arrangement

The literature suggests that the seating arrangement for a choir can affect the quality of its sound. Singers should be placed in a formation that supports the best possible sound.

Interestingly, Daugherty (1999), however, found little empirical research to support such widely accepted views. According to Kohut and Grant (1990) for example, “noticeably different changes in choral sound occur by moving sections of the choir, relocating individual singers, or singing in mixed quartets” (p. 125). In response, he conducted a study entitled *Spacing, Formation and Choral Sound: Preferences and Perceptions of Auditors and Choristers*. He discovered that directors, singers, and auditors preferred the sound produced when choristers were more spread out in their spacing. “Ninety percent of choir members reported they could hear and monitor their own voices better with spread spacing than with close spacing” (p. 233). “Choristers thought individual vocal technique and production improved with spacing” (p. 235). Preference of mixed formation versus section formation was split. Younger singers preferred mixed formation while older singers preferred section formation. Daugherty also found that most singers “preferred a position within the middle segment of the choir” (p. 235). Conversely, strong singers preferred standing at the outer edges of the choir. Daugherty believed the most significant finding was “choral sound is influenced more by the choir’s spacing than by its mixed or sectional formation” (p. 236).

Matching singers' voices to each other or "acoustic seating" is achieved by voice-matching trials to discover choristers whose voices blend naturally. By placing these singers together in choir formation it is believed that choral blend and the overall choral sound will be optimal. Ekholm (2000) cites a study by Giardiniere that suggests voice-matching contributes to the quality of choral sound in an ensemble. In her own study she concluded, "acoustic seating positively affected evaluations of choral performance, ...and choral sound ratings" (p. 123). The choristers studied preferred an acoustic seating arrangement for the following reasons: "greater ability to hear oneself and/or other singers; less tendency to over sing; apparent ease of singing in tune; and impression of blend, allowing for greater vocal freedom" (p. 131).

When working with elementary students, Broeker (2006) reminds us that more consideration is often given to height and behavior when choosing seating arrangements. Her approach, however, is to disperse her more experienced students amongst younger, less experienced choir members. "They are able to clearly hear the model on one side and focus on how their own intonation, tone quality, etc., compares..." (p. 43). Similarly, Hinton (1985) places students who have trouble matching pitch at the end of a row.

Bartle (1988) uses a very practical approach when determining seating arrangements for her choirs. While agreeing with Broeker by considering height and behavior, she also mixes stronger and weaker voices. Bartle (2003) prefers to place "two singers with good ears next to each other, each sitting beside a child with a modest ear" (p. 60). Robinson (2007) places the "uncertain singers" (p. 3) near the strongest vocalist in the section. Bartle (1988) mentions providing chairs for choristers rather than having students sit on risers or on the floor. Roe (1983) stresses the importance of each singer being able to see the ictus of the conductor's beat. He

suggests seating strong singers at the rear (or middle) of the section. This way they are heard by the weaker singers in front of them, who may depend upon their help. It will also help to blend strong voices into the overall sound of the section” (p. 26).

Audition Versus Non-Audition

The focus of literature pertaining to achieving excellence in choral sound has moved away from the question of auditioned versus non auditioned groups. Notwithstanding the pros and cons of each school of thought, there is no definitive conclusion on which group can best attain quality choral sound (Hinton, 1985).

Hollenberg (1996) suggests, “Educators struggle between the desire to provide a choral experience for all students and the desire to provide a high quality experience for the most able students” (p. 36). When creating an auditioned choir she suggests if there are students who would really like to participate in choir but have limited abilities she will work with them for several sessions on their own time so that they may join the choir at the next opportunity. She believes making the effort to work with these students at the beginning of the school year helps create the best work ethic for your choir.

Many extra curricular choirs do not have an audition process and welcome all interested singers. Wilson (2003) believes it is more important to include students who may struggle with pitch matching and want to belong to the choir rather than those who may have the ability but lack commitment and interest. These students are more readily motivated and their positive attitude contributes to the production of quality sound.

Qualities of Effective Choral Teachers

A director with appropriate training and experience is able to teach children the skills and abilities necessary to create good choral sound. Grant and Norris (1998) and Wolverson (1993) identified relevant and important teaching behaviors for school choral directors to have: “a) the ability to detect errors in pitch intonation, and rhythm; b) conducting skills; and c) vocal skills” (p.41). Roe (1983) cites these same qualities as important, but adds the following: a) a sense of humor, b) clearness of speech; c) eye contact with the choir; d) facial expression appropriate to mood of music; e) a cheerful businesslike demeanor; f) a commanding posture; and g) sincerity. A choral director’s attitude and the atmosphere created in rehearsal also affect the quality of a choir’s sound. Elliott (1995) believes, “an excellent school music program reflects the dedication [of teachers] who are musically, pedagogically, philosophically, psychologically, and politically savvy” (p. 309). Robbins (2008) reminds conductors that they must strike a fine balance between nurturing teacher and demanding head musician. “As in choral music, balance is achieved by listening” (p. 26). She warns against letting egocentric pursuits shape our professional practice. Choral education is for and about the students, not the teacher’s reputation. Hart (1996) found that choral conductors often talk too much when conveying musical ideas, and should demonstrate and teach by example more often.

Kohut and Grant (1990) feel good choral sound begins with a competent conductor who relies “on conducting techniques to convey her or his musical intentions” (p. 103). Edwards (2002) reminds teachers to ask themselves “Does your teaching bring students to their best singing, (both functionally and expressively)...?” (p. 34). Lawrence (1989) and Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) caution that no amount of enthusiasm will result in quality choral sound if the

teacher is not knowledgeable and skilled in subject matter and delivery. “The success of a rehearsal depends largely upon the conductor’s skills, preparation, understanding, organization, and imagination” (Brunner, 1996, p. 1).

A masterful teacher will also exhibit a teaching style that incorporates appropriate demeanor. Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) observed that the nonverbal teaching behaviors that received the most attention from researchers were eye contact and facial expression. In a later study, *The Effect of Observation Focus on Evaluations of Choral Rehearsal Excerpts*, Yarbrough and Henley (1999) found that “the ability to both concentrate on the score and pay attention to interpersonal interactions was paramount for good teaching to occur” (p. 316). In order to maintain student attentiveness and on task behavior, the teacher must make eye contact with the students and not focus exclusively on the score. Lack of positive facial expression also influenced the quality of the musical communication between teacher and student, affecting the quality of sound in rehearsal and musical performance. Hildebrand (2006) and Phillips (2004) reiterate the importance of many of the behaviors cited in the research including, “aim for eye contact/smile with each singer at each rehearsal” (Hildebrand, 2005, p. 15). Hammar (1984), Bartle (2003), and Robinson (2007) appreciate the place of humor in the rehearsal and caution conductors to develop a individual style that is unique to their personality.

Other studies reveal that being knowledgeable in choral practice techniques is not all that is required to achieve a successful choral program. Keating (2005) reported that incorporating both freedom and specific behavior guidelines contribute to “good classroom management and are key in making rehearsals successful” (p. 50) Teaching style and demeanor also play an important role in the success of choral rehearsals. For example, Grant and Norris (1998) completed a study

that revealed trends in the field of choral research including teaching style and class environment. Teaching styles and class environments that rated the highest in motivation and task completion were those of teachers that had active professional lives. These teachers continued to attend professional development opportunities to update their knowledge and teaching techniques. Students and administrators described them as “enthusiastic, self-confident, prepared for class, stimulating, poised, and consistent in discipline” (Grant & Norris, 1998, p. 35).

Corbin (1995), Lavender (1991), Stamer (1999), and Woody (2001) stress the importance of a nurturing atmosphere. Make sure to praise the choir as a whole entity and to praise individuals often for their efforts, insisting each singer is a “Most Valuable Player” (Hildebrand, 2005). Addressing each child’s self-esteem impacts positively on their motivation to learn, and in turn, boosts the moral of the entire ensemble. Thomasson (2007), works diligently to create an environment where there is respect for everyone. When a struggling student “finds his singing voice, the class erupts with applause” (p. 1). She also suggests refraining from making instructional comments after the last sing through of a work in progress. She wants her choristers to enjoy their rehearsal achievements. Elster (2002) wants to create music rooms that honour and facilitate the development of even the most reluctant singer. She employs five guiding principles to remind her how to nurture and support these choir members. These principles include: 1) creating a safe environment; 2) honesty and gently encourage students; 3) choose relevant and accessible repertoire; 4) depersonalize criticism by using strategies that the whole group can participate in; and 5) encourage self expression by allowing singers to articulate their fears.

Achieving quality choral sound with an ensemble is not always the result of a conductor’s skill learned through educational instruction, but rather abilities obtained through a lifetime of

personal experience and their own innate musicality or natural talent. While reviewing studies on teacher education, Grant and Norris (1998) noted a study by Willis (1990) that reported the most important learning experience for a choral director was their personal participation in choral ensembles. Kerley (1995) believes “the artistic component of musicality is inherent and can be developed only when present in the choir director” (p. i).

Edwards (2004) encourages conductors to explore their own joy of singing. A conductor’s enjoyment of music making will be transmitted to students and give spontaneity to the director’s problem solving. Knowing one’s “singing self” presents new avenues of learning to our students. He suggests that choral directors be choristers themselves, singing in community choirs that are professional or amateur. These activities reinforce the joy of singing and help teachers relate to their singers’ trials and tribulations.

Accommodating a variety of learning styles in a choral setting should be considered. Kerley (1995) emphasizes the need for diverse instructional strategies to obtain quality choral sound. Edwards (2002) suggests using Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligence when striving for choral excellence. Master teachers should explore auditory and visual methods when giving instructions and teaching skills.

This review of the literature on choral teaching provides a wealth of information concerning the knowledge and skills required to produce a desired elementary choral sound and to emulate the practice of master teachers in the field. It has provided a pedagogical framework for exploring elements of teaching and learning in elementary choral education. The emerging categories and themes will help inform my observations of master teachers, structure data gathering tools, and guide my data analysis. Chapter III outlines the research methods employed in this study.

Chapter III: Research Methods

An action research design was the best way to inform and transform my current practice as a teacher of elementary children's choir. One of the central features of action research is "to consciously seek to understand the perspectives of others and to use those perspectives to formulate actions" (Stringer, 2008, p. 99). Qualitatively-oriented practitioner research is a research approach "to do what I do better", as stated by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). Observing and interviewing master teachers, analyzing what makes them successful, and applying this knowledge to my own practice can potentially contribute to my professional growth and success as an elementary choral teacher. The gap between my current practice and my desired improvement was the basis for action research (Adelman & Kemp, 1992). By taking action on my findings, I have brought about change to my professional practice (Mills, 2007).

This chapter provides an overall discussion of the research design and methodology employed in this study. What follows is a description of the design of the study, participants and methods to be used to collect and analyze data. Also included are the standards of research quality to be adhered to and the limitations that need to be acknowledged when using this methodology.

Participants

The participants for this study were determined through using a purposeful sampling strategy. According to Berg (2009), "researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population" (p. 50-51). My participants included one master choral educator from each school division in a major city in Western Canada as

recommended by their music coordinator or equivalent administrator. My first written contact was with the superintendent of each school division in the form of a consent letter outlining my research plans and their staffs' involvement (Appendix H). After receiving their written consent for their teachers' participation the music/arts coordinators were solicited by "Letter of Nomination" (Appendix I). They were asked to recommend two candidates for participation. I randomly selected one of the two recommended master teachers and contacted them with a letter of explanation and consent to be returned to the researcher signed (Appendix J). Stringer (2008) believes it is beneficial to "focus attention on a smaller number of people to explore their experiences in depth" (p. 91). The selection of master choral educators was based on the following criteria:

- Extent of choral teaching experience and profile in the music education community;
- Choral awards received at the local Music Festival and Choral Festival;
- Experience and level of participation in conducting honor choirs or choirs comprised of auditioned singers;
- Record of adjudication at choral competitions or festivals;
- Record of service as a guest teacher in a university setting or a clinician at professional development seminars; and
- Peer recognition as master teachers in the field.

In summary, the individuals were chosen because other people in the music community held them in high esteem, and their contribution to choral education was seen as particularly significant (Stringer, 2008).

After receiving the signed letter of consent to participate in the study, the master teachers

were contacted to arrange a time for my visit to observe a rehearsal and then conduct my interview. An information letter was provided to each principal, making them aware of my research and the date of my visit (Appendix K). An information letter for the parents/guardians and students of each master teacher was also be provided for distribution (Appendix L).

Sources of Data

Multiple qualitative data collection techniques are essential to establishing a valid and reliable data set. "It is generally accepted in action research circles that researchers should not rely on any single source of data, interview, observation or instrument" (Mills, 2007, p .66). Johnson (2005) suggests selecting two to four types of data collection to maintain research focus. Using different methods to collect data is identified as triangulation, a "multi-instrument approach" (Mills, 2007, p. 66). Bogdan and Biklen (2003), describe triangulation as "the use of multi-data sources or theoretical perspectives in a study" (p. 262). "In action research, triangulation is achieved by collecting different types of data, using different data sources, collecting data at different times..." (Johnson, 2005, p. 83). Sagor (2005) suggests that action researchers complete a data collection plan that identifies at least "three independent windows for collecting data on the question being investigated" (p. 45). Johnson (2005) suggests selecting two to four types of data collection to maintain research focus.

My data collection techniques were suitable for answering the research questions asked. In this way, research questions drove the data collection techniques rather than vice versa (Eisnenhart & Borko, 1993). I chose four sources of data for collection in this study: a) literature review; b) direct observations of participants recorded via video tape and field notes; c) personal interviews with participants using divergent and guided questioning recorded by audio tape and;

d) participants' written feedback and assessments of observed rehearsals conducted by teacher-researcher. The matrix outlined in Table 1 shows how each data collection technique will inform my questions.

Table 1
Data Collection Techniques

Question	Data Collection Techniques				
	Literature Review	Pre-Observation	Observation of Master Teachers	Interview of Master Teachers	Post-Observation
1. How do master choral teachers of elementary children's choirs teach and guide musical learning in their classroom?	X		X	X	
2. How can the new pedagogical insights gleaned from master teachers inform and transform my choral teaching process?	X	X	X	X	X

Observation of Master Teachers

Master teachers were observed and video taped while they conducted a choral rehearsal which provided first hand information about their skills and practice. Observing the practice of master teachers allowed me to step away from my role as teacher and embrace the role of researcher. All aspects of the rehearsal procedures and methodology used by master teachers were observed and noted at the source. Video data allowed me to analyze each participant's practice and behavior. Eisnenhart and Borko (1993) believe videotape provides "explicit, informationally

rich cues” to stimulate the participant’s recall of the event (p. 100). “One distinct advantage of the observation technique is that it records actual behavior, not what people say they said/did or believe they will say/do” (Joppe, 2004, p. 2). Video tape provided a reliable source that was reviewed multiple times after the initial observations. This allowed me to focus upon and make note of various dimensions of their practice, including the verbal and non-verbal interaction, demeanor and tone of voice, body movement, and hand gestures.

Everything observed was recorded on video tape. Furthermore, Bogdan and Biklen (2003) believe the meaning and context of the observation can be captured more completely if the researcher also takes field notes. Mills (2007) also supports the notion that everything the researcher observes should be recorded by writing, “If going into an observation you knew exactly what you wanted to observe, you would find this process to be inefficient” (p. 52). He also suggests recording a time line for the sequence of events at rehearsal. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) stress the importance of including everything the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study. This would include observer’s comments, recording ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches as well as noting patterns that emerge.

Interviews with Master Teachers

Observation alone does not provide any insight into what a participant may be thinking or what might motivate a specific teaching practice or overall philosophy (Joppe, 2004). This type of information can only be obtained by interview. Therefore, complementary data (Mills, 2007) was gathered by conducting interviews with the master teachers observed. “Pairing observation and interview provides a valuable way to gather complimentary data” (Mills, 2007, p. 55). Participant

interviews allowed each individual to provide information to specific questions from their own perspective, presented in their own descriptive words, allowing me to gain insight into how master teachers express and interpret their practice (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Interviews “aim to develop conversations that lead to enhanced insights...” (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003, p. 124). Seidman, cited in Glanz (2003), states that interviewing is the most suitable data collection method if we are to understand the experience of others and the meanings they make of them.

The interviews were guided by a specific set of questions, prepared in advance, which were asked in the same order each time to maintain consistency (Johnson, 2005). The interviews were conducted immediately after the videotaping and observation of the rehearsal. Even when an interview guide is employed, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics. This process allows the interviewer to shape the content of the interview to best obtain data that may otherwise have gone unexplored (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Divergent or open-ended questions provide opportunities for the participant to elaborate on questions in ways that might not have been anticipated (Tomal, 2003), “leading to richer data as a result of being able to probe further” (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003, p. 124). A less structured interview was employed, allowing the researcher to address any questions about what was observed during the participants’ rehearsals. It was important to establish a rapport with each participant. This helped form a bond of trust between researcher and participants (Joppe, 2004, Tomal, 2003).

As recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), both the field notes from the observation and any notes from the interview were labeled accordingly. Data was kept on the interviewee, date, the start and end time of the interview, the duration of the interview, and the location of the

interview. Participants' responses to questions were audio-taped and transcribed for later analyses. Field notes were also be taken as a back-up.

Pre- and Post-Observational Assessments of Researcher's Rehearsals by Master Teachers

The last method of data collection was two direct observations of my rehearsal practices by a sub group of three master teachers, one at the onset of the study and another at the end. It offered yet another perspective to have three master teachers observe and video tape my practice with the purpose of critiquing and assessing it. Three teachers recognized for their willingness to contribute were selected by my advisor and me. Selection was based on factors such as; availability, gender balance, and convenient proximity to my school. I invited them to video tape one of my rehearsals and provide me with constructive feedback and an overall rating. A rating scale was used as a pre and post observation tool. I provided guidelines so that I could transcribe their observations and comments for later analysis. This final data collection offered evidence of my changed practice. This provided an additional tool for self-evaluation and allowed me to continue to "develop an action plan" to initiate change in my practice (Mills, 2007, p. 6).

As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), I also recorded important insights that came to me during data collection before I lost them. Stringer (2008), suggests researchers identify "key experiences...epiphanies, or critical incidents" (p. 89). During data collection, if I noticed anything that connected to another participant's observation, interview, or ideas found in the literature, I made note of this. I transcribed recorded interviews in a timely fashion to preserve their integrity and the participants' true intents as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003).

Procedure

Each phase of data collection and analysis was described in detail to establish accuracy and credibility as stated by Johnson (2005). A detailed explanation of each component is included so other researchers can duplicate the study (Joppe, 2004).

The initiation of the project entailed securing the names of all the school divisions in the city, and the names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers of each of the individuals holding positions as music coordinators or administrators responsible for music within the division. This information was obtained from the school division offices in the city. Master teachers were recruited for the study based on the recommendations of consultants or their equivalents in each division within the city's boundaries, and the reputation of the individual selected. I also used any recommendations my music coordinator suggested. The province is rich in choral heritage and I was confident that reliable participants would agree to take part in my study.

All contacts were made by e-mail, and were followed-up with a phone call. An "Information Letter" with a consent form (Appendix D) included a personal introduction, a summary of the rationale and purpose of the study, and a brief description of the study and the nature of the participation requested. This was sent to the superintendents of each division. Music coordinators were initially contacted by phone to ask for their participation. Then they were sent a similar information in the form of a "Letter of Nomination" (Appendix E), asking them to recommend a teacher in their division having outstanding extra curricular elementary choirs, making them suitable participants for my study. Once the participants were selected by the music coordinators, an "Information Letter" with a Consent Form (Appendix F) was sent to the school principal asking permission to observe and interview the music teacher for my study. A similar

“Information and Consent Form” (Appendix G) was also be sent to each chosen participant. These letters were returned with the participant’s signature. A copy of the signed form was mailed to the participants for their records. Contact with all parties was accomplished through e-mail when possible. All the letters were modeled after examples from McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003).

When the participant, principal, and superintendent responded positively, I contacted the participating teachers to arrange suitable times for observation of their rehearsals and arrange suitable interview times. I also obtained permission from my principal to be relieved of my classroom duties so that I could observe the master teachers with their students.

Before the interview with each master teacher was scheduled, I reminded the participant that the process would take approximately one hour. The location and time of the interview was at the participant’s convenience. I briefly informed the participant that “what is said in the interview will be treated confidentially” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 95). A pseudonym was used for each participant. The date, start time and end time were recorded, and the duration calculated. The participant had a copy of the questions which were asked in sequence, allowing room for related discussion and further unanticipated questions that came up as the interview unfolded. I took notes as we proceeded. It was important to ensure the correct interpretations of each response. This was done by paraphrasing and conducting meaning checks (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The interview questions appear in Appendix E.

While observing each participant with their choir, I used an “Observation Guide for Master Teacher’s Rehearsal/Field Notes” (Appendix D), based on the recurring themes found in my literature review. The foci of these observations included: a) organization; b) repertoire

selection; c) vocal techniques; d) seating arrangement; and e) qualities of effective choral teaching. Comments were recorded under each appropriate heading as each was observed. If an area of focus was not observed, it was also be noted on the Observation Guide. This facilitated the coding and analysis of data collected. I also used an “Observation Guide: Master Choral Teacher’s Rehearsal-Sketch of Choral Rehearsal Space” (Appendix C) as suggested by Mills (2007) and Bogdan and Biklen (2003) to help recall the observations noted.

The master teachers selected were asked to attend two of my extra curricular choir rehearsals on a mutually acceptable date. Permission to have visiting teachers observe my teaching was obtained from my principal (Appendix G). Master teachers participating in this data collection were provided with a “Jury’s Observation and Assessment Tool” (Appendix A) that facilitated the recording of their responses. They were also provided with a “Jury’s Observation Rating Scale: Pre Test/Post Test” (Appendix B). Upon their second visit the same observation and assessment tool and rating scale was presented as a post-test rating scale.

As suggested by Tomal (2003) all data were gathered during the same time of the school year to assure consistency in attitude. He suggests if one collects data just prior to summer vacation teachers are most likely to have more negative attitudes or relaxed expectations for themselves and their students. Conversely, a teacher’s methodology and demeanor might be adversely affected around holiday performance time when there is pressure to cover much music for concerts. The beginning of September would have been an ideal time to observe master teachers because routines and expectations would be discussed and implemented with choristers at this time. The second school term, extending from January to March proved to also be an ideal time to observe master teachers. Routines were well established and it there was an optimum

teaching/learning atmosphere in each classroom.

All observations were transcribed in a timely fashion to help maintain their accuracy and authenticity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Rather than employing an outside source, as suggested by Karp in Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), I transcribed all my data as a way to “get close” (p. 368) and familiar with the information collected. I included body language, gesture, demeanor and tone of voice in my coding (Glanz, 2003). All transcripts and questionnaires were stored securely and were shredded and discarded when the study was completed. No names were used, protecting the participants’ identities. No one except the researcher had access to the data.

Data Analysis

Glanz (2003) and Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state that data analysis is the process of bringing structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. Action research and the resulting collection of data facilitates the emergence of patterns, categories, or themes (Glanz). The analysis “involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 147).

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) suggest that researches begin by summarizing the data collected and writing down “any ideas that come to you as you are reading your notes, interviews, etc. What things fit together?...What are the most telling quotes in your data” (p. 347). This technique was employed to help me get a closer picture of my data and to help uncover major features, called “units of meaning, themes,” or “key elements” (Stringer, 2008, p. 98). The reduction of these commonalities is referred to as coding. Hesse-Biber and Leavy describe coding as “a central part of a grounded theory approach involving extracting meaning from nonnumerical data such as text and multimedia such as audio and video” (p. 349). I searched for segments of

data I believed were important and applied a name or code to each of these segments. I used highlight markers to isolate and identify emerging categories.

I used memos as an intermediate step between coding and my interpretation of the data as suggested by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006). These memos consisted of written ideas about my analysis and interpretation of data and identified key quotes found in the data. Coding helped reduce the data and memoing assisted with thinking about how to organize my data into meaningful categories and patterns. The recurring patterns, key themes, ideas, and concepts yielded these coding categories that led to emergent hypotheses about the practice of master teachers. My coding categories were revised and/or expanded if they did not directly reflect the themes found in the literature reviewed. As stated in Hesse-Biber and Leavy, the goal is to gain insight and understanding. It is not necessary to have a predefined set of coding categories. Themes and key ideas were organized in chart form for easy viewing. The interpretation of the information coded involved explaining and framing my ideas in relation to other research, why my contribution is important, and how I will follow through with action.

Tomal (2003) and Johnson (2005) suggest using visual graphics to describe data. I used an "Observation Frequency Form" recommended by Tomal, to list emerging themes each time a participant was observed utilizing a particular method in rehearsal, mentioned its utilization in the course of the interview, or used a technique often, as verified in their questionnaire answers. I had one "Observation Frequency Form" for each theme identified in the literature to facilitate categorizing data. When practical, diagrams were utilized to illustrate themes, providing a quick way to observe data and make analysis as suggested by Tomal and Glanz (2003).

The pre- and post-assessment data collected from master teachers observing my practice

will be particularly beneficial to the next cycle of action research. These observations and subsequent comments have provided insightful suggestions, contributing to my improved practice and teaching success. These data were compared to the data collected from the three other sources and compared to the results found therein, helping me decide what practices I will need to incorporate to initiate change and improve the quality of sound in my choral setting.

Standards of Research Quality

Several empirical standards, that is standards based on observation or experience, were applied to this study including Guba's criteria for validity of qualitative research as stated in Mills (2007). These criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

According to Mills transferability "refers to the applicability of findings to settings and contexts different from the one in which they were obtained" (p. 83). When recurring themes surfaced in my analysis of the data theories about the practice of master elementary choral teachers emerged that could be helpful to other teacher-practioners. Eisnenhart and Borko (1993) believe educational research should be accessible to a variety of stakeholders including teachers, administrators, parents and other educational researchers with varying perspectives and expertise. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this "universality transferability." My collection of detailed descriptive data will permit comparison and application to other similar contexts. I was able to provide rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study that will facilitate transferability (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Reliability is a study's ability to be replicated and produce similar results. Mills (2007) asks his readers if the same data would be consistently collected if the same techniques and data collection tools were used again. He defines reliability as "the consistency that our data measures

what we are attempting to measure over time” (p. 83). It provides evidence that the instruments being used produce consistent results over time and are appropriate to what we want to find out. Reliability also depends on the data collected and reported, and refers to the accuracy of the researcher’s description of the research sites and subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Care was given to design data collection tools that best addressed what I wanted to find out. A strong coding scheme also ensured the reliability of my study. In addition, I was careful to check with my participants to make sure I interpreted their responses as they intended during all interview situations.

Validity is the accuracy or truthfulness of a measurement (Mills, 2007). Tomal (2003) suggests that the researcher strive to collect data under natural conditions in order to achieve authentic data. All of my observations and subsequent field notes were obtained by watching each participant in his or her own rehearsal space, during a typical rehearsal scenario.

Tomal (2003) notes that participants in action research studies are often motivated to perform better because they are being observed. This occurrence, known as the Hawthorne Effect, may have hindered reliability of data collected by observation. Getting to know my participants before data collection begins put them more at ease and lessened this effect. Using multiple forms of data collection, or triangulation, also lessened this effect. I collected data from multiple sources including observation, interview, and questionnaire. This helped ensure the data collected was valid. Tomal also suggests collecting data during the same time of the school year to “assure similar perspectives and attitudes” (p. 82).

In all research studies the reader questions what makes the research valuable and worth believing. Trustworthiness is an encapsulation of: a) internal validity; the “truth” of the findings

within the context of the study; b) external validity; the findings applicable in other contexts with other participants; c) reliability; could the same results be repeated in a similar context; and d) objectivity; was there any bias on the part of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Glanz (2003) believes if a pattern emerges consistently in the videotaped observations, interview, and written questionnaires, then the trustworthiness of the analytic procedure is apparent. The use of multiple forms of data collection referred to as triangulation, also “lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena [I will be] studying” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 107).

Limitations

There are three areas where the methodology has limitations. Each of the participants were visited only once for observation and interview. Ideally, several visits would have provided additional validity to the study. However, my participants might not have agreed to participate in the study if several visits to their rehearsals were required. They might find this disruptive to their teaching. I continued to teach in my school and it was difficult to take too much time away from my students. Funding for substitute teachers was not an issue. I rearranged my timetable to accommodate by observations and interviews. Second, I limited my selection of participants to those teaching in my own city. All the data was collected from the same group of participants, rather than multiple samples of master teachers. All of these limitations were necessary because I am a practicing teacher with obligations to my own students and teaching schedule. Collecting data from several sources of participants or out of town sources would have been unmanageable. Third, there was collaboration with other researchers as is often customary in action research. I was the only researcher analyzing and interpreting the data.

Chapter three detailed the action research design employed in this study. It offered an

overview of the criteria used to select participants and the data collection techniques employed.

Chapter IV presents the results of this research process, identifying common themes and practices of master elementary choral teachers.

Chapter IV: Results

This chapter will present the results of the data collected and analyzed during this study. Findings are structured around the three data sources: a) direct observations of participants recorded via video tape and field notes; b) personal interviews with participants using divergent and guided questioning recorded by audio tape and; c) jury participants' written feedback and assessments of observed rehearsals conducted by teacher-researcher before and after data collection and analysis.

Each source of data was reviewed and broken down into manageable units with an eye for emerging patterns, categories or themes, and dominant teaching strategies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Glanz, 2003). These major features or "key elements" extracted from each data source helped identify commonalities in master teachers' practice (Stringer, 2008, p.98). The results from each data source were then triangulated to substantiate commonalities found. "Observation Frequency Forms" were used to display the themes rendered by direct observation of the participants and to display the themes corroborated by interviews with the participants (Tomal, 2003). Key themes found in the literature review will be compared with the themes emerging from data collected from the field.

Observations of Master Teachers

Data was collected from observing six master teachers, one from each school division in a large city in Western Canada. A sketch of each choral rehearsal space provided a physical description of the learning environments. Information was included from field notes compiled by the researcher while attending rehearsals and is supported and augmented by an analysis of video tape data. Field notes were categorized on a worksheet using themes identified

in the literature. These themes include: evidence of pre-planning; repertoire used; vocal techniques such as warm-ups, posture and breathing, use of movement, sight reading and solfege, and visualization and imagery; seating arrangement; and qualities of effective choral teaching style and demeanor. Table 2 presents descriptive data related to the choral programs observed.

Table 2

Description of Choral Programs

Teacher	Grade Level	Number of Choir Members	Attendance Criteria	Rehearsal Time
Debbie	4/5/6	53	volunteer	30 minutes once/cycle during lunch time
Amy	4/5	40	volunteer	35 minutes once/cycle during lunch time
Anne	3/4/5/6	75	volunteer	35 minutes twice/cycle during lunch time
Shelley	2	45	mandatory	35 minutes once/cycle during class time
Becky	1/2/3	25*	mandatory	30 minutes once/cycle during class time
Will	4/5/6	160	volunteer	40 minutes once/cycle during class time

*For performances, two additional multi-age classrooms are added.

Physical description of the choral rehearsal space. One master teacher rehearsed in the gym because of choir size while the other five rehearsed in their classrooms. Two of the classrooms had portable risers set up and one classroom had built in risers. One classroom had no risers. Five master teachers had electric keyboards, one used a piano.

Evidence of pre-planning. Rehearsal planning was evident in observations but took on a variety of configurations dependent upon the rehearsal focus. Shelley was the only master teacher that provided a rehearsal agenda that was visible to students (Observation #4, March

17, 2009). This was written on a rolling blackboard at the front of the classroom. The rehearsal agenda was numbered and included the names of songs used for warm-up, review songs, and songs to be learned in rehearsal. Shelley referred to the board as she moved through the items listed for rehearsal. Solfege dots were arranged like a ladder on the side of the board from high doh to low doh and were used as reference for warm-up activities. As observed during Shelley's rehearsal, many of the literature sources reviewed stressed the importance of having a list of accomplishments for the rehearsal outlined on the board (Bartle, 1988; Brunner, 1996; Countryman, 2007b; Grat 2006; Hammar 1984; Swears, 1990; Woody, 2001; Zielinski, 2005).

Becky demonstrated pre-planning by displaying various time signatures, note values, and rests on the white board (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). She referred to these during the rehearsal. She had scores available for each student and handed them out as they entered the classroom. Debbie had prepared typed lyrics displayed on an overhead projector. The alto lyrics were in red boxes and the soprano lyrics were in blue boxes (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Will's students came to the rehearsal with their own binders filled with lyric sheets or complete music scores (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Anne's rehearsal pre-planning was less evident. The lesson plan was more spontaneous and emergent, fueled by what was heard in the actual rehearsal. The specifics of her rehearsal agenda were based on immediate feedback, as she evaluated what she heard and what details needed attention (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). It was observed that all master teachers intuitively employed on the spot solutions if issues occurred rather than adhering to strictly planned activities. It is interesting to note that the concepts of being flexible enough to work outside what has been planned, responding to the needs of the moment and letting what you hear

guide the rehearsal, were also suggested as strategies to improve my practice by a jury member during his post-observation of my rehearsal.

Repertoire used. During my observations, I noted that repertoire selection was influenced by several criteria. Debbie, Amy, and Will's selections were performance driven (Observation #1, February 10, 2009, Observation #2, February 19, 2009, and Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Amy's and Debbie's repertoire choices were motivated by previous performances at divisional concerts and consequent preparation for a city-wide Music Festival (Observation #1, February 10, 2009 and Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Debbie was preparing for a school concert and she required repertoire that would showcase the students' abilities, at the same time capturing the interest of family audience members. Amy's choir had just participated in a divisional wide choral festival to help choirs prepare for the upcoming Music Festival. Her festival class criteria required two selections of contrasting style. Anne also chose repertoire contrasting in musical styles and used the differences in tone production and mood setting to teach her students to recognize style differences when interpreting choral music (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Will's repertoire choices were also performance motivated as he prepared repertoire for Grade Six Farewell Assembly (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). He chose songs with messages of good luck and future happiness to enhance the event.

Repertoire choices were also influenced by the specific musical skills teachers wanted to develop amongst their choristers. Perhaps because she was dealing with a younger choir (her students were exclusively in grade two), Shelley's repertoire choices focused on elemental criteria. Her repertoire consisted of several short songs, 12 to 24 measures long, each employing easily accessible melodies using rudimentary solfege. Many of the songs were utilized as canons

or rounds. Another selection followed a simplistic verse and chorus pattern and all song lyrics used basic language. Much of the repertoire could be described as dated and consisted of well known melodies from song collections and graded music texts (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Will also favoured older, classic repertoire in three of his four repertoire selections (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Amy and Anne's repertoire choices included challenging but accessible two-part singing appropriate to their choirs' skill and ability levels (Observation #2, February 19, 2009 and Observation #3, February 20, 2009). One of Anne's selections and one of Will's selections employed a sweeping melody line with opportunity to develop long phrases and other good singing techniques.

Debbie, Anne, and Amy's repertoire choices reflected music that students would enjoy and could relate to (Observation #1, February 10, 2009, Observation #2, February 19, 2009 and Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Becky's repertoire selection supported a school-wide interdisciplinary theme about the sea, evident from various art projects displayed in the school hall ways (Observation #5, March 23, 2009).

As illustrated in Table 3, it was observed that a range of criteria are employed when master teachers choose repertoire. Three of these criteria are applied by half the group and include: performance obligations; teachable music skills inherent in the repertoire selection and; qualities of accessibility and appeal to singers. All but one participant employ two or more criteria.

Table 3
Criteria Used for Repertoire Selection

Teachers	Perform- ance Driven	Music Skills to be Taught	Classic Repertoire	Contrast- ing Styles	Acces- sible/ Enjoyable	Supports School Wide Themes	Number of Criteria Used by Individ- uals
Debbie	•				•		2
Amy	•	•		•	•		4
Anne		•		•	•		3
Shelley		•	•				2
Becky						•	1
Will	•	•	•				3
Number of Teachers Using Specific Criteria	3	4	2	2	3	1	n/a

Vocal techniques. Various vocal techniques were employed throughout the rehearsals observed to elicit optimum choral learning. Designating the warm-up as an individual and distinct category within the rehearsals as identified in the literature, was reflected in five of the six practices observed. Kohut and Grant (1990) believe the warm-up should fulfill three distinct purposes: 1) to physically awaken the body parts engaged in singing; 2) to focus the singers on a common goal; and 3) to provide a group technique lesson. These criteria were observed in many of the master teacher's practice however, various vocal techniques were also artfully intertwined throughout the rehearsal and not just in the warm-ups observed. The vocal techniques utilized in warm-up activities reflected other categories that were discussed separately in the literature review such as: posture and breathing; use of movement; sight reading and solfege; and visualization and imagery. If these techniques were observed as part of a master teacher's warm-up they were

included as observed in the warm-up.

Warm-ups. Five out of six master teachers began their rehearsals with a warm-up, while one did not (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). It was observed that Debbie and Amy used piano accompaniment when warming up their choirs (Observation #1, February 10, 2009 and Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Will remained behind the keyboard for all of the warm-up and most of the rehearsal (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Five out of six of the master teachers focused on good posture during their warm-ups. Amy had her students stand for the entire warm-up. They were instructed to stand still with feet planted on the risers, shoulder width apart and remained like this for the whole warm-up. There were constant reminders to, “Stand tall” and “Get as tall as you can, separate your legs” (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Both Amy and Anne had their students alternate between standing and sitting tall (Observation #2, February 19, 2009 and Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Will also reminded his students to “Sit tall, posture” during the warm-up. (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Shelley reminded her choir to pay attention to the placement of their shoulders during warm-up by having them do several shoulder rolls and by turning their heads left and then right over their shoulders. Choristers were instructed to “Roll your neck down and back” (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). This warm-up encouraged good neck, shoulder and back alignment. Debbie also encouraged good posture by having choir members ‘karate chop’ their neighbor’s shoulders (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). The literature reviewed supported many of the posture preparations and breathing techniques observed during the warm-ups (Gaston 2003, Skoog 2004, and Spurgeon 2002).

Four of the six master teachers employed jaw placement techniques while warming up

their choirs. To encourage a dropped jaw Amy had her students massage their faces and jaw area and then sing ‘ah’ descending and ascending. (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Will reminded his choir to “Sing with a relaxed jaw” (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Shelley had her students put their hands with spread fingers on their faces to draw the jaw down during several warm-up activities (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). The importance of jaw placement was also stressed by Powell (1991), who believes excess tension in the jaw often causes poor intonation. Anne instructed her students to “Flutter their lips with their hands on their cheeks” (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

Four of the six master teachers incorporated visualization and imagery in many of their warm-up activities. Amy used a sports analogy to explain the rationale behind warm-ups: “When you play a sport you warm up your bodies. When we sing we do the same” (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Debbie and Shelley had their choir visualize singing with breath and Shelley asked her students to, “Draw your breath with your pointer finger” (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Will encouraged his singers to “Make it bounce off the back wall...give me energy now...keep your voices focused” (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Amy instructed her singers to make “walrus tusks” with their pointer fingers at the corner of their mouths while singing ‘ah, aye, ee, oh, oo’ warm-up (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Debbie asked her students to imagine they were throwing a frisbee as they sang ‘vee, veh, va.’ She added, “pretend you have strings through your bodies. Now pull the strings up” (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). This also helped correct her singers’ posture.

Attention to vowel and consonant production was included in four choir warm-ups. For vowels, Will used ‘mee, mah, may’ to a ‘do-so-high do’ pattern and ‘loo’ up a five-note scale

(Observation #6, June 2, 2009). For the 'oo' vowel Debbie used 'Scooby doobie doobie doobie doo' going down by step after each five-note ascending and descending pattern and an arpeggiated 'vee, veh, vah' (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). This warm-up encouraged buzzing in the nose so students could find resonance in their singing voices. Anne had choir members look at each other as they sang through an 'oh, ah, oo, ee' warm-up to see if their mouths changed shape for each new vowel sound. "Look at someone around you. Look at your neighbour's face" (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Shelley focused her choir at the beginning of the warm-up by used rhythmic vocal sounds in echo such as 'ch-ch-ch, ch, ch' at the start of the rehearsal (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Amy also used rhythmic echoes in the form of 'ssss, ssss, ss, ssss' to get air moving at the beginning of her warm-up (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). To engage tummy muscles Anne used 'tuh, tuh, tuh,' and 'kuh, puh, fuh.' Students were encouraged to blow on their hand for 'fuh' (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

Three of the master teachers used sliding warm-up exercises on the vowel 'oo' and 'ah' to warm up their voices. Amy used a 'yoo-hoo' descending pattern and an 'oo' like a siren (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Anne used the same 'yoo-hoo' as an echo to focus students at the beginning of the warm-up (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). They turned to their side and back to watch their neighbors. Shelley also used the sliding 'oo' up and down (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Anne's choir was instructed to "take a really big breath and go as high as you can and as low as you can" (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

Both Debbie and Shelley favoured warm-ups that incorporated movement including stretching, use of hands and arms, and actions that correlated to warm-up lyrics. Shelley used many warm-up activities to engage kinesthetic learners and to focus attention. These activities

included bending to touch ankles and staying down to a count of four, repeated several times, wiggling fingers near their heads while making high little clicking sounds, and word poems with actions (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Amy had her choir making circles with their fingers pointing down as they sang through 'oh, ah, oo, ee' in warm-up (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Debbie often used 'rowing fists' for warm-ups that featured sustained tones such as 'tah' held over eight beats. The 'tip of the tongue warm-up' was employed using numbers, first without actions and then adding actions, one for each number moving up and down the scale: 1, 121, 12321, 1234321, and so on. Students were often instructed to snap their fingers to the beat while warming up (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). The use of movement in the warm-up got choir members active and challenged their concentration skills. The literature review revealed that Henry Leck (1995) incorporates movement in all his warm-up activities to encourage an energized sound from his choirs.

Debbie and Anne sang along with their choirs for much of the warm-up, modeling their expectations (Observation #1, February 10, 2009 and Observation #3, February 20, 2009). At the end of the warm-up Amy used two exercises in unison and then in canon, repeating each one half step higher at each repetition and increasing the tempo. *Every Morning When I Wake Up* was sung primarily to engage choir members and get them listening to the harmony they were creating with a three-part canon. "Mingo, Mango" was utilized to prepare good diction. This warm-up also included a clap on the strong beat as the tempo increased.

Two of the master teachers observed incorporated solfege in their warm-up. Debbie had her choir sing down the scale from 'do. She demonstrated incorrectly first, stressing the consonants, then correctly stressing the vowels. The choir was asked to model her second example

as they moved up one half step after each repetition of the solfege scale. The result was beautiful vowels (Observation #1, February 19, 2009). Shelley used solfege as part of her warm-up to strengthen sight reading skills. She had magnetic 'solfege bubbles' arranged on the black board from low do up to and including high do. She started by pointing to the first note and singing with the students, guiding them through interval changes, coaxing or correcting the pitch as needed. She started with intervals relating to so; 'so-mi, so-la, so-la-high do.' Then she started with intervals relating to high do; 'do-la-so, do-ti.' Then she incorporated the lower part of the solfege scale, adding 'mi-re-doh' incorporating 'ti' and 'fa' (Observation #4, March 17, 2009).

Will's warm-ups incorporated challenges that were common to the repertoire. He made sure all warm-up exercises went up to a high 'A' and that the choir was focused when appropriate, on singing each warm-up cognizant of good phrasing (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

A summary of the vocal techniques observed during master teachers' choral warm-ups are displayed in Table 4. It is evident from this data that the most frequently observed techniques were correct posture and jaw placement, the use of visualization and imagery, and attention to correct vowel and consonant production. It was interesting to notice that only one master teacher focused on challenges in the repertoire. I also noticed there was very little use of solfege and modeling of correct techniques.

Table 4

Frequency of Vocal Techniques Observed During Choral Warm-Ups (N=5)

Technique	Frequency
Posture	5
Jaw Placement	4
Visualization and Imagery	4
Vowel and Consonant Production	4
Sliding Up and Down Register	3
Use of Movement	3
Modeling	2
Use of Solfege	2
Focus on Challenges in Repertoire	1

The vocal techniques observed during the rehearsal of repertoire echoed many of the themes identified in the literature reviewed. I discuss these in more detail below.

Posture and breathing. Many of the warm-ups incorporated posture and breathing exercises and many of the master teachers made reference to good posture and breathing techniques throughout their rehearsals. Becky often asked her choir to demonstrate how “a musician sits up to sing” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Anne reminded her students to “sit up really tall” whenever they switched from standing to sitting (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Amy instructed her choir to put “one hand on your tummy. Feel how you are breathing” (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Although he never defined what “sitting well” was, Will reminded his choir to do this throughout the rehearsal (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Use of movement. Many of the master teachers incorporated movement in their demonstrations to convey musical ideas. Most of the master teachers had their students incorporate movement while they sung to better help them understand vocal technique and phrase

execution. It is of interest to note that Will's choir remained seated on the gym floor for the entire rehearsal. Conversely, Shelley's choir spent much of the rehearsal moving whether it be to "draw" phrases while singing to count how many there were or adding actions to accompany each song they reviewed. Some songs used body percussion. Students were very proud to make suggestions for movement when newer repertoire was rehearsed (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Both Amy and Anne's choirs were kept focused by alternating standing with sitting throughout the rehearsal (Observation #2, February 19, 2009 and Observation #3, February 23, 2009).

Much of Anne's rehearsal incorporated hand gestures. Like Shelley, Anne and Amy also used hand motions that corresponded to the contour of phrases being rehearsed especially when the choir sang in two parts. They often asked the students to use their hands to follow the phrasing (Observation #3, February 20, 2009 and Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Will also used sweeping hand gestures to indicate long phrases while playing the melody with the other hand but he did not ask his students to mirror his gestures (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Debbie fixed timing issues by having her choir keep a steady beat on their legs while singing through the passage (Observation #1, February 10, 2009).

On several occasions Anne put her index finger to her chin to encourage students to open wide while they sang. She would demonstrate and then have the choir mirror her gesture. When the choir had trouble with the rhythm of a passage, Anne had them put their hands to their heads and gently tap the correct rhythm of the phrase while they sang. Anne also used movement to help her choir stay in tune while singing a descending passage. "The hardest thing is to go down without going flat. Sing that downward passage with your hands going up. You can even rise a bit on your heels" Her choir members were instructed to 'map' the contour of a challenging phrase by

asking them to point their fingers down when there was a downward interval. This helped guide the choir to the correct note. She also pointed up with her fingers to demonstrate when they were flat (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

Near the end of the rehearsal Becky used movement to review new vocabulary found in the lyrics and to combat restlessness. “Stand up. Put your music by your feet. Where is starboard?” The children lean right. “Where is port?” The children lean left. “Where’s the bow?” The children lean forward (Observation #5, March 23, 2009).

Sight reading and solfege. Both Debbie and Shelley used solfege in their warm-up; Debbie to stress good vowel production and Shelley to introduce sight reading skills. This was rather surprising because the literature reviewed suggested solfege be used to help develop the relationship between sound and syllable and eventually be transferred to repertoire learning to solidify notes (Giles, 1991; Keating, 2005; Kohut & Grant, 1990; Phillips, 2004; Swears, 1985). None of the other master teachers used solfege in repertoire rehearsal. Solfege is also a recognized tool in the music curriculum used to teach the relationship between notes and is intended to eventually lead to note reading. I had assumed that most master teachers would have used solfege in the classroom and would have built on this skill in their choir programs.

Becky’s rehearsal, on the other hand, focused on identifying several music notation signs as her choir worked through their score. The students paused to identify time signatures, rests and accidentals throughout the medley. Whenever the time signature changed they were instructed to “Find the time signature and put your finger on it” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). She often referred to the time signatures displayed on the whiteboard: 4/4 time or common time was identified as a March; 3/4 time was identified as a Waltz; and 2/2 time was described as cut time.

Both 4/4 and 3/4 time were shown to use a quarter note as a beat and 2/2 time was shown as using a half note as a beat. Rests were also drawn on the white board, labeled with their names for reference throughout the rehearsal. Students were also asked to identify sharps and flats as they appeared in the music.

Becky's students were learning how to follow their music by identifying rehearsal numbers and finding them. "See if you can follow the music intro with the tape" (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). She called out the rehearsal numbers as students sang along with the recorded music. Becky's students each had a copy of the music being rehearsed. When needed, Anne handed out music to each student (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). It appeared that Becky and Anne were preparing students to read by first introducing how to follow along while listening to a tape or the teacher modeling the singing. Will's students each had their own binders with lyrics and when possible, legally reproduced scores (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Conversely, Debbie and Shelley provided the lyrics for their students on an overhead, teaching by rote (Observation #1, February 10, 2009, Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Amy's students had no music either (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). The repertoire they were rehearsing was already committed to memory. Music literacy was not a primary focus among the participants.

Visualization and imagery. Many of the master teachers used imagery to illicit the appropriate qualities of sound required to sing passages in the repertoire effectively and musically. When his choir was not smiling and did not sound particularly joyous Will made reference to a community event held at a local city park called "Teddy Bears' Picnic," where children could bring their teddy bears to be examined by "doctors." He said, "You sound like your teddy bear can't be saved" (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). This got a laugh from many of the students and

put a smile on many faces. He also instructed his singers to “think energy” to help propel them through long phrases (Observation #6, June , 2009). Will’s technique was similar to examples cited in the literature by Leck (1995), who might suggest that his choir “sing like purple velvet” to illicit a rich, full-bodied sound and Thomasson (2007), who teaches her students to listen for specific tone qualities by comparing singing styles to the quality of various hamburgers. To help students enunciate lyrics and engage the face and jaw Amy said, “Chew five hundred year old bubble gum! Is your jaw getting a workout? (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). To improve posture Debbie instructed her students to get “up on your toes. Imagine you are up on a diving board” (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Later when the choir was asked to sit Debbie instructed them to “pretend you are standing” reinforcing the need to be tall even though they were sitting (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). To encourage good posture Shelley asked her students to “stretch to the rooftops” (Observation # 4, March 17, 2009).

Shelley used visualization to instill the idea of long, sweeping phrases. First, she demonstrated by drawing phrases with a sweeping gesture starting at her hip, sweeping up and down to the opposite hip, outlining a rainbow shape. She had students do the same drawing as they sang through the verse. “How many rainbow phrases did you hear?” (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Debbie also outlined phrases with her arms (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Amy, Anne and Will referenced the eyes and eyebrows when students had to sing ascending passages. (Observation #2, February 19, 2009, Observation #3, February 23, 2009, and Observation #6, June 2, 2009). “What am I doing with my eye brows? I want you to do that. Raise your eyebrows for every note” (Observation #3, February 19, 2009). Will instructed his singers to have “eyes open, nice wide eyes...use your eyebrows” (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Becky had her students visualize their individual interpretation of the lyrics by asking them to imagine “What is it like to be under the ocean?” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). To help students drop their jaws for the word ‘below’ she asks them to think about “how you would hold your mouth for [the word] below?...Drop your jaw or chin” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Anne asked students to sing with their index finger on their chin to produce a unified vowel. Then she asked them to imagine how wide their mouths must be opened. She paused and sang with them, with her finger on her chin. When the desired tone was achieved Anne asked, “Are you imagining it echoing in your head? It should” (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

When students sang a note incorrectly, Anne used a visual to illustrate how small a half step is vocally by drawing a picture of the black and white piano keys on the white board. She also drew a music staff to show the distance between F# and Eb, showing three half steps. This image augmented her demonstration on the piano. She played the interval slowly on the piano while using her left hand to show the downward movement (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

Worthy of note is Anne’s use of slow, deliberate singing. She uses this technique to fix incorrect notes or whole phrases. It was observed that she often had the choir sing passages very slowly to tidy ragged singing. Repetition of passages was also a favoured rehearsal technique of Anne’s (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). This slow and deliberate repetition of one or two words or syllables at a time had amazing results! Students became intensely focused on correct deportment, and any problems encountered with pitch were remedied by the focus on modeling each unified vowel sound correctly. This technique also worked well to define consonants that had previously been sung sloppily. This was a wonderful example of quality listening from both students and teacher. Table 5 summarizes the use of the above mentioned techniques as identified

in the literature and as observed in practice by the six master teachers.

Table 5

Vocal Techniques Evident in the Literature and Observed in Practice

Teacher	Use of Warm-ups	Posture and Breathing	Use of Movement	Solfege and Sight Reading	Use of Visualization and Imagery
Debbie	●	●	●		●
Amy	●	●	●		●
Anne	●	●	●		●
Shelley	●	●	●	●	●
Becky			●	●*	●
Will	●	●	●**		●

* No use of solfege, but students identify several notation devices by sight.

** Only the teacher uses movement to convey legato singing for long phrases. The students do not move.

Seating arrangement. Two of the music classrooms had risers built into the floor.

Becky's room had three shallow risers and Shelley's room had five very steep risers that took up most of the room (Observation #5, March 23, 2009 and Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Debbie and Amy had portable risers set up in their classrooms. Both of these teachers had one additional row of students stand or sit on the floor in front of the risers (Observation #1, February 10, 2009 and Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Debbie's choir had fifty three members from grades four, five and six. Amy's grade four/five choir had forty members. Students in these four choirs all had their own specified spots and remained there for the entire rehearsal.

Shelley's choir was comprised of three grade two classes with forty five students in total. Each class had their own particular side of the risers and in turn each student had his or her own spot. It was evident by observation that students had been arranged first according to behavior, then height, and then singing ability (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). In Becky's classroom

grade one students were interspersed amongst grade two and three students so the older children could help the younger students follow the lyrics and music. There were approximately twenty five children in her class choir (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Anne and Will had students sit on the floor. Anne's choir of approximately seventy five children in grades three, four, five and six was arranged in four long rows and the room was quite crowded. Children did not appear to have specific spots but they sat in the same general area for rehearsal, altos on the conductor's right, sopranos on the left (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Will's choir was the largest with one hundred and sixty grade four, five, and six students. They sat on the gym floor in seven rows, with the sixes in the back, then the fives and then the fours in the front two or three rows (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

The literature reviewed found that choral sound improved when choristers were spaced farther apart from one another (Daugherty, 1999). It was discovered that choral blend and overall choral sound improved when teachers placed voices that blended well together in proximity to each other (Bartle, 2003). The choirs observed did not take advantage of this theory, perhaps because the rehearsal spaces were all rather small and did not allow for spread out formations. Intermingling the students with strong music abilities with students with weaker skills was deemed important in the literature review, but not so much in observed practice. Height and social behavior seemed to affect student placement more in practice than suggested in the literature reviewed. Table 6 illustrates the pertinent facts revealed by observation.

Table 6
Seating Arrangement

Teacher	Risers	Seating Plan	Height	Social Behavior	Musical Ability	Grade Level
Debbie	●	●	●	●		
Amy	●	●	●	●	●	●
Anne		●*				
Shelley	●	●	●	●	●	n/a
Becky	●	●	●	●	●	●
Will		●	●			

* Individual students do not have a specific spot. Sopranos sit on the conductors left, altos on the right.

The only choir that strayed from their seating plan during the rehearsal was Anne's. To help solidify their part the altos were asked to form a standing circle. The grade three and four altos were asked to mix up with the grade five and six altos. Meanwhile, the sopranos were asked to stay in their spots and sit tall while they sang. Anne stood in the middle of the circle singing with the altos, instructing them to "listen to each other" (Observation #3, February 20, 2009).

Qualities of effective choral teaching/teaching style and demeanour. This category provided a large volume of data. The dominant qualities observed during rehearsal have been broken down into several categories including: teacher is piano-focused or vocal-focused; use of recordings; use of critical listening; focus on music terminology; focus on meaning and sentiment; focus on active participation by students; teaching by echoing, modeling and demonstrating, concrete and reflective questioning; distinct pacing style; and positive demeanour and respect for singers.

Four of the six master teachers relied heavily on the piano or keyboard during the observed rehearsals. These rehearsals could be categorized as piano-focused. The teachers always faced

their choirs while playing. Will used his keyboard throughout the rehearsal, playing the accompaniment while students sang more familiar repertoire, adding the odd conducting gesture with one hand to delineate cut-offs. When a new vocal line was introduced he would simultaneously sing and play the melody on the keyboard. Will drilled more difficult passages with lots of repetition, always playing the vocal line on the keyboard. When a passage was more familiar he played the left hand accompaniment to encourage long phrases. The accompaniment employed a sweeping legato line and he wanted their voices to mimic this quality (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

When repertoire became well known to students both Debbie and Amy played the accompaniment with their choirs (Observation #1, February 10, 2009 and Observation #2, February 19, 2009). When staying together became an issue Debbie stopped playing with one hand to snap a steady beat to get her singers back on track (Observation #3, February 10, 2009). Becky depended heavily on the piano throughout the rehearsal. When learning new passages, Becky played the melody on the piano and students followed along. There was very little teacher singing/students echoing employed (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). By contrast, Anne used the piano to find pitches only and did not play with her choir. It is also interesting to note that in pre-observation all three jury members provided positive feedback concerning my lack of dependence on the keyboard. They believed this practice would “make the choir stronger” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009).

Both Debbie and Becky had their choirs sing along with recordings. Debbie shared with her students that this would be her first time using recorded music as accompaniment in preparation for a concert. Becky’s choir sang with a cassette tape when larger portions of their

medley were put together. She also informed the students they will use the cassette as accompaniment for performance (Observation #1, February 10, 2009 and Observation #5, March 23, 2009).

Anne demonstrated many positive teaching techniques throughout her rehearsal. Of note was her constant critical listening and her encouragement to have her singers do the same as they worked through the repertoire. It was also observed that she knew the music very well and seldom needed to look down at the score or look away from her students as she taught. This allowed her to be totally engaged with her students and what she was hearing (Observation #3, February 2009). Debbie also referred to her vocal score infrequently, but it was noted that she did not have as intense connection to her students because she was often at the piano, trying to do two things at once (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). While Shelley was engaged with her students the room layout did not allow her to physically be as close to her singers as Anne or Debbie (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Will had a problem with proximity to students because there was no room to wander between them. He also did not stray far from his keyboard (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Becky stayed behind her keyboard or close to the cassette player and only ventured in front of the choir when she asked them to lean port, bow, or starboard (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Amy moved equally well between her keyboard and the students (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). It is interesting to note that the importance of eye contact between conductor and choristers, and proximity of conductor to students was also stressed by two jury members in their pre-observation of my practice. In the literature, both Hildebrand (2005) and Phillips (2004) reiterated the importance of having eye contact with each singer at each rehearsal.

Becky's rehearsal was curriculum driven and focused on teaching specific music

terminology including time signature, key signature, rests, tempo and dynamic markings. She checked constantly to see if the children knew where they were by page number and bar number. There was little guidance on the aesthetics of music making such as tone production, phrasing, breathing, and quality of sound. There were no discernable connections made to artistic musical concepts. Instead, terminology was recognized and defined in passing by the teacher: “Rall. That means to go slower...A tempo. Go back to the original speed...Dynamics make the music more interesting...Rit. Slow down again” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). A circle of fifths chart was referred to help identify key signatures.

Two of the master teachers encouraged their students to think about the meaning and sentiment of what they were singing. Anne wanted to make sure that her students realized they were telling their audience a story. “This time, don’t forget your story” (Observation #3, February 23, 2009). Will also focused on the sentiment students could convey with their music. He had the grade fours listen to grade five and six, explaining that, “This is a sad song to say good bye to grade six’ (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Two of the master teachers immediately engaged students in learning by getting them actively involved in a warm-up. Anne began the rehearsal by singing “you-hoo” so-mi and having the students echo. She also used this two or three times during the rehearsal to re-focus attention on learning (Observation #3, February 23, 2009). At the end of her warm-up Amy had students sing *Every Morning, When I Wake Up* with stretching actions. “For fun, let’s do it in three parts” (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). When students became restless near the end of the rehearsal, Shelley engaged students by having them read lyrics from an overhead projector; a chosen student got to ‘hide’ the next line of words until the choir was ready to sing that segment. She also had

them count the number of phrases in a verse. Later she elicits further participation by taking students' suggestions for new actions for the song and incorporating them into the song practice (Observation #5, March 23, 2009).

There were very few behavior issues that interrupted teaching during the observations because students were most often focused on task. Will had some students who began chatting during the end of the rehearsal and he spoke to them quickly, not interrupting the pace of the lesson (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). When needed, Shelley gently rang a small bell on the piano to get students' attention (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). This served as a reminder to students and did not disturb the momentum of the rehearsal (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). It was evident that missed rehearsals were not excused lightly in Amy's choir. She took attendance at the end of the rehearsal. When someone was missing she would say for example, "Where's Avery? Tell her to come and see me" (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). When one student was being disrespectful Anne used a firm tone and said, "Someone ruined it by talking" (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Anne seems to have struck the "fine balance between nurturing teacher and demanding head musician" that Robbins referred to in her article (2008, p. 26).

All of the master teachers observed used echoing, modeling, and demonstrating to teach musical concepts. Debbie taught a difficult melody line by using a variety of drills such as: echo and repeat, sing and clap the rhythm at the same time, "Close your eyes and sing it, please" (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Shelley also used echoing to teach new material, one phrase at a time (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Amy demonstrated what an opened mouth looked like by drawing her jaw down and opened with her index finger. She also modeled how to put the 'sh' on at the beginning of the word 'shining' and in the middle of a word for 'flashing'

(Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Shelley demonstrated proper pronunciation of consonants by accentuating 'c,'s, n's and t's' in the round *Morning Has Come* (Observation #4, March 17, 2009).

Anne's rehearsal used "showing and doing" continually. She sang with her choir for most of the rehearsal, modeling good sound (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Becky also had a lovely singing voice that provided her choir with a pleasant model. However, she always sang with the students and never had them sing without her. Sometimes she sang more quietly, stopping only to help a student find their place in the music when he/she got lost (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Anne often demonstrated the wrong way first to emphasize the right way to sing phrases or individual words. "The word 'dream.' Hit it from the top with bigger breath, smaller sound" (Observation #3, February 23, 2009). She would often touch a student's head or face to show correct placement of sound. Becky demonstrated how to sing the consonant 'w' for 'westerlies, whence and wayward' (Observation #5, March 23, 2009).

Will used six soloists to help demonstrate the desired quality of sound. The small group of students stood in front of the choir and faced the choir. The soloists sang the opening verse and the choir was instructed, "you copy that." The soloists were then instructed to add dynamics. "Second time, piano." Then the choir was instructed to add dynamics in the same way (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Several master teachers used concrete and reflective questioning to teach. Will incorporated historical facts to explain the Baroque style. For example, the students were singing a piece by Handel and were asked when the song was written. He employed a brief question period about features found in the architecture and fashion of the time period, and what

similarities can be found in the music. This helps the students understand the embellished melody and gets them in the “Handel spirit” (Observation #6, 2009). Will also guides learning by questioning the students about what they are hearing as a second part is added to the melody. “What did we get at the end?” They reply, “Harmony.” He replies, “more specifically?” A few reply, “A third.” Later he asks, What is that interval?” Several students reply, “A third” (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). He often asks what direction the melody is moving to encourage his singers to be good listeners, too.

Shelley used questioning to reinforce the concept of verse and chorus. “Which part of the music always comes back?” The children respond, “Chorus.” “Which part changes?” The children respond, “The verses” (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Shelley also uses questioning as a way to remind students of the skills they have amassed throughout the year. “What trick can we use for away?” A students answers, “The ‘w trick’ to launch the ‘w’ sound” (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). Other ‘tricks’ include the ‘h trick’ for the word sun or sun-hun-hun to help fix a descending passage of several tones sung to one syllable of text (melisma). Another ‘trick’ is used to connect the last letter of a word to the next word for legato singing (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). More simply, Becky used questioning to keep students involved and to gage learning. “Who can tell me the page number and bar number?...What kind of rest is between ‘end’ and ‘kiss?’ Look at the board and find it” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009).

Amy used questioning to help students learn to evaluate their own performance as an “assessment for learning” (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006). After warm-up she asked students what they thought of their performance at Divisional Festival. “What do you think was good? What should we keep working on?” Students previously had time to listen to a tape of

their performance. They reflect and voice their opinions such as: “A couple of voices were not in pitch...We had a balance problem” (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). She also scaffolded students’ learning by using questioning to help students problem solve. “Did we get that much contrast [in dynamics] on the tape?” They then sing through the passage in question using numbers one to eight, one being pianissimo and eight being fortissimo (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). As the rehearsal progresses there are more questions about their singing: “How was our ‘t?’...Do you know what word painting is?” (Observation #2, February 19, 2009).

All of the teachers used lesson pacing to their advantage, getting maximum teaching and learning out of rehearsal time. It was interesting, however, that master teachers displayed distinct pacing styles. Two of the master teachers expertly employed slow, methodical repetition of individual phrases, parts of phrases, and individual words to correct errors or draw attention to specific problems. Anne used lots of slow singing to emphasize breath control and vowel production in warm-up and while singing repertoire. Music is sung through phrase by phrase. She often stopped at the end of a phrase and waited for the students to watch her for their next cue. There was constant attention to good vowel production and lots of time is spent singing each syllable slowly to work on unified vowel production. She worked on double consonants such as “giant trolls,” two ‘t’s’ next to each other and word emphasis: “Try VERY high up...no try very HIGH up...Yes!” (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). The students are very familiar with her rehearsal style. They seem pleased with the result of this methodology. Will also slowed down the note progression to correct difficult intervals or passages (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Even though both Anne and Will used methodical repetition to teach and correct, their overall rehearsal pace was fast and steady. Anne might have used repetition to make her points but

there was no down time. Students were kept “on their toes” by alternating between standing and sitting throughout the rehearsal. She could be described as a ‘firm demander’ always giving her best and expecting her students to do the same. She had a no nonsense approach, employing firm discipline, honest criticism, and praise when warranted. “Very good vowels. I noticed you are a little bit flat. Leave your music down” (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). Will’s rehearsal was fast and steadily paced with lots of stopping and starting, demonstrating, doing, and questioning by the teacher (Observation #6, June 2, 2009). Debbie’s rehearsal was paced moderately, and well-focused, and moved from one warm-up to another sequentially (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Amy was always very positive and demonstrated an outgoing, confident, but relaxed attitude as she moved through her lesson plan (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). It is interesting to note that in the literature Chivington (1998), Grant and Norris (1998), and Yarbrough and Henley (1999) reported that brisk pacing keeps choristers engaged, on task and motivated, creating a good choral sound. Conversely, a study by Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) found that a slower-paced rehearsal with fewer activity changes had a lower performance rating and more off task behaviour.

Two of the participants stood out because of their gentle and quiet demeanour with their choirs. Shelley moved through her rehearsal sequentially but her demeanour conveyed a more gentle personality, promoting student focus with a calm quiet voice. Her choir entered and exited the music room while her stereo played Debussy’s *Au Claire de la Lune*. This calmed and quieted the students so they could begin warm-up with no verbal instructions from the teacher. Becky also displayed a gentle and quiet demeanour throughout her rehearsal (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Shelley often addressed a student as “friend” (Observation #4, March 17, 2009). It should

be noted that both of these teachers were observed working with younger students than the other master teachers; Shelley's choir was made up of grade two students and Becky's choir was made up of grade one, two and three students. It is speculated that the students' age influenced their lesson deportment and choice of demeanour.

Will was also very polite when speaking with his students. If he needed his students' undivided attention he would say things like, "Quiet, please, listen, please" and "eyes, please kids" (Observation #6, 2009).

Both Debbie and Will used encouragement to get the best effort from their singers. After the warm-up Debbie thanked her students for maintaining good posture and encouraged them to continue doing so throughout the rehearsal. During the rehearsal she then infused gentle reminders about maintaining their good posture from the warm-up (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Amy often used verbal reminders such as: "Check you posture, nice and tall, check your feet...Pointer finger on your chin, think about your vowels...Can you hear the piano? Watch your tone" (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). When the children were singing through passages effectively Will encouraged them enthusiastically to, "Keep going! Crescendo a little bit more!" (Observation #6, June 2, 2009).

Individual praise, group praise, and positive reinforcement tools were used often by five of the six master teachers during rehearsal and at the end of rehearsal. Debbie, Amy, and Anne singled out children for positive behaviour. Debbie singled out one student for sitting tall and used her as a model. "Sit up like Lindsay" (Observation #1, February 10, 2009). Amy also used individual praise. "Graham, good for you! You also heard that we missed the 't'" (She shakes the child's hand.) Later, when students made progress with a difficult passage they had been working

on she replied, “Altos, I like that! You’re getting it!” (Observation, 2#, February 19, 2009). Amy’s students were acknowledged for their participation in a Divisional Festival and she had certificates for each choir member. She told students, “It’s nice to have a memento from the concert to put in a scrapbook” (Observation #2, February 19, 2009). Anne often singled out children that were demonstrating good singing technique, praising them by name: “Erica, wonderful ‘t’s.’ You are moving your mouth to get good consonants... Riley, I heard every consonant...It was beautiful!...(Observation #3, February 23, 2009). At the end of the rehearsal, Anne announced, “If I said your name for a good thing, see Madame Emerson for liquorice” (Observation #3, February 20, 2009). At the end of her rehearsal Becky instructed the students, “Everyone give themselves a pat on the back” (Observation #5, March 23, 2009). Will also thanked his choir for their hard work at the end of the rehearsal (Observation #6, 2009). Despite differences in style and delivery, it was noted that all teachers observed created a nurturing environment for their choristers as stressed in the literature by Corbin (1995), Lavender (1991), Stamer (1999), and Woody, (2001).

Table 7 serves to summarize the commonalities and differences in each master teacher’s lesson pace and demeanour. It can be seen that fast-paced rehearsals and an outgoing, lively demeanour were prevalent among the master teachers observed. Alternative approaches to pacing and demeanour, however, were effective as well.

Table 7

Lesson Pace and Teacher Demeanour

Teacher	Fast Paced	Slow Paced	Gentle/Quiet Demeanour	Outgoing/Lively Demeanour
Debbie	•			•
Amy	•			•
Anne	•			•
Shelley	•		•	
Becky		•	•	
Will	•			•
Total	5	1	2	4

Key findings constructed from observational data. Fourteen key findings were constructed from observational data that addressed how master teachers of choral elementary children's choirs teach and guide musical learning in their classroom. These findings were summarized as follows:

1. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs are well-prepared with a lesson plan and have a good understanding of the repertoire and its construction.
2. Master teachers of elementary choirs choose repertoire that teaches specific music skills while still being accessible and enjoyable. Choices are often performance driven and sometimes support school-wide themes. Classic repertoire and contrasting styles were also considerations when choosing repertoire.
3. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs use warm-ups that include: good posture; face and jaw movement and alignment; visualization and imagery; attention to unified vowel formation and consonant production; sliding exercises between high and low registers; and use of movement through various exercises.

4. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs stress good posture including head, neck, shoulder, and foot placement. Standing tall, sitting tall and correct breath control are stressed throughout both warm-ups and rehearsals.
5. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs use movement-based pedagogy and gesture to emphasize or convey musical ideas and singing technique. Students employ movement when learning musical concepts and skills such as: phrasing; crescendo and decrescendo; pitch maintenance; and sustained notes.
6. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs use visualization and imagery techniques and analogy to communicate musical ideas including: tone colour and quality; sentiment and emotion; breath management; singing posture; and tuning issues.
7. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs choose seating arrangements that are deliberately designed to make the most of teaching time and facilitate learning by considering non-musical criteria such as height, behavior, and grade level more than students' musical skills.
8. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs consistently use particular teaching strategies that include: echoing; modeling; and demonstrating.
9. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs model and teach critical listening skills.
10. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs engage students in dialogue about their singing using a variety of questioning techniques.
11. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs teach students to pay attention to detail, striving for best interpretation and performance ideals by showing patience in repetition and the value of practice.

12. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs engage their students by: demonstrating a positive demeanour, whether soft-spoken or vibrant; and instill commitment and pride in belonging to choir with honesty, encouragement, practice, and acknowledgment.
13. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs make students feel valued and important so that choral singing is regarded as a positive experience.
14. There is a tendency for rehearsals to be paced quickly and conducted in a lively, animated manner.

Interview with Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs

Following the direct observations of the six participants, an interview was conducted using divergent and guided questioning. Candidates were encouraged to reflect freely and steer the discussion to subject matter they thought was relevant. Because divergent questioning was employed, each participant had the latitude to interpret the questions as they wished. Comments were recorded by audio tape and later transcribed and coded according to recurring themes that emerged in teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches. Key findings were constructed from the answers and discussions that precipitated. A detailed discussion of candidates' comments are examined below and answers to each question are summarized in the tables that follow beginning with the most prevalent responses.

Discuss the criteria you use to choose repertoire. Two participants considered the vocal range of potential repertoire as important criteria in the selection process. Anne said that if she was picking music to really showcase her choir she would not pick something that hovered around middle C and D. She would pick something in a higher tessitura at least between E and B. Will commented that if his chosen repertoire was too low as written he would transpose it (Interview

#3, February 20, 2009 and Interview # 6, June 2, 2009). In the literature, Spurgeon (2002) and Swears (1985) echo the importance of tessitura and range when selecting repertoire.

Amy, Anne and Will all noted that repertoire in unison helps build strong listening skills including basic pitch matching and blending. Amy stressed the importance of learning to “sound like one voice” first and then adding the skill of “being able to hold their own parts and sing in harmony” (Interview #2, February 19, 2009). Will commented that most of his repertoire was in unison for his grade four, five, and six choir but he also had success introducing part singing via rounds and partner songs where both parts could sing their own independent melody rather than a vocal line designed strictly as harmony (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). In the literature review, Countryman (2008) also recommended canons, echo songs, and partner songs as an introduction to part singing for young singers.

Many participants chose repertoire based on performance obligations and seasonal themes. Shelley used her choir’s participation in the Winnipeg Music Festival as encouragement to choose repertoire that would challenge her choir to “work toward and take to that higher level because the rest of the year chorally you just don’t do things at that level” (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Amy also noted that around festival time they prepare “high quality repertoire” to perform (Interview #2, February 19, 2009). There was much written about the importance of selecting quality repertoire for students. Kohut and Grant (1990) and Zielinski (2005) believe that quality choral literature translates into good repertoire and will help choirs develop better vocal production, resulting in a better choral sound. Kohut and Grant (1990) defined quality repertoire as music that will stand the test of time, displaying good craftsmanship exemplified by musical tension and release, and written by an acknowledged quality composer or arranger. However,

when Amy has to make repertoire choices for school-based performances she is not so concerned about the quality of the repertoire as much as its relationship to the theme of an event such as Volunteer Tea. Both Anne and Shelley mentioned choosing repertoire that embraces themes of peace they could use for Remembrance Day Assembly (Interview #3, February 20, 2009 and Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Shelley commented that when she chooses repertoire in August she is thinking, “Okay, this one might be good for festival, this one might be good for Remembrance Day, this one might be good for Christmas, that sort of thing” (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Debbie’s repertoire choices were performance based on themes she chose. Examples included a Mozart music theme, and an African music theme (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Performance obligations and seasonal themes were not criteria explored in the literature reviewed.

Will stressed the importance of choosing repertoire that is “tied into the calendar and seasons. We don’t sing about rain when it’s not raining. We don’t sing about flowers when they are not coming up” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). He believes repertoire should relate to the students’ environment and life.

Becky noted that many of her students were not born in North America so she felt that it was important to choose repertoire that used holiday themes such as Thanksgiving and Valentines Day to help teach her students the meanings and traditions surrounding these events (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Becky’s repertoire choices also supported classroom curriculum and were guided by school-wide themes. Her grade one, two and three choir repertoire selections for the first term of school focussed on songs about mathematics, specifically shapes and counting to support what students were learning in their classrooms. In February she augmented another school-initiated

theme and her focus switched to pirate songs and songs about things under the ocean (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Debbie chose a few pieces for the beginning of the year in August and then picks more repertoire as the year progresses. In the past she picked all her repertoire only to find she did not have the group of singers she thought she would have and that the selections were either too easy or too challenging for her group. Because her school is a French Immersion School, when possible, she likes to incorporate French repertoire. Sometimes she will translate English text especially for school concerts. Debbie often chooses repertoire in Latin because the vowels are straight forward and there are few exceptions to basic pronunciation rules. She enjoys music in African styles and in Italian and consults experts to help with pronunciation when possible (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Packwood (2005) also supports the use of foreign language texts because they offer opportunities for achieving quality choral sound because there are no bad habits associated with the pronunciation of foreign text and one can encourage unified vowel production.

Anne and Amy often choose repertoire that is available at their school board office that they find interesting. Amy believes that if she is excited about teaching a song then her students will be excited to learn it. Transmitting your enthusiasm is key. Both Gackle (2006) and Leck (1995) acknowledged the importance of choosing music that you love and are passionate about. Anne also gets new repertoire from listening to other choirs at music festival (Interview #2, February 19, 2009 and Interview #3, February 20, 2009).

Debbie and Becky prefer up-tempo repertoire for their choirs and they try to select music that will challenge students in ways they may not experience in the regular music classroom such

as larger range and more complicated rhythmic patterns (Interview #1, February 10, 2009 and Interview #5, March 23, 2009). Amy is aware that her repertoire selections must “keep them coming back. It has to be something that they are not going to find stuffy and boring. They do give up their lunch hour and I know how much they love their recess time! ...I throw in a pop tune because I know I need to hook them sometimes at the beginning of the year with something kind of popular sounding that may even have a sound track” (Interview #2, February 19, 2009).

Will relies on an established core repertoire that he has collected over his years of teaching. “These pieces have good text and good melody line. I know these pieces are excellent teaching vehicles and I know the kids will respond to them” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Everyone mentioned that the repertoire they choose has to appeal to them before they can teach it to their students. It is interesting to note that no teachers considered giving students input into selecting repertoire. Table 8 summarizes the participants’ feedback to the first interview question, listed in order of most common response.

Table 8

Criteria Used to Select Repertoire

Criteria	Frequency of Response
Appealing to teacher	6
Performance obligations and seasonal themes	6
Appropriate range	2
Availability to borrow multiple copies	2
Unison repertoire	2
Up-tempo	2
Guided by classroom curriculum	1
Language considerations	1
Repeat use of quality core repertoire	1

Reflect on how you prepare a musical selection for subsequent rehearsals. Two of the participants shared how they approach new repertoire. Debbie liked to vary how she started a new piece so that her students didn't feel like they were in a rut by starting a new piece the same way every time. "Sometimes we start a new piece by using the text as a poem and we talk about the meaning or what it evoked within them; what kind of sentiments, thoughts or images that they saw . . . Sometimes I'll start with just a little lick that is a bit catchy that I know they will find easy and that will grab their interest . . . Sometimes we start with more difficult sections . . . Sometimes I'll sing through the piece once so they can get an idea of what it's about and what it sounds like so they know what they are working toward" (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Amy also used a variety of ways to introduce new repertoire including singing through the piece first herself so that students could hear the style of the piece. "Then we talk about what they think it's about or anything interesting they heard or what dynamics. I want them to reflect" (Interview #2, February 19, 2009). Amy also likes to include any historical background attached to the repertoire. She often has them begin by learning the melody so everyone learns the main melody line before teaching the alto line.

The participants did not all use music scores for rehearsing. Although Will liked to have a copy of the score for each student, this was not always possible. Sometimes he used arrangements that were reproducible and although he would like all his choir members to have music, the cost is usually prohibitive. Instead, students used photocopied lyric sheets (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Shelley never used individual copies of the score. Sometimes she had the music on an overhead projector. Most often the overhead includes just lyrics (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Debbie also had the lyrics displayed on an overhead projector (Interview #1, February 19, 2009).

Amy, Anne, and Becky all reported that they had complete scores for each choir member (Interview, #2, February 19, 2009, Interview #3, February 20, 2009, and Interview #5, March 23, 2009). Anne stressed the value of learning to follow your own line of music while you sing, and the importance of seeing how what you are singing looks on the page. Becky commented on how much can be learned from having a score for each child. Becky believed that even young students can make connections between how music looks on the staff and how they sing. She encouraged her students to map read the notes, noticing if they move up or down, noticing dynamic markings such as piano and forte, noticing a variety of music notation symbols such as key signature, time signature and accidentals (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Anne and Will thought that good preparation of repertoire should always include lessons on correct vowel formation. Anne thinks “the biggest thing that makes a choir are the vowels” (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). She talked at length about often starting her rehearsals with vowel work singing through the repertoire slowly so her choir can think about each vowel they sing. She would over-emphasize every vowel in the song and incorporates warm-ups stressing the vowel sounds from the repertoire. Will commented that he always prepares for repertoire with warm-ups including a variety of vowel sounds (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). When choosing repertoire, Shelley looks for lyrics that use elongated vowels for her young choir. She believes that concentrating on good vowel production contributes to good pitch and good unison sound (Interview #4, March 17, 2009).

Four of the participants talked about the value of good listening by choir members and conductors alike. Debbie and Anne like to use recordings to help themselves and their students decide on such qualities as tempo, style and interpretation. Debbie often asks her students to

compare two or more different recordings to discuss what they hear that is different or the same and which interpretations they prefer (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Anne uses critical reflection techniques and asks her students to listen to each other and comment constructively on what they hear. Altos listen to sopranos, sopranos listen to altos and her singers become better singers by being better listeners. Anne added that she prefers to rehearse without the piano because “it really focusses their ear” (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Will mentioned he uses the keyboard as a perk. “They have to know the repertoire really well first. Otherwise, you are wasting the accompanist’s time” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

Three of the participants cited rhythmic and melodic preparation, kinesthetics and imagery as important repertoire preparation techniques. Debbie and Shelley often use difficult rhythmic passages from the repertoire as warm-up exercises. Students are asked to identify these passages when they move on to the repertoire (Interview #1, February 10, 2009 and Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Shelley often uses movement to prepare individual phrases. “They need to be active and energized when they are singing” (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Will tries “to get them to use their arms and their bodies and when they do it is absolutely spectacular!” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Shelley and Will spoke of using the image of floating or being suspended to encourage light tone (interview #4, March 17, 2009 and Interview #6, June 2, 2009). There were several examples of use of movement as a rehearsal technique in the literature reviewed including Apelstadt (1996), Bailey (2007), Grant and Norris (1998), and Liao and Davidson (2007). All agreed that employing gesture or movement while singing helped children improve their vocal techniques and correct vocal faults.

Two participants shed light on how they prepare two-part singing. Will teaches the bottom

or alto part first to ensure success because his students tend to gravitate to the top if it is learned first. He said that often this is because the top voice usually carries the melody and is often more accessible. If the alto is learned first, it can become the dominant melody in the students' ear (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Amy presents singing the alto line as a challenge for her students. Who sings alto is often arbitrary and range does not effect the decision. Sometimes she will say, "If you sang in the soprano section last year, maybe you want to change this year" (Interview #2, February 19, 2009).

Will believes good preparation of repertoire begins in the classroom before students join his choir. "My whole program is choral based . . . I have chosen repertoire that allows the kids to really sing. I think these songs taught in the classroom provide a foundation for good singing" (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

Anne believes that rehearsal success is connected to the teacher's energy level. "The more energy you show, the more they give and the more successful you are then the more excited they get and they can hear the difference between bad and good and they are all excited that they can do all this stuff . . ." (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Anne also stressed that a well-prepared conductor knows the repertoire inside out before attempting to teach the selection. The literature supports the idea that no amount of enthusiasm will result in quality choral sound if the teacher is not knowledgeable and skilled in subject matter and delivery (Lawrence, 1989; Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998). A summary of the findings for how master teachers prepare a musical selection for subsequent rehearsals by criteria are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9
Criteria for Musical Selections for Rehearsal

Criteria	Frequency of Response
Focus on teacher and student listening skills	4
Focus on vowel formation	3
Rhythmic and melodic preparation, kinesthetics and imagery	3
Scores are always used by students	3
Vary approach depending on selection	3
Scores never used by students	1
Scores used by students when available	1
Important for teacher to exhibit high energy	1
Offer alto line as a challenge	1
Strong choral focus in regular classroom music	1
Teach alto first when singing in two parts	1
Well prepared teacher	1

Reflect on the methods and techniques you use when teaching elementary choir. Two participants said they relied on their experience as teachers of elementary choral programs and their personal experiences as choir members (Interview #3, February 20, 2009 and Interview #5, March 23, 2009). As a member of a community choir Becky went on to say she often observes the techniques her conductor employs and then adapts and incorporates these methodologies for her school choir. The literature supports the notion that one of the most important learning experiences for a choral director was their personal participation in choral ensembles (Edwards, 2004; Grant & Norris, 1998).

Five of the participants commented on the importance of clear expectations for behaviour, decorum and commitment within the choir culture. Debbie and Will had students and

parents/guardians read and sign a choir contract, outlining a year-long commitment to the ensemble and behaviour expectations for rehearsals, performances and field trips (Interview # 1, February 10, 2009 and Interview #6, June 2, 2009). The literature supports the idea that specific behaviour guidelines contribute to “good classroom management and are key in making rehearsals successful” (Keating, 2005, p. 50). Will also had his students purchase their own page protectors for twenty-five cents each. This contributed to feelings of ownership and responsibility and students were less likely to forget or lose their music. Anne mentioned she appreciates help with discipline from the educational assistants that regularly attend her rehearsals. They enable her to teach more efficiently and with less interruption so that there is little time spent on repeatedly focussing singers (Interview #3, February 20, 2009).

Becky found that her grade three students often model appropriate behaviour for the younger members of her choir and she often draws attention to their good posture and attentiveness to encourage others to do the same (Interview #5, March 23, 2009). Becky is also very careful to model good singing technique when she is teaching or demonstrating a new passage. Will often calls a small group of students up to the front to demonstrate what concept, technique, style or skill he is trying to convey to his choir. If students are having trouble learning a passage because Will is singing an octave lower, he will ask one of the female classroom teachers in attendance to sing the passage as a comparison. He also admitted that he spends most rehearsals at the piano and that perhaps this was not ideal (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

Debbie reported that she often uses imagery to help students with the more abstract concepts of singing such as: raising the soft palette; producing soaring high notes; producing clean vowels; and conveying the idea of crescendo and decrescendo. To help students raise their soft

palettes she asks them to “Imagine that there is a cherry in your mouth. Now imagine you have a grapefruit in your mouth. They can imagine the size difference in their mouth. They have an image that they have so much space” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). She also has students find their soft palette by yawning or taking a quick breath. “It’s the soft palette that moves when you yawn or are surprised. It automatically raises, improving your resonance. For beautiful high notes I tell them to imagine standing on the top of a building and look down to the ground so they are not thinking it’s so high. For clean vowels I say bite into your imaginary apple, drop your jaw and there’s the ‘ah’ vowel. For crescendo and decrescendo I call on things they already know. The racing car that comes by. It starts really quiet. It gets closer. Louder, louder, louder and then it zooms by and away it goes! So I’ll often just say there’s a car and they know it means crescendo and decrescendo” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). In the literature review Grant and Norris (1998) and Stegman (2003) also found that verbal imagery and the use of analogy works well in repertoire rehearsals to achieve the desired sound quality.

Debbie also encourages students to use their hands to make up and down movements that outline the direction of phrases they are finding difficult. If her choir sound is strained, she will ask students to imagine throwing a frisbee or a basketball to help free the sound. When appropriate, to help emphasize beat one, students imagine they have a yo-yo and we let the string down on beat one each time (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Amy helps her students connect to the music by incorporating explanations about music notation as they appear in the music (Interview #2, February 19, 2009).

When asked about methods and techniques used in rehearsals, many of the participants stressed intelligent listening by teacher and students. Master teachers often depend on feedback

from their singers and other adults in the room including teachers, educational assistants and accompanists. Anne often found it helpful to have students abandon their line formation and sing in a circle to facilitate seeing and hearing each other. Sometimes the circle was made up of only sopranos. As part singing becomes more confident the circle incorporates both altos and sopranos to encourage more advanced listening abilities and blending skills. All singers are taught both soprano and alto lines. If better balance is needed singers are able to move from one section to another with little practice. Anne also stressed the importance of warm-ups that directly relate to problems that may be encountered in the repertoire. She also emphasized slow, deliberate singing as a good way to tidy incorrect notes, misshaped vowels, and pitch problems (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Shelley approached pitch problems by breaking long phrases into pieces or smaller chunks and used solfege to dissect difficult melodies. Focus on supported breath and good posture were also techniques used by Shelley (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Amy emphasized paying attention to details such as vowel formation and diction (Interview #2, February 19, 2009).

Table 10 summarizes the key methods and techniques used by the participants when teaching elementary choir. The most important criteria were clear expectations for behaviour, decorum, and commitment. The listening skills of both teacher and student were also found to be key to good teaching practice.

Table 10

Key Teaching Methods and Techniques

Criteria	Frequency of Response
Clear expectations for behaviour, decorum, and commitment	5
Focus on teacher and students listening skills	3
Based on teacher's personal experience as conductor or choir member	2
Student demonstrations/modelling	2
Use of imagery and kinesthetics to convey ideas	1

Reflect on how your seating plan is determined. A variety of criteria were considered by the six participants including: no exact plan; height as a determining factor; behaviour as a determining factor; language and reading abilities; grade level considerations; voice range; pitch matching abilities; singing skill sets; and performance situations. Anne reported that she does not use a seating plan but students often choose to sit in the same general area. Will starts the year with five rows and prefers them in longer rows instead of shorter, deeper rows. When singing in two parts, the students singing the same part all sit together. "The teachers that help supervise rehearsals write all one hundred and sixty names on a seating plan!" (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

Debbie and Becky use height as a determining factor when planning seating arrangement. Debbie has her students line up from tallest to shortest much like a class photographer might do. Within that arrangement she then places weaker singers between two stronger singers (Interview #1, February 10, 2009 and Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Amy and Shelley based their seating arrangements on students' behaviours. "If a student's focus is an issue, I want them close to me" (Interview #2, February 19, 2009). Because Shelley's choir is made up of three classes, she keeps each class together within her seating plan. Shelley

also mentioned that before a performance she might make some changes to her seating plan. If a particular student is singing off pitch, she finds this distracting to her concentration. She will move this child out of her ear shot so the pitch indiscretion is not obvious to her (Interview #3, March 17, 2009). Because Becky has so many EAL (English as an additional language) students, her most important consideration is interspersing these students among strong readers who can help the new students follow the lyrics and verbal directions from the teacher. Becky and Amy also intersperse older and younger singers. Amy believes singers that are not as experienced can benefit from singing beside strong singers so they can hear what they should be sounding like (Interview #5, March 23, 2009 and Interview #1, February 10, 2009).

Only one participant spoke of the importance of knowing each singer's range before determining what part they would be singing. Debbie said, "First I determine high voices and low voices so I know generally where they are comfortable singing. I know this because of class activities or little things like, when you start to feel uncomfortable sit down. We do warm-up exercises going up and going down to get a general idea" (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). In addition to behaviour issues, Amy cited pitch matching abilities as an important factor in determining seating arrangement. She surrounds students with difficulties with students who have a strong sense of intonation (Interview #2, February 19, 2009).

Anne reported, "When it gets closer to performance time we choose line leaders" (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Line leaders are students that are strong singers. The students standing on the end tend to project a little more sound in a performance situation. Anne also stated that it is also important to have strong singers in the middle to help lead a section. Shelley commented that even if a child is small, if she is a strong singer, she will move her to the middle

of the seating arrangement for a performance so that other choir members can best hear her accurate singing (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). In performance situations Will uses risers and then instead of the five rows he employs at a rehearsal, he has three very long rows. “In order to accommodate everyone, the row on the floor curves around the risers” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

By comparison, only two examples in the literature review considered height and behaviour when choosing seating arrangements for elementary choirs (Bartle, 1988; Broeker, 2006). While also considering height and behaviour, Bartle also mixes stronger and weaker voices. Most of the literature focussed on the placement of strong and weak singers and on formations that would result in the best overall choral sound.

Key findings on how master teachers determine their seating plan for choir rehearsals are summarized in Table 11. Height, student behaviour, student grade level and experience, and voice range were considered important for determining seating arrangements.

Table 11
Criteria for Determining Seating Plans

Criteria	Frequency of Response
Height	2
Student behaviour	2
Student grade level/experience	2
Voice range	2
Performance situation	1
Pitch matching/skill sets	1
Text reading ability	1
No plan	1

Reflect on the pros and cons of auditioning choristers. Most participants had experienced working with auditioned and non-auditioned choirs and had strong opinions to support both sides of the argument. Many participants addressed issues surrounding mandatory versus volunteer elementary choral programs in their reflections.

When discussing the positive features of an auditioned choir, Debbie and Becky acknowledged that some students need the extra challenge and singing with an auditioned group can fulfill that purpose. Debbie went on to say when students choose to audition you can be certain that you have students that want to be in the ensemble. Debbie also admitted that the auditioning process can be rationalized as a learning process. “After all, as children grow up they must learn that they will not get everything they want. It’s a learning process, right?” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Becky supports auditioning singers for special events such as singing with the local symphony orchestra. She believes there is value in selecting students that have reached a certain level or standing in their singing abilities and such experiences offer a positive challenge for these students (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Debbie noted that sometimes students come to volunteer choir because their friends want to belong and they don’t want to go out for recess alone. Girls especially she added, want to stay with the ‘pack.’ From a teacher’s perspective Debbie admitted you would have a stronger group that would have the potential to achieve a better sound if your choir was auditioned (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Amy commented that an auditioned choir would better showcase her teaching abilities, especially if her choir would compete in a music festival situation. She mentioned she had sometimes experienced frustration with comments made by adjudicators that said, “Almost all your singers are matching pitch. As a conductor you know that! You do the best you can with

what you have” (Interview #2, February 19, 2009).

Debbie also talked about the negative aspects of having an auditioned choir. Because she has a school volunteer choir and conducts an auditioned divisional choir, she found it difficult to face her students that had auditioned and been turned down for the auditioned choir (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Anne, who also conducts an auditioned divisional choir in addition to her volunteer choir believes there is no room for auditions in a school setting. “If you are going to tell a kid that they can’t be in choir, What are you telling them? That they are no good...We do not exclude anybody” (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Amy and Becky also believe there is no place for auditioned choirs at school (Interview #2, February 19, 2009 and Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Becky reported that in her division there are no auditioned choirs for elementary students (Interview #5, March 23, 2009). Shelley stated, “We want everyone participating and being part of the learning process, being part of the team...I mean it’s fine to want to win gold at festival but that’s not what it is all about. We are teaching far greater skills in choir class” (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Will also thinks that at this age auditioned choirs are not practical. “How can we exclude the very students that might learn and grow the most by being part of a choir that helps them become better singers and better musicians? If we were focussed on the product then maybe” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

In support of mandatory choir classes Debbie went on to say that, “in an ideal world every school should offer their students a chance to have a choral opportunity because they are getting something in choir they will not get in the classroom” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009).

Debbie also supported the idea of mandatory choir citing that students don’t always make good choices about what activities they should participate in. By offering choir much like we offer

French or computer technology every student is getting exposed to the opportunity to learn.

Maybe an activity they thought they would not like becomes something they do enjoy? (Interview #1, February 10, 2009).

The participants provided strong arguments supporting auditioned and non-auditioned choirs. However, current literature supports the belief that students who have the desire to sing in choir but have limited skills should be encouraged to participate. Teachers should nurture their abilities by providing one on one coaching and positive motivation (Hollenberg, 1996; Wilson, 2003). Table 12 summarizes the key findings expressed by master elementary choral teachers regarding the pros and cons of auditioning choristers.

Table 12
Pros and Cons of Auditioning Choristers

Criteria	Pro Audition	Con Audition	Frequency of Response
No place for auditioned choir in an elementary school setting		•	5
Uncomfortable for teacher that conducts both choirs to face child who did not make it into auditioned choir		•	1
Extra challenge for student	•		2
Better showcases teacher's abilities/more to work with	•		1
Stronger ensemble	•		1
Valuable life lesson: you can't always get what you want	•		1
* One master teacher cited one con for Volunteer Choir - Peer pressure to participate			1

Discuss the qualities you believe result in effective choral teaching. Knowing your repertoire was an important aspect of choral teaching amongst participants. Debbie stressed that you should know your score “inside out, backwards, forwards, and upside down. I know where I am going with a piece dynamically and musically” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Amy and Will agreed that you should be knowledgeable about the repertoire, pay attention to detail and be organized (Interview #2, February 19, 2009 and Interview #6, June 2, 2009). “Will noted that it is important to “plan out what you do. Mark your score. Let them know where to breath. Don’t let them sing out of tune” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

Modelling correct singing was also mentioned by five of the participants as an important teaching quality that results in effective choral learning. Debbie and Shelley model good singing for their choirs and Amy and Will used choir members to demonstrate good singing skills to the rest of the group (Interview #2, February 19, 2009 and Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Anne often has her choir listen to and then imitate quality recordings made of other children’s choirs singing their repertoire. There is much listening and discussion about what they hear before they sing (Interview #3, February 20, 2009).

The theme of being a good listener resurfaced with Anne when we discussed what teaching qualities resulted in effective choral learning. She reiterated that “the most important thing you can do is listen. There is so much to do when you are teaching a song or conducting that often you loose that and you don’t concentrate on that” (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Will believes a successful choral teacher addresses pitch issues and uses the following strategies to help remedy pitch issues: record them; have them sit tall; compare what it sounds like; and “bright eyes” (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Debbie believes that being able to play the piano is an asset

when teaching elementary choir. When she is teaching a song she will often “plunk out” the melody line. “I am very often behind the piano” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Becky believes an effective choral teacher challenges her students by “pushing the envelope. . .you find what they can and cannot do and that’s when the greatest learning occurs” (Interview #5, March 23, 2009). While teaching repertoire Becky will find new music concepts to introduce such as: time signatures; key signatures; and interval recognition.

Three of the participants mentioned that a teacher who is always learning and growing is an effective choral educator. Amy, Anne, and Shelley stressed the importance of continuing to try new methods and repertoire. They spoke of taking advantage of professional growth opportunities to build on existing skills. Professional development included: going to concerts; attending workshops; and always being a conscious listener (Interview #2, February 19, 2009, Interview #3, February 20, 2009 and Interview #4, March 17, 2009). These recommendations were echoed in the literature by Grant and Norris (1998) who found that teachers who attended professional development opportunities to update their knowledge and teaching techniques tended to be master choral educators.

Teaching style and demeanour were teaching qualities that all the participants agreed resulted in effective choral learning. Becky believes in order to be effective you have to love what you do (Interview #5, March 23, 2009). “When I know my students are here doing something they don’t need to be doing. . .my teaching style comes out a little bit differently than in the classroom. It is fun and I am more energetic” (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). High energy and genuine enthusiasm were important teaching qualities reported by Debbie, Amy, and Anne. They said that the more energy they give the more excited about learning and singing the students will be

(Interview #1, February 10, 2009, Interview #2, February 19, 2009, and Interview #3, February 20, 2009).

Shelley offered a different perspective by reporting that, “It has been my experience over the years that if the listening is not in place the learning isn’t going to happen. They can’t internalize if their brain is just going a million miles. They really just need calm to focus on what we are doing and I think that the calmness that I bring to the rehearsal works” (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Will added having a consistent teaching style contributes to effective choral learning (Interview #6, June 2, 2009).

Five of the participants spoke of how their personal experiences provided insight into effective choral learning strategies. Debbie believes her music education experiences from childhood to present day have shaped her teaching style. As a child she struggled to match pitch and she finds that this experience has helped her teach students facing the same problem. She credits her experience as a singer and then conductor of her junior church choir for influencing her teaching methods and giving her a chance to experiment as a choir director. As a university music student her major was organ and then piano. She believes this experience taught her much about interpreting music (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Shelley also credited her musical experiences as a child for her success as an effective choral educator. She also participated in her church choir as a child and a young adult and later worked for an elementary school as an accompanist. This gave her opportunities to watch other conductors teach and she feels she learned much about the nuts and bolts of choral education from these experiences. She admitted that being in the same school for approximately twelve years has helped her amass effective choral teaching strategies (Interview #4, March 17, 2009). Anne began her musical career as a

violin student but switched to voice for a while when she suffered from tendinitis and could not play. As a violinist she could apply the concepts of good intonation and lyrical phrasing to her choral teaching (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). While she was growing up, Becky's primary instrument was voice but she does have some piano instruction in her background. She brought her childhood experiences and understanding of singing techniques to her teaching practice and says that after thirty years of teaching "you learn a thing or two" (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Table 13 summarizes the key qualities master elementary choral teachers believe result in effective choral teaching. Good modelling and the teacher's personal music experiences were found to be the qualities most often considered by master teachers that resulted in effective choral teaching.

Table 13
Teaching Qualities Resulting in Effective Choral Teaching

Criteria	Frequency of Response
Good modelling	5
Teacher's personal music experiences	5
Teacher's high energy and enthusiasm	3
Teacher's knowledge of repertoire	3
Teacher's ability to learn and grow	2
Teacher's listening skills	2
Teacher's interjection of new music concepts	1
Teacher's calm demeanour	1
Teacher's passion for subject	1
Teacher's skill as a pianist	1

In your opinion, what has made you a master choral teacher? Many of the participants credited their personal experiences saying that their training or involvement in community music making has contributed to their expertise as choral educators. Participants who had opportunities to sing with master choral educators as they were developing skills believed these experiences contributed greatly to their abilities. Debbie again mentioned her experiences as a member of a children's church choir and then as accompanist and conductor as positive influences (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Anne also spoke about her experiences as a member of a children's church choir and later her experiences as a conductor of children's church choirs and believes these opportunities helped her become a master choral teacher (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Shelley also cited her personal experiences as a member of a children's church choir and later as an accompanist helped her become a master choral teacher later in life. She credits her conductor for providing a great model of how to teach (Interview #3, March 17, 2009). Will's personal experience included a fascinating piano teacher he had growing up and his involvement as a church musician from his childhood to the late 1970's (Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Amy said her experiences as a member of Provincial Honour Choir and Westman Choir have contributed to her choral teaching skills (Interview #2, February 19, 2009). The literature also supports the perspective that achieving quality sound with an ensemble is not always the sole result of a conductor's skill learned through educational instruction, but rather abilities obtained through a lifetime of personal experience (Grant and Norris, 1998 and Willis, 1990).

Anne attributes her success to positive feedback from her students and the community. The more successful her choirs were at music festival, the more the staff and parents supported her program. The more support she received, the more confident she got. The more confident she

got, the more she experimented, learned, and grew (Interview #3, February 20, 2009).

Strong rehearsal techniques were also the focus of discussion when the participants were asked what made them master choral teachers. Debbie spoke about the importance of good unison singing. In her Early Years programs, she stresses matching pitch and the difference between notes that skip and notes that step. She believes these concepts gives her singers a good foundation for choral singing (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). Anne reiterated the importance of knowing your music well and really listening to what your choir sounds like. She believes a master choral teacher should be an individual who can create a sound that is unique and reflects their personal interpretation of the music (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Becky thought a master teacher had the ability to convey not only the meaning of the text, but a musical understanding of the repertoire to her students (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Debbie mentioned that a master choral teacher is honest with her students. "If it doesn't sound good, you tell them...This makes the difference between getting a little bit better and really improving. . .Teach kids to listen to themselves and be critical of what they hear" (Interview #1, February 10, 2009). An article by Roe (1983) also mentions the importance of a conductor's sincerity when teaching the skills necessary for good choral sound.

Amy believes a master teacher is organized and prepared (Interview #2, February 19, 2009). Anne says being opened to criticism from peers and adjudicators helps teachers become masterful. Be confident enough to take suggestions for improvement and act on them (Interview #3, February 20, 2009). Becky echoed the same sentiments when she suggested, "Never stop learning. If what you are doing isn't working, don't be afraid to try something new. Be up. Be there. Be present" (Interview #5, March 23, 2009).

Four of the participants talked about their passion and love of teaching choral music and the belief that these feelings were an important factor in their success as master choral educators. Amy, Anne, Becky, and Will all mentioned they love what they do. They all mentioned it wasn't just about teaching music but rather their love of children and their love of teaching choral music (Interview #2, February , 19, 2009, Interview #3, February 19, 2009, Interview #5, March 23, 2009, and Interview #6, June 2, 2009). Table 14 summaries what key factors the participants believe make them master elementary choral teachers.

Table 14
Factors Contributing to Master Teaching

Criteria	Frequency of Response
Passion for choral teaching	4
Personal training, experience, and involvement in music endeavours	4
Strong rehearsal techniques	3
Strong organizational skills	1
Positive feedback from students and community	1
Teacher as learner	1
Teacher's honesty/critical listening	1
Uses criticism positively	1

Key findings constructed from interview data. Seven key findings were constructed from the content analysis of the transcribed interview questions and responses that addressed how master teachers of choral elementary children's choirs teach and guide musical learning in their classroom. These findings are summarized as follows:

1. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs choose repertoire based on their personal appeal, seasonal themes, and performance obligations.

2. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs prepare musical selections by focussing on teacher and student listening skills, correct vowel formation, rhythmic and melodic drills, and employment of kinesthetics and imagery.
3. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs have clear expectations for behaviour, decorum, and commitment from choir members.
4. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs consider height, students' behaviour, students' grade level/experience, and voice range when choosing seating plans.
5. Five of six master teachers of elementary children's choirs believe there is no place for auditioned choirs in an elementary setting. Two teachers also supported auditioned choirs as an extra challenge for gifted students.
6. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs believe their personal musical experiences, good modelling, their high energy and enthusiasm, and their knowledge of repertoire contribute to their effective choral teaching.
7. Master teachers of elementary children's choirs believe their passion for choral teaching, personal training and experience, involvement in music endeavours, and their strong rehearsal techniques are factors that contribute to making them master teachers.

Pre- and Post-Observational Assessments of Researcher's Rehearsal by Master Teachers

The last method of data collection was pre- and post-observations of my rehearsal practices by a sub-group or jury, consisting of three master teachers. This technique offered yet another perspective by having three master teachers observe my practice with the purpose of critiquing and assessing two of my rehearsals, one before my observation and interview of master teacher candidates and one after. The jury provided constructive feedback facilitated by a self-developed

“Jury’s Observation and Assessment Tool” and a “Jury’s Observation Rating Scale.” Using the “Observation and Assessment Tool,” the jury was asked to record any observations and reflections on rehearsal organization, repertoire selection, vocal techniques, approaches to teaching, problem solving, and any other elements they deemed important. There was also opportunity for jury members to write down any observations deemed noteworthy on the rating scale. Their observations and suggestions for improvement from both data sources are described below.

Jury’s Observation and Assessment Tool. All jury members provided positive feedback on several aspects of my practice. These general comments encompassed rehearsal organization, repertoire selection, vocal techniques, and approaches to teaching. Their positive feedback is described below. Several suggestions for improvements to my practice were also shared in their observations and reflections. Improvements are discussed after the positive comments.

Evan praised my repertoire selection in his initial observation however, was concerned that the students were reworking repertoire when he returned to observe a rehearsal in May (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009 and May 11, 2009). He suggested choosing new repertoire over re-working old repertoire even if the final product would be much less finessed. In contrast, the literature suggested that teachers choose fewer pieces of literature, affording time to concentrate on producing a quality sound rather than overwhelming choristers with an abundance of notes and text (Packwood, 2005). Cathy praised my feedback to singers on how well they had done at their last rehearsal. She thought this was a very positive and motivating way to start a rehearsal (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). In her post-observation she reiterated that I had provided “nice encouraging words throughout, especially at the end of a song” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009).

Cathy also praised several of my approaches to teaching which included my effective use of charts and visuals, good sequencing, and utilizing singing in two circles to help solidify notes in two-part singing (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). In her post-observation, Cathy noted that three-part singing of the new repertoire was “nicely secure for so few singers” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009). She also praised how “you handle the little interruptions of people coming and going brilliantly and with such a positive attitude” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009). However, in post-observation, she reminded me to begin the rehearsal on time, even though all choir members had not yet arrived. “Get right to work with those students who are in place. Time is precious” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009). Jane praised the pacing of my initial rehearsal and liked the gentle stretching at the beginning, the amount of time allotted to warm-ups, and the effective use of my voice throughout the rehearsal. She commented that, “you are an excellent vocal model” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009).

Only one jury member commented on rehearsal organization. Evan thought the post-rehearsal order and process made a lot of sense but, he cautioned that sometimes “real-time” issues were missed, so he recommended that I be flexible enough to work outside the plan and respond to the needs of the moment (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009).

In the pre-observation rehearsal all three jury members provided positive feedback concerning my lack of dependence on the keyboard. Jane commented, “I really appreciate the way you’re working with them away from the keyboard” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Evan said, “I like the work being done without the piano. This will only serve to make the choir stronger” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Cathy liked that I was

“developing [my] singers’ pitch memory by asking them to find an A to start” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). She suggested that when they are not quite there to ask them if they are too high or too low to help refine the skill even more.

The jury’s pre-observation comments provided many suggestions for improvement regarding my vocal techniques and general approaches to teaching regarding breath control and arm movement. Jane recommended to “give time for breath and incorporate this in the warm-up and make a transition from breathing to vocalization” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). She liked that I said, “Feel the yawn before you sing” but I should make sure they do this! She suggested beginning repertoire rehearsal by carrying through with the vocal techniques from the warm-ups, making an immediate transfer to the repertoire, incorporating the importance of preparatory breath. She suggested that when I use a legato motion with my arm to facilitate legato singing, have the singers do it too. “Plan the breath for this” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Cathy felt more of the singers’ energy should go towards breath and text and for this reason recommended students not snap their fingers during one of the repertoire selections. Incorporating students’ upward hand movements to improve pitch on descending passages was also mentioned by Cathy in her post observation. “Insist everyone use your suggested arm gesture on [the word] falling” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009).

Cathy noticed that rather than counting the choir in, I should breathe with them to bring them in. “Ensure that both you and the singers begin singing any phrase or part after taking a proper breath. I think you could model this for them more” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Evan observed that, “You are saying breathe etc., but when you breathe to sing with the choir you do a very fast, sharp breath almost every time. You are not modelling the

correct technique” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 20, 2009). In post observation, Jane reiterated to emphasize posture and prepare the breath always (Observation and Assessment Tool, April 20, 2009).

Vowel unification was an area targeted for improvement by Jane and Cathy in their pre-observation. Jane suggested sustaining a [u] vowel in the first part of the warm-up to provide a point of reference for exercises I incorporated later in my warm-up. She suggested doing some kind of physical gesture to draw more attention to vowel shape as I model. Cathy thought I could strive for a more unified vowel sound on words with diphthongs, like “down” and “bright” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). In her post observation she praised the choir’s head tone but suggested, “now mouth shape could be addressed; taller, rounder, or at least matched” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009).

Both Jane and Evan recognized the need to provide the students with music scores more often. “I am a strong believer in putting scores into the students’ hands. They need to be taking ownership of the music, they need to see it unfold on the page and know how their parts fit together” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Jane believes referencing the score is important to keep the details clear for singers during rehearsal.

Jane suggested that I rehearse smaller sections and have them repeat after me to improve learning. She noted that evaluative comments by the teacher, whether positive or negative need qualification to improve musical understanding. If I say, “I like that better,” tell them why (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Cathy said, “Be careful about saying things like plaster a smile on. It doesn’t jive with taking healthy, energizing breaths and it doesn’t allow for text painting” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). In post-

observation, Evan indicated that “the rehearsal would be more effective if about 75% fewer words were used” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009). He added that this is an issue at all levels of conducting, including his own. In her post observation Cathy made a similar comment suggesting not to give out any more instructions as they run through songs. She suggested giving them lots of visual feedback instead (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 20, 2009). The literature supports this idea in a study by Hart (1996), who found that choral conductors often talk too much when conveying musical ideas. The study suggested that conductors demonstrate and teach by example more often.

The warm-up portion of my rehearsal produced varying opinions for improvement. Jane suggested I spend time checking posture and body alignment at the beginning of the warm-up. Cathy liked that I incorporated stretching arms upwards while singing high notes during warm-up exercises but did not find the result effective. She suggested spreading the singers out physically throughout the room so that they don’t feel restricted with how far they can extend their arms. “In order to for a stretch to be effective I think they need to feel it in its full expression” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). Cathy liked the body awareness I created with my warm-up stretches. She said they helped focus the singers and prepare them for rehearsal. However, she questioned whether there were any physical moves we could do that would refresh their bodies more as opposed to relaxing it. She commented that warm-ups should really help gear up the body for a vibrant rehearsal. Evan explained that, “there are notions that a choir rehearsal must go through specific warm-ups vocally and physically. However, these kids have been active for a half day by now. They have been talking and playing on the field and in the gym” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). He concluded that the warm-ups were

mostly disconnected from what needs to take place in a short rehearsal and what is expected from the singers in actual pieces. He suggested that my goals for warm-ups needed some exploration. When I skipped the warm-ups in my post rehearsal he suggested that instead I have something to grab them at the start of the rehearsal in their place (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009).

In Evan's opinion, my seating arrangement left much to be desired during warm-up. He observed that the students in the back row were "completely uninvolved for the most part in the warm-up and if they aren't going to commit fully with their voices and their bodies, you are better off going directly to the music. Later, he added that my older singers were completely disengaged in the back row. "You can't see them properly and so they get away with a lot." He suggested I use the built-in risers in my room. "If there was one thing I could change over all the rest, this would be it" (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). He suggested seating the choir in two long rows instead of four. In his post observation Evan noted that students were seated in a formation on the risers that allowed more success than in his earlier observation (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009).

The jury's reflections and feedback on the repertoire portion of my rehearsal provided many suggestions for improvement to my approaches to teaching and my problem solving techniques. Cathy made two interesting observations: She thought that the singers should spend more time standing during the rehearsal and she suggested that I sing along with my singers less. "You will hear them much better if you are not singing" (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). She also recommended circulating around the room more, mingling in between singers, as opposed to being front and centre so often. "You did this at times and I think if you did

this even more often it would keep your singers motivated” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). In his post observation Evan commented that, “It was awesome that you moved through the choir during this rehearsal. I think this worked very well. You could do this even more” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009).

Jane suggested putting my music stand away. She thought I was behind it too much and many of my gestures were often hidden by it. Evan agreed that “you are buried in your music. The stand is between you and the choir. You were looking at the score almost entirely when running the music. Look up! This is the most important thing you can do to improve your conducting. They need to see your soul through your eyes and you into theirs. They need inspiration” (Observation and Assessment Tool, January 30, 2009). The literature supports Evan’s idea that a masterful teacher should have “the ability to both concentrate on the score and pay attention to interpersonal interactions. . . for good teaching to occur” (Yarbrough & Henley, 1999, p. 316). In an earlier study, Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) found that eye contact and facial expression were of great importance when rehearsing and performing. Evan also realized that my gestures were disconnected 90% of the time from what I actually wanted them doing with their bodies and their voices. He insisted that I move away from beating time with my hands or sustaining a gesture that was weak and did not indicate breath support. He was adamant that I listen to the choir and that my body and hands need to always react to what I hear.

In his post-observation, Evan noted improvement in hand gestures. “Not once did I see you just beating time for conducting sake. Great!” (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009). He also noted an improvement in the strength of my gestures and thought these showed healthy technique and contributed to good vowels. He commented further saying I was much more open

with the choir and rarely got lost behind my music stand. He thought this made a big difference in my ability to communicate with the choir. He suggested putting surprises into my conducting and my singers would follow me even more. In her post observation, Jane liked my emphasis on important words but echoed Evan's sentiments about clear gestures. "They are singing exactly the way you are conducting. This is exciting and can be used to your advantage, particularly if your gesture shows what you want them to do" (Observation and Assessment Tool, April 20, 2009). Overall, Evan noted that 'some positive, specific changes have been made, increasing the chance of a great rehearsal. . . Great musical skills, voice, gesture, and ears" (Observation and Assessment Tool, May 11, 2009).

Key findings constructed from the jury's pre-and post-observation and assessment.

Nine key findings or suggestions for improvement were constructed using the data and feedback from the three jury members who participated in pre and post observation of my choir rehearsals. These findings are summarized and listed as follows:

1. Teach proper breath control, beginning with the warm-up and incorporate these principles during the rehearsal of repertoire.
2. Unify all vowel sounds, beginning with the warm-up and incorporate these principles as problems occur in the repertoire.
3. Keep warm-ups purposeful and connected to issues found in the repertoire.
4. Improve seating arrangement by considering the layout of the rehearsal space. Older students in the back two rows are often disengaged. Try two long rows instead of four.
5. Have the score in students' possession more often. Use the score to facilitate fuller musical understanding.

6. Don't remain in front of the choir for the entire rehearsal and don't get stuck behind the music stand. Instead, circulate around the room.
7. Connect with your singers; eye contact is paramount. Singers need to be engaged.
8. Follow through when making corrections or asking for changes in breathing, phrasing or vowel production. Make sure students are doing what you ask.
9. Less verbalizing, more doing. Don't only "talk the talk" but "walk the walk."

Jury's Observation Rating Scale: Pre-Test/Post-Test. There were five factors for consideration by jury members included on the rating scale. Each one will be addressed and where provided, the jury's comments will be included. It should be noted that most jurors commented with more detail on the Jury's Observation and Assessment Tool.

This rehearsal is well-planned and organized. Jane suggested to pull together or synthesize techniques and challenges worked on throughout the rehearsal of each piece. She doesn't believe you need to do a complete run through of each piece, but rather bring together the ideas from each similar part to solidify learning (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Pre Test, January 30, 2009). On the post test Jane commented that my goals were clear. She noted that my teaching strategies were definitely geared towards development of musicianship (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, April 20, 2009). On the post test both Jane and Evan agreed that the rehearsal was well-planned and executed but added that I should be prepared to stray from the plan if necessary (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, April 20, 2009 and May 11, 2009). Cathy had no comment on the pre- or post-rating scales for this question.

The repertoire selected is musically appropriate and well-suited to the age group. Jane approved of repertoire choices including songs in two parts but suggested that I keep

working on a good unison sound and separate the two parts more often to ensure correct pitches (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Pre Test, January 30, 2009). In the post-test she commented that choosing repertoire in c minor was difficult and she warned that this might contribute to out of tune singing (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, April 20, 2009). In the post test Evan reiterated working the same repertoire for the entire school year is less than desirable. He preferred balancing learning new with polishing old (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, May 11, 2009). Cathy had no comment on the pre- and post-rating scales for this question.

There is evidence of teaching good vocal techniques including: warm-ups, breathing and posture, use of movement, sight reading and solfege, and visualization and imagery.

Cathy and Jane thought that breathing and posture issues needed addressing. Jane noted there was no application of solfege and score reading skills were not considered (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Pre Test, January 20, 2009). In the post test, Jane liked when I isolated difficult intervals, but she still noted this could be effectively reinforced with the use of solfege. She also liked the use of imagery and added that my physical gestures served as effective reinforcement. She praised my use of demonstrations but suggested I try fewer words (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, April 20, 2009). Cathy liked my "cultivation of nice, long, musical phrases and recognized that I had musically and effectively addressed singers' vowel shapes and mouth shapes (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, May 20, 2009). Evan commented that I had moved away from my music stand and was able to teach with my gesture much more effectively (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, May 11, 2009).

The seating arrangement allows for weaker singers to be surrounded by stronger singers. This observation proved troublesome because the jury did not actually know who the

strong singers were. There were insufficient responses to complete the rating scale portion of this data source, but two jury members did provide remarks that were valuable. During the pre-test Cathy observed that I lost some of my older singers by having them in the back row. She suggested I use the risers built in to the classroom to alleviate this problem (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Pre Test, January 30, 2009). In the post-test Jane noticed that there seemed to be highly motivated students placed throughout the choir (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, May 20, 2009).

Does the teacher exhibit the qualities of an effective choral teacher? Jane and Cathy suggested areas for improvement. Jane proposed that I focus on incorporating vocal techniques to secure pitches as well as intonation, but she did not specify which techniques should be employed. Cathy's strongest suggestions were to model and insist upon better breathing and to sing along with the students less (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Pre Test, January 30, 2009). Both of these jury members provided more positive comments on their post-test rating. Cathy was pleased with my improved gestures. She thought they were clear, precise and economical. She also "loved that I was out from behind the music stand" (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, May 20, 2009). She also commented on the use of my humour being appropriate and effective. Jane praised my pacing and that my focus on developing musicianship was motivated throughout the rehearsal (Jury's Observation Rating Scale, Post Test, April 20, 2009). Evan had no comment on the pre or post rating scale for this question. The results of the rating scales are provided in Table 15.

Table 15

Jury's Observation Rating Scale: Pre-Test/Post-Test Comparisons

Questions	Jane		Evan		Cathy	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. This rehearsal is well-planned and organized.	7	8	6	8	10	9
2. The repertoire selected is musically appropriate and well-suited to the age group.	10	9	9	7	7/8	10
3. There is evidence of teaching good vocal techniques including: warm-ups, breathing and posture, use of movement, sight reading and solfege, and visualization and imagery.	8	8	3	7	7	9
4. The seating allows for weaker singers to be surrounded by stronger singers.	*	*	*	*	*	*
5. Does the teacher exhibit the qualities of an effective choral teacher?	7	8	2	8	8	10

* Jury participants were unable to address this statement because they were not familiar with the singing capabilities of individual students.

Each jury member's pre and post rating scores out of 10 were added together and the results were tabulated in Table 16. Improvements were noted in three of the five categories critiqued on the Jury's Observation Rating Scale: Pre Test/Post Test. The fourth item, concerning seating arrangement, contained insufficient numerical data to analyze. Jurors did not complete this portion of the rating scale because they were not familiar with the level of proficiency of individual singers and so could not comment on the arrangement of strong versus weak singers. Some jurors chose to comment on other aspects of the seating arrangement. These comments were

incorporated in the discussion above. The other category that registered no improvement in the post-test was whether my repertoire selection was appropriate and well-suited to the ensemble. The difference between pre-test and post-test showed a drop of 0.5. Improvements in my abilities to teach good vocal techniques, increased by 6 points. My overall skills as an effective choral teacher, increased by 9 points. Cumulative points for vocal techniques went from 18 to 24 points. Cumulative points for exhibiting the qualities of an effective choral teacher rose from 17 to 26. The rating for my rehearsal plans and organizational skills went from 23 to 25 for a gain of 2 points on the rating scale.

Table 16

Jury Pre- and Post -Test Rating Scale Results

Observation Categories	Total Pre-Test Score	Total Post-Test Score	Score Difference
Displays qualities of an effective choral teacher	17	26	9
Teaches good vocal techniques	18	24	6
Evidence of rehearsal planning and good organizational skills	23	25	2
Appropriate repertoire selection	26.5	26	-0.5

Chapter IV offered rich, thick description of my observations of six master teachers of elementary choirs and culminated in fourteen summary statements of how they guide musical learning in their classrooms. In a similar way, findings from in-depth interviews with master teachers are presented and distilled into seven summative statements. And finally, results gleaned

from an analysis of three jurors' pre- and post-assessments of the researcher's rehearsals are given. Attention is now turned to Chapter V which provides an overall summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

As a practising elementary school music teacher and singer, the capabilities of my extra-curricular choir had reached a plateau and I was struggling to find ways to improve my students' musicianship and finesse. I concluded their improvement was dependent on my growth as a choral educator. To this end, I was searching for ways to improve my pedagogy and chose to examine the practices of other elementary choral educators who were deemed successful and masterful by reputation.

The purpose of this study was to find out how master choral teachers of elementary children's choirs teach and guide musical learning in their classrooms, and how the new pedagogical insights gleaned from master teachers could inform and transform my own choral teaching. An action research approach was determined to be the best way to reflect on my current practice and its problems, and investigate ways to initiate change that would improve my teaching methodology and most benefit my students.

Before entering the field, I reviewed pertinent literature about good choral practice, resulting in my construction of six categories used to guide elementary pedagogy: 1) Planning and Organizing Rehearsals; 2) Repertoire Selection; 3) Teaching Vocal Technique; 4) Seating Arrangement; 5) Audition Versus Non-Audition; and 6) Effective Choral Teaching. These themes served as a framework for organizing and analysing the data collected.

The research methodology employed in this study involved collecting data from three additional sources: 1) observation of master teachers; 2) interview of master teachers; and 3) observation of my practice by a jury of master teachers, at the onset of the study and another at the

end. Music/arts coordinators from six school divisions in a major city in Western Canada were asked to recommend two master teachers based on their choral teaching experience and their profile in the music education community. Observations of master teachers were video-taped. Interviews with master teachers consisted of seven open-ended questions. The jury of three master teachers were selected by my advisor and me based on the criteria outlined previously and their expertise, availability, and proximity to my school. The observation and assessment tool asked the jurors to reflect on: rehearsal organization; repertoire selection; vocal techniques; approaches to teaching; problem solving; and any other items they deemed important. All collected data were transcribed for later coding and analysed using a qualitative approach (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Mills, 2007). All data analysed identified key findings that were used to construct a conclusion and recommendations for further study (Stringer, 2008).

Conclusions

While the literature review provided ample information on methodology, teaching strategies, and purposeful suggestions, the knowledge attained from observing actual practice provided insight into intuitive teaching behaviours and provided much food for thought (Eisenhart & Borko, 1993; Joppe, 2004). Interview data provided more intimate and personal information resulting in an added dimension, which helped to answer how master teachers teach and guide musical learning. Participants' responses were often diverse and varied, but there were many commonalities that emerged when all data sources were compared and triangulation was practised (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Glanz, 2003; McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 2003). A jury- assessment of my rehearsals offered additional valuable information for improving my practice (Mills, 2007). This data provided a pre- and post-assessment of how my practice compared to master teachers of

elementary children's choirs at the onset of the research; what could be improved upon from their initial observation of my teaching practice; what areas of teaching I was able to transform after conducting observations and interviews; and additional areas for further change and improvement.

By comparing and triangulating the data collected from an extensive literature review, observations and interviews of master teachers of elementary children's choirs, and pre- and post-observation and assessment of my teaching by a jury of master choral educators, several conclusions were drawn.

Planning and organizing rehearsals. Planning and organizing rehearsals is key to effective choral teaching. This precept was consistently evident in the literature. For example, Bartle (1988), Brunner (1996), Countryman (2007b), Grat (2006), Hammar (1984), Swears (1990), Woody (2001), and Zielinski (2005) all believed successful rehearsals are planned and organized. This was confirmed by observing master choral teachers in action. It is important however, that plans remain flexible enough to respond to choristers' learning needs that arise unexpectedly during a rehearsal.

Repertoire selection. When selecting repertoire for elementary choir several criteria are important for consideration. Using music of a high quality was recommended by authoritative resources such as Apfelstadt (2000), Forbes (2001), Leck (1995), and Small (2006) as well as study participants. Level appropriateness and teacher/student appeal were also recommended by both sources. Master teachers in this study also selected repertoire based on performance and music curriculum needs. When interviewed, one master teacher revealed that her repertoire selection began in August in anticipation of performance obligations surrounding holidays and upcoming school events. Master teachers also gave some consideration to appropriateness of

range, unison repertoire, music selections that were up-tempo, and availability of multiple copies. Two teachers were particularly adamant that the text relate to the students' environment and life, and that it say something worthwhile and inspires them to sing. Bartle (2000) and Harvey (2007) echoed similar sentiments in the literature review.

Teaching vocal technique. All but one of the pedagogical principles of vocal technique were handled identically in the literature as in the field, and the findings from the field were comparable to the information provided by the literature sources studied such as: Bailey (2007); Roe (1983); Skoog (2004); Swears (1985); and Wis (1993). Only one teacher was observed using solfege as a warm-up tool, although it was mentioned frequently in the literature by Giles (1991), Keating (2005), Kohut and Grant (1990), and Swears (1985).

It was observed that master teachers used warm-ups that included: good posture; face and jaw alignment; visualization and imagery; attention to unified vowel formation and consonant production; sliding exercises between high and low registers; and use of movement through various exercises. Good posture was also emphasized. It was also observed that these principles of vocal technique were incorporated not only during the warm-up, but throughout the rehearsal as needed to teach and perfect repertoire. When interviewed, master teachers talked about focussing on teacher and student listening skills, correct vowel formation, rhythmic and melodic drills, and employment of kinesthetics and imagery. Jury members suggested more focus on proper breath control and unified vowels as important vocal techniques I should employ to achieve a quality choral sound.

Seating arrangement. It was discovered in observation and interview that the master teachers primarily choose seating arrangements that were deliberately designed to make the most

of teaching time and facilitate learning by considering non-musical criteria such as height, behaviour, and grade level more than students' musical skills. Conversely, the literature focussed primarily on music criteria such as balance and the specific pitch matching strengths of individual singers (Broeker, 2006; Ekholm, 2000). When able, teachers placed more experienced students amongst younger less experienced choir members much like suggested in the literature (Robinson, 2007). The choirs observed had four or more rows. Conversely, one juror suggested that two long rows instead of four might help students focus better.

Audition versus non-audition. Five of the six teachers interviewed believe there is no place for auditioned choirs in an elementary classroom setting. The sixth teacher supported auditioning students for special events because this offers a positive challenge for these students. Another participant mentioned that the teacher's abilities could be better showcased by an auditioned choir. Another teacher mentioned that holding auditions for choir can provide a valuable life lesson; you can't always get what you want. These beliefs were not found in the literature or shared by any other participants, but are interesting to note. The focus of literature pertaining to achieving excellence in choral sound has moved away from the question of auditioned versus non-auditioned groups (Hinton, 1985). Instead, the literature suggests that teachers work with students that have limited abilities to improve their skills (Wilson, 2003).

Effective choral teaching. Effective choral teaching was found to be heavily dependent on the demeanour of the teacher. It was observed that master teachers engaged their students by demonstrating a positive demeanour, and rehearsals had a tendency to be paced quickly and conducted in a lively, animated manner. It was interesting to note however, that both of the master teachers whose choirs were comparatively younger than the other four choirs, differed in their

approach, conducting rehearsals in a more quiet, calm manner. Perhaps they found this approach more suitable to younger choristers.

Appropriate demeanour was explored by Yarbrough and Madsen (1998), and included characteristics such as a good sense of humour and eye contact. The importance of eye contact was also mentioned in one juror's evaluation.

It was observed that effective choral teachers instilled commitment and pride in belonging to choir with honesty, encouragement, practice, and acknowledgement. This establishment of a nurturing and respectful environment was also mentioned in the literature as a key component to boost the moral of the entire ensemble, contributing to good choral sound (Corbin, 1995; Lavender, 1991; Stamer, 1999; and Thomasson, 2007).

Choral Training and Experience. It was interesting to note that when interviewed, many master teachers reported that they believed their personal training and experience, including their personal involvement in music endeavours, had contributed to their mastery. The literature reiterated that in order to teach children the skills and abilities necessary to create good choral sound a director with appropriate training and experience is needed (Grant & Norris, 1998; Wolverton, 1993). Grant and Norris and Edwards (2004) also stressed that a choral director's personal participation in choral ensembles was a significant learning experience and contributing factor to their expertise as choral educators. Participants also talked passionately about their involvement in choral music making as both children and adults. By comparison, there was only one mention of the importance of a teacher's personal passion for choral music in the literature reviewed (Edwards).

Recommendations for Further Personal Study

My action plan for changed practice began immediately after I received feedback from my jury's pre-observation with simple innovations that I could implement with minimal disruption to my ongoing program. As suggested by one jury member I immediately made the following changes: I reconfigured my seating plan so that I had two rows instead of four; I routinely removed my Orff instruments from the risers so that I could utilize them for choir rehearsals; and students were provided with a score at each rehearsal, even though the music had been memorized. This way I could make reference to rehearsal numbers and point out various dynamic markings, thus facilitating fuller musical understanding as suggested by my jury.

I am currently struggling with two other suggestions made by my jury. I am trying to move from behind my music stand and instead circulate around the room to make more of a connection with my singers. I am also trying to connect more with my singers by making more eye contact when we rehearse and perform. As observed and communicated by master teachers, I have made sure that I know the repertoire I am teaching thoroughly and I am beginning to realize the benefits of this competency. Many of the master teachers observed barely glanced at the actual score while they were teaching. This familiarity with the score has made eye contact with choristers much easier because I don't have to be rooted in my music. I have also employed one of the master teacher's technique of slow and careful repetition of short passages to ensure proper and unified vowel and consonant formation. I have discovered this is only achievable if the teacher knows her music well.

I am trying to model better breathing technique by emphasizing good posture and breath preparation in our warm-ups and during repertoire rehearsal. One of the jurors noticed that I talked

about the importance of preparing a phrase with a good breath, but my conducting gesture and my own preparation were demonstrating the contrary.

I now constantly remind myself to really listen to my choir to make sure students are doing what I ask. One candidate demonstrated the strength of good listening skills by both chorister and teacher by employing rehearsals techniques that required the students to correct errors by paying close attention to the relationship of one note to another, and the importance of using superior listening skills when correcting pitch and vowel discrepancies.

I have also tried the “less talking, more doing” style of teaching as was suggested by one of my jury members. It is interesting to note that many of my choristers later came to ask, “Is something wrong? You were so quiet today!” It is now obvious to me that students do notice a teacher’s demeanour or style of teaching and realize when this is altered. This example also made me realize that changing practice is a gradual process, and affects not only the teacher, but her choristers as well.

Goals. It is my goal to review in more depth, some of the literature concerning various vocal techniques so I can add a variety of methodology to my teaching repertoire. I have had some previous success with movement and visualization so I will focus on additional ways to use these techniques. I would also like to watch my video observations again to reinforce many of the observations before the data are destroyed. If possible, I would like to arrange further observation and discussion with some of the master teachers that participated in the study. I think much information can be gained by observing their rehearsals unencumbered by recording field notes.

I was particularly interested in the notion introduced in the literature and revealed in some of the interviews, that a choral conductor’s success is not always a result of skills learned through

educational instruction, but rather abilities obtained through a lifetime of personal experience and the individual's innate musicality or natural talent. When interviewed, many of the participants shared their personal musical backgrounds and made strong connections between their skills and their personal experiences. The connections would be interesting to explore, although might best be further researched by a psychologist rather than a teacher.

Recommendations for Further Study

For those wishing to duplicate my study I would strongly suggest including a pre- and post- observation of your personal practice from an expert jury. This provided a manageable starting point for personal change and improvement. Although the truth was hard to hear, I believe the jury's candid observations and suggestions made the most difference in my pursuit for improved practice. Many of their suggestions could be employed without major disruption or preparation. I would also suggest allowing for more time in between pre- and post- observation by jury members, should you employ this data collection technique. This would allow more time for recommendations to be considered, and to allow for organized implementation of further action. More time between pre-and post-observations would also give the returning jury an opportunity to observe more change and growth in your practice.

If possible, it would be helpful to arrange all observation and interview appointments closer together. This would help keep field notes more consistent in structure, which might prove helpful as you strive to code and analyse responses. If participants could be observed more than once this would help consolidate key findings by providing additional data.

Another consideration worth noting is perhaps limiting your participants' choirs by more specific age criteria, thus narrowing the focus. My study sampled a variety of elementary choir

configurations, encompassing chorister anywhere from grades two to six. Increased validity might be achieved by limiting the participating choirs to either early years or middle years. Consistent size amongst participating choirs could also be considered.

Initially, I asked that two master teacher candidates be identified by each music coordinator and I randomly chose only one participant. If two participants from each school division were involved there would have been even more data from which to draw. This would have provided even more data. However, findings could have become saturated and this amount of scheduling and data collection, coding, and analysis could prove to be overwhelming to an in-service teacher. These recommendations may present a challenge because of scheduling limitations and time constraints in one's timetable, or because of commitments your participants may have. Practicality of design may influence the scope of such a study.

The opportunity to conduct a more in depth study of a specific pedagogical approach employed by master teachers of elementary choirs could be an extension of the findings realized by this study. Other researchers might have a personal interest in expanding any one of the six recurring themes sighted in the literature reviewed.

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Appendix A

[illegible]

Appendix B

Jury's Observation Rating Scale: Pre-Test/Post-Test

Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Duration: _____

Please rate your observations on a scale of 1 - 10. Circle the appropriate number. 1 represents poor and 10 represents outstanding. Please comment on any observations you deem noteworthy.

1. This rehearsal is well-planned and organized.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments: _____

2. The repertoire selected is musically appropriate and well-suited to the age group.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments: _____

3. There is evidence of teaching good vocal techniques including: warm ups, breathing and posture, use of movement, sight reading and solfege, and visualization and imagery.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments: _____

4. The seating arrangement allows for weaker singers to be surrounded by stronger singers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments: _____

5. Does the teacher exhibit the qualities of an effective choral teacher?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments: _____

Appendix C

Observation Guide: Master Choral Teacher's Rehearsal

Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Duration: _____

Sketch of Choral Rehearsal Space:

Appendix D

Observation Guide for Master Teacher's Rehearsal/Field Notes
Evidence of Pre-Planning (e.g.: objectives, agenda on board, chart of rehearsal structure):
Repertoire Used:
Vocal Techniques: Warm-ups _____ _____ Posture and Breathing _____ _____ Use of Movement _____ _____ Sight Reading and Solfege _____ _____ Visualization and Imagery _____ _____
Seating Arrangement:
Qualities of Effective Choral Teaching/Teaching Style and Demeanor:

Appendix E

Interview Guide: Elementary Master Choral Teachers
Date: _____
Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Duration: _____
1. What are the criteria you use when selecting repertoire for your choir?
2. How do you prepare a musical selection for subsequent rehearsals?
3. What are some of the key methods and techniques you use when teaching elementary choir?
4. How do you determine your seating plan for your choirs?
5. In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of auditioning choristers? Is (Are) your choir(s) auditioned?
6. What teaching qualities do you believe result in effective choral learning?
7. In your opinion, what has made you a master choral teacher?

Appendix F

Consent Form - Pre- and Post-Observational Assessments of Researcher's Rehearsals by Choral Music Experts Jury

Dear (Research Participant),

My name is Bonnie Antel and I am an elementary music teacher and graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs***. Because you are considered a choral music expert, I am inviting you to participate in my study as a member of a jury.

This consent form, a copy of which should be retained for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analyzing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding of their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

Your participation in my study will involve completing an observational assessment of one of my choir rehearsals at the beginning of the study, and a second at the end of my study. The purpose will be to assess any changes in my teaching practice and effectiveness as a result of my research. You will be provided with a *Jury's Observation and Assessment Tool* and a *Jury Observation Rating Scale: Pre Test/Post Test* for each rehearsal, enabling you to write down any observations or reflections including: a) rehearsal organization; b) repertoire selection; c) vocal techniques; d) approaches to teaching; e) problem solving; and f) any other elements you deem important. A video camera will tape my teaching during your participation so that I may use it as data to augment your observations. Each visit would be approximately one hour. Completion of the observation and assessment form and the rating scale would take place during this time. All observations will occur in the music room at xxxxxxxx Elementary School, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, in Winnipeg.

Your observations and assessments will be used as sources of data for analysis. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet until my thesis is complete and then destroyed. No one but myself will have access to the data. References or quotations may be drawn from your data but no names will be used. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of the participants. Once my thesis is

concluded, I will provide a summary of my research findings to all participants involved in this project. The results of the study may be presented in some other format than my thesis including workshops, presentations, or journal submissions.

There is no risk to you, me or the students if you participate in my study. The sole focus of my data collection is on your observations and assessments of my performance. Students will not be videotaped.

No deception will be employed and you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. In this case, all data collected to that point will be destroyed. If, at any time you wish to withdraw your participation, you may inform the researcher of your intent by e-mail.

Your signature on this form indicates that you understand your participation in the research project. Please return a copy of the signed consent form in the attached envelope to me and retain a copy for your records. If you consent to participate in my study you will be contacted by phone or e-mail to arrange pre and post observation appointment times during the period of October, 2008 and March, 2009. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at xxxxxxxx (work phone), xxxxxxxx (home phone), or xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may also contact my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, University of Manitoba, .

This research has been approved by The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122.

Thank you for your participation and support.

Bonnie Antel (researcher)

Consent Form

I, _____
 _____ consent, or _____ do not consent to observe two choir rehearsals conducted by the researcher, Bonnie Antel. I understand that references to my observations and assessments will be used in the study, but no names will be used.

Please e-mail a summary report of the study to: _____

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix G

Consent Letter - Researcher's Principal

Dear (Principal),

I am currently enrolled as a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba where I am conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs***. I am informing you that three choral music experts will be observing my Grade 4/5/6 Choir Rehearsal between October, 2008 and March, 2009.

This information letter should give you the basic idea of what the research is about. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand the accompanying information. You may also contact my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, Professor, University of Manitoba, at xxxxxxxx.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve my teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analyzing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

My research will involve observing one choir rehearsal conducted by a master choral teacher in each Winnipeg school division as nominated by their music coordinator. The teacher's rehearsal techniques and strategies will be video recorded for analysis. Field notes will also be taken during the rehearsal and used as sources for data analysis. Each master teacher will also be invited to participate in an audio taped interview that is designed to take between forty-five and sixty minutes. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions will be employed.

As part of this research, three choral music experts, called a jury, will be video taping me and assessing my teaching in our music room during a regularly scheduled Grade 4/5/6 Choir rehearsal. They will write down their observations and reflections while considering the following: a) rehearsal organization; b) repertoire selection; c) vocal techniques; d) approaches to teaching; e) problem solving; and f) any other elements they deem important. This observation and assessment will be completed at the beginning and end of my study; before I have observed and interviewed the master choral teachers, and after I have observed and interviewed the master choral teachers. Pre and post observation appointment times have been arranged on (date) and (date). The purpose will be to assess any changes in my teaching strategies as a result of my research.

The sole focus of my data collection is on my methodology. Students will not be videotaped.

Students will be asked to stay in their place within their choir formation for the duration of the rehearsal to eliminate any chance of them being recorded on the video. The video camera will be on a tripod and will remain focussed on me at all times to further insure no students will be taped. Only the sound of students' voices will be captured by the taping. The camera will be set up in a way that will not interfere with my lesson delivery. There will be ample room for my movement and the camera will be set up before the rehearsal begins. I will introduce each juror and briefly explain to the students why they are in attendance before the rehearsal begins.

Parents/Guardians and students will received a letter outlining the purpose of my research, the participation of their children, and when the jurors will visit our school to observe my teaching.

Data will be stored in locked cabinets until my thesis is complete and then destroyed. No one will have access to the data except me. Once my thesis is completed, I will provide a summary of my research findings to you. The results of the study may be presented in some other format than my thesis including workshops, presentations, or journal submissions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation of myself and the jurors in my research project. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

This research has been approved by The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122.

Thank you for your participation.

Bonnie Antel (researcher)

Consent Form

I, _____
_____ consent, or _____ do not consent to have three choral music experts observe two choir rehearsals in my school. I understand that the sole focus of the observation is on the teacher and students will not be video taped.

Please e-mail a summary report of the study to me at: _____

Principal's Signature

Date

Print your name here.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix H

Consent form - Superintendent

Dear (Superintendent),

My name is Bonnie Antel and I am an elementary music teacher and graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs***. I am requesting your permission to attend a choir rehearsal at one of your elementary or middle schools to observe the music teacher's pedagogical approaches.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve my teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analyzing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding of their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

My research will involve observing one choir rehearsal conducted by a master choral teacher in each Winnipeg school division as nominated by their music coordinator. The teacher's rehearsal techniques and strategies will be video recorded for analysis. Field notes will also be taken during the rehearsal and used as sources for data analysis. Each master teacher will also be invited to participate in an audio-taped interview that is designed to take between forty-five and sixty minutes. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions will be employed.

No deception will be employed in the interview, and you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time, in which case, all of the data collected to that point will be destroyed. If, at any time you wish to withdraw your participation, you may inform the researcher of your intent by e-mail.

I will be asking your elementary music administrator or the appropriate curriculum superintendent to recommend two teachers from your school division whom they know to be respected in the area of elementary children's choirs due to their strong programs and reputations as experts in their field by colleagues and adjudicators. One of the nominees will be formally invited to participate in the study. If they decline, the second nominee will be contacted. I will request written consent from the participating teacher and provide an information letter to the school's principal. You will receive a signed copy of the participating teacher's letter for your records. The principal will also receive a copy of the participating teacher's consent. Parents/Guardians and students will receive an information letter outlining the purpose of my research, the participation of the students, and when the video taping will take place.

There is no risk to teacher or students while participating in this study. The sole focus of my data

collection is on the methodology of the teacher. Students will not be video taped. Students will be asked to stay in their place within their choir formation for the duration of the rehearsal to eliminate any chance of them being recorded on the video. The video camera will be on a tripod and will remain focussed on the teacher at all times to further insure no students will be taped. Only the sound of students' voices will be captured by the taping. The camera will be set up in a way that will not interfere with the teacher's lesson delivery. There will be ample room for his/her movement and the location of the camera will be approved by the selected teacher before the rehearsal begins. I will ask the teacher to introduce me and briefly explain to the students why I am in attendance before the rehearsal begins.

Data will be stored in locked cabinets until my thesis is complete and then destroyed. I am the only one who will have access to the data. Quotations may be drawn from teacher's comments or references made to their teaching techniques, but no names will be used. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of the participants. The results of the study may be presented in some other format than my thesis including workshops, presentations, or journal submissions.

Please return a copy of the signed consent form in the attached envelope to me and retain a copy for your records. I ask that your consent be received by Friday, November 28, 2008 to facilitate scheduling.

Your signature on this form indicates that you understand the teacher's participation in the research project. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at xxxxxxxx (work phone), xxxxxxxx (home phone), or e-mail xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may also contact my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, Professor, University of Manitoba, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxxx. Once my thesis is completed, I will provide a summary of my research findings to all the participants involved in this study.

This research has been approved by The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122.

Thank you for considering my request and assisting me with the completion of my thesis research.

Bonnie Antel (researcher)

Consent Form

I, _____
 _____ consent, or _____ do not consent to allowing a member of my staff to participate in an
 action research study, *Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of Six
 Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs* conducted by Bonnie Antel in fulfillment of a
 Master of Education Degree.

Please e-mail a summary report of the study to: _____

Superintendent's Signature

Date

Print your name here.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix I

Letter of Nomination - Music Administrator

Dear (Music Administrator),

My name is Bonnie Antel and I am an elementary music teacher and graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs.*** Because you are in a position of leadership in music education, I am requesting your help in nominating two elementary music teachers who exemplify the qualities of a master teacher of elementary children's choirs, making them suitable participants in my study.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve my teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analyzing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding of their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

My research will involve observing one choir rehearsal conducted by a master choral teacher in each Winnipeg school division as nominated by the music coordinator. My aim is to have one educator from each school division as a representative sample. The teacher's rehearsal techniques and strategies will be video recorded for analysis. Field notes will also be taken during the rehearsal and used as sources for data analysis. Each master teacher will also be invited to participate in an audio-taped interview that is designed to take between forty-five and sixty minutes. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions will be employed.

I would greatly appreciate your assistance in nominating two elementary music teachers from your school division whom you know to be respected in the area of elementary children's choirs due to their strong programs and reputations as experts in their field by colleagues and adjudicators. One of the nominees will be formally invited to participate in the study. If they decline, the second nominee will be contacted. Please forward the nominees' names and the name of the school at which the individual teaches to me at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxx (work), xxxxxxxx (home), or to my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, Professor, University of Manitoba, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxx. Your response would be appreciated by (date).

Thank you for your help.

Bonnie Antel (researcher)

Appendix J

Consent Form - Elementary Music Educator

Dear (Research Participant),

My name is Bonnie Antel and I am an elementary music teacher and graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs.*** Based on your experience and expertise as a teacher of elementary children's choirs, you have been nominated by your music coordinator as a potential participant in my study.

This consent form, a copy of which should be retained for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analyzing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding of their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

Your participation in the study will involve two things. First, I will be asking your permission to observe, videotape, and take notes as you conduct a choir rehearsal. Specifically, I will be looking at your rehearsal techniques and strategies. Second, you will be interviewed for approximately one hour. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. I will ask you questions regarding rehearsal planning and organizing, repertoire selection, teaching vocal technique, seating arrangement, and audition versus non audition.

My observational notes and your interview comments will be used as sources of data for analysis. All data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet until my thesis is complete and then destroyed. No one but me will have access to the data. References may be made to your teaching techniques or quotations may be drawn from your interview comments but no names will be used. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Once my thesis is concluded, I will provide you with a summary of my research findings to all participants involved in this project. The results of the study may be presented in some other format than my thesis including workshops, presentations, or journal submissions.

No deception will be employed in the observations, and you may choose to withdraw your

participation at any time, in which case, all of the data collected to that point will be destroyed.

There is no risk to you or your students if you participate in this study. The sole focus of my data collection is on the methodology of the teacher. Students will not be videotaped. Students will be asked to stay in their place within their choir formation for the duration of the rehearsal to eliminate any chance of them being recorded on the video. The video camera will be on a tripod and will remain focused on you at all times to further insure no students will be taped. Only the sound of students' voices will be captured by the taping. The camera will be set up in a way that will not interfere with your lesson delivery. There will be ample room for your movement and the location of the camera will be approved by you before the rehearsal begins. I will ask you to introduce me and briefly explain to the students why I am in attendance before the rehearsal begins.

I will provide you with an *Information Letter* to distribute to parents/guardians and students outlining the purpose of my research, the participation of the students, and when the video taping will take place.

Your Superintendent (name) has signed a letter of consent for participation in this study. Your Principal (name) has received an information letter outlining the purpose of my study and your participation. An information letter addressed to Parents/Guardians and Students will be provided for their information. Please return a copy of the signed consent form in the attached envelope to me and retain a copy for your records.

Your signature on this form indicates that you understand to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If, at any time you wish to withdraw your participation, you may inform the researcher of your intent by e-mail.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at xxxxxxxx (work phone), xxxxxxxx (home phone), or xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may also contact my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxx, Professor, University of Manitoba, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference.

This research has been approved by The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122.

Thank you for your participation and support.

Bonnie Antel (researcher)

Consent Form

I, _____
_____ consent, or _____ do not consent to have one of my elementary choir rehearsals observed and to participate in an interview of approximately one hour. I understand that I might be quoted in the study and references to my teaching techniques might be made in the study, but no names will be used.

Please e-mail a summary report of the study to: _____

Participant's Signature

Date

Print your name here.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix K

Information Letter - Principal

Dear (Principal),

My name is Bonnie Antel and I am an elementary music teacher and graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs***. This letter is to inform you that I will be contacting (name of teacher) to ask for her participation in my study by letter of consent.

This information letter, a copy of which should be retained for your records and reference, should give you the basic idea of what the research is about. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand the accompanying information.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve my teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analysing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding of their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

(Name of teacher) has been selected as a participant in my study. He/She is one of six master choral teachers, one from each Winnipeg school division, that has been nominated by your Music Coordinator, (name) to participate in my study. Participants have been recommended by your elementary music coordinator because they exemplify the qualities of a master teacher of elementary children's choirs, making them suitable participants in my study.

My research will involve observing one choir rehearsal. (Name of teacher's) rehearsal techniques and strategies will be video recorded for analysis. Field notes will also be taken during the rehearsal and used as sources for data analysis. I will also arrange to interview him/her for approximately one hour. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions will be employed. This interview will be audio taped. A suitable time for interview will be established with (name of teacher) and myself outside his/her scheduled teaching time.

Data will be stored in a locked cabinet until my thesis is complete and then the data will be destroyed. Quotations may be drawn from the teacher's comments or references made to their teaching techniques, but the name of the teacher or the school will not be used. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of the participants.

There is no risk to teacher or students while participating in this study. The sole focus of my data

collection is on the methodology of the teacher. Students will not be video taped. Students will be asked to stay in their place within their choir formation for the duration of the rehearsal to eliminate any chance of them being recorded on the video. The video camera will be on a tripod and will remain focussed on (name of teacher) at all times to further insure no students will be taped. Only the sound of students' voices will be captured by the taping. The camera will be set up in a way that will not interfere with the teacher's lesson delivery. There will be ample room for his/her movement and the location of the camera will be approved by (name of teacher) before the rehearsal begins. I will ask him/her to introduce me and briefly explain to the students why I am in attendance before the rehearsal begins.

Parents/Guardians and students will receive an information letter similar to this letter, outlining the purpose of my research, the participation of the students, and when the video taping will take place.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at xxxxxxxx (work phone), xxxxxxxx (home phone), or e-mail xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may also contact my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxxx, Professor, University of Manitoba, at xxxxxxxx or e-mail xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Antel (researcher)

Appendix L

Information Letter - Parent/Guardian and Student

Dear Parent/Guardian and Student,

My name is Bonnie Antel and I am an elementary music teacher and graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis entitled - ***Informing and Transforming My Choral Teaching Practice: A Study of the Pedagogical Approaches of Six Master Teachers of Elementary Children's Choirs***. This letter is to inform you that I will be observing a choir rehearsal on (date) at your child's school, to which (name of teacher) has already consented.

The purpose of this research is to inform and improve my teaching practices to best advance the musicianship of students participating in elementary children's choirs by: a) identifying the tools and strategies employed by master choral teachers; b) analysing the practices of master elementary choral conductors and increasing my understanding of their pedagogy; and c) transforming my personal choral teaching practice by applying the strategies discovered by observing and interviewing these master teachers.

Your child's music teacher, (name of teacher) has been selected as a participant and agreed to take part in my study. He/she is one of six master choral teachers, one from each Winnipeg school division, that has been nominated by your music coordinator, (name) to participate in my study. Participants have been recommended by the elementary music coordinator because they exemplify the qualities of a master teacher of elementary children's choirs, making them suitable participants in my study.

I will video record (name of teacher's) rehearsal techniques and strategies so that I can later study and learn from his/her practice and technique. He/she will also take part in a guided interview. A suitable time for interview will be established with (name of teacher) and myself outside his/her scheduled teaching time.

I have requested written consent from the superintendent (name of superintendent), and your child's music teacher, (name of teacher). (Name of superintendent) has received copies of the signed letter from (name of teacher) for his/her records. Your child's principal (name of principal), has also received an information letter outlining the purpose of my research and the participation of (name of music teacher.) Once my thesis is completed, I will provide a summary of my research findings to all participants involved in this study.

There is no risk to teacher or students while participating in this study. The sole focus of my data collection is on the methodology of the teacher. Students will not be video taped. Only the sound of students' voices will be captured by the taping. The camera will be set up in a way that will not interfere with the teacher's lesson delivery. There will be ample room for his/her movement and the location of the camera will approved by (name of teacher) before the rehearsal begins. Your

child's music teacher will introduce me and briefly explain why I am in attendance before the rehearsal begins.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at xxxxxxxx (work phone), xxxxxxxx (home phone), or e-mail xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You may also contact my Thesis Advisor, Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxxx, Professor, University of Manitoba, at xxxxxxxx or e-mail xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Antel (researcher)