S-Cubed! Successful Sight Singing For Middle School Teachers

Music in the Middle with Mr D
Poll: Your Current Sight Singing Program

Answer the following questions with YES or NO by indicating with the arrow button:
Poll #1:

Have you ever heard a child moan with dread when you asked your class to pull out the Sight Singing books?

a) YES

b) NO
Poll #2:

Have you ever felt like a failure while teaching Sight Singing?

a) YES
b) NO
Poll #3:

Do you enjoy teaching Sight Singing?

a) YES
b) NO
Why I created S-Cubed:

My 325 students ...
Why I created S-Cubed ...

• I failed so many times!
• Other methods skipped too many steps for young singers.
• Needed a systematic methodology in an easy to use 21st century format.
• Wanted to have FUN while teaching Sight Singing (no moaning!)

• Most importantly....
• I wanted all 300 children to become musically literate!
My research...

• I am not an academic. I am a real teacher in a real classroom.

• My research lab has been 22 years of teaching middle school beginners.

• I’ve taken a few courses along the way, taken days off school to watch other teachers, but mostly....

• I just wanted to figure out how to give a young middle school singer who is a total beginner the tools he or she needs to successfully Sight Sing.
S-Cubed is a method AND a philosophy
The Three Ingredients

Leverage All Learning Styles

Build & Reinforce 10 – 15 minutes/day

Incorporate Fun & Success
Topics for Today

Fun Activities
• Singing Positions
• Forbidden Pattern

Tools for Your Toolbox
• Varied But Comfortable DO
• Chaos-How to teach it
• Rhythm-Kodaly TA system-Importance of Accents

Learning Styles
• Follow the Hand and Ear (Pitch Training)
• Training the Eye-Ledger Lines
  • Pulsing
Interactive: Singing Positions

Instructions: Follow me at your seat!

Position 1: Concert Singing position
- Hands by side
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Chest up/shoulders relaxed

Position 2: Music learning position
- Sit at front edge of chair
- Torso completely straight

Position 3: Relaxed Position
Interactive: Forbidden Pattern!

Instructions: Follow me at your seat!

- Follow my hand signs
- Make sure you have a Kodaly Hand Chart in your room.
- Introduction of the game.
Tips for the Forbidden Pattern Game

Use these ideas each time you play the game for the next couple of months.

**Acknowledge:** ... good hand placement during the game. Students love to be caught doing the right thing. Others students will emulate them. Later in the method, hand placement will help them find pitches, so it is imperative to create good habits while using the game.

**Explore:** ... how to have fun with the game using your personality. This gets them hooked and excited – students love when the teacher is having fun too!

**Observe:** ... students who have pitch problems and focus issues.

**Encourage:** ... students to use the signs even if they are making mistakes. It is critical that each student use their hands every day. During the first 10 lessons, continue to stay on top of this.

**Allow:** ... students to win the game sometime during the 1st week by going slowly enough that they can score a win. It keeps them excited. Speed up the game as they get better. Keep morale high while they get comfortable with the signs.

**Use:** ... a key that is comfortable for their voices. I recommend that “DO” is anywhere from Middle C to E for this first game. Vary slightly in each subsequent game so they don’t learn “fixed” DO. Keep a comfortable range. In month 4 or 5, begin to vary the keys – a “Varied, but comfortable DO”.

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Using Distractions....
Some fun for the teacher!

While it is important to keep the game fast paced, add an element of fun by “distracting” the students from the forbidden pattern.

The first time you use “distractions”, tell the students what you are doing; introducing a distraction because you like to win, and want to make them forget what the forbidden pattern of the day.

For example, you can make it obvious by briefly stopping the game and talking about something random in hopes of helping them forget the forbidden pattern so you can win!

Other times, you can briefly stop the game in order to teach or reinforce a point:
• Voices (terminology, vocal production, etc.)
• Vowel Production
• Correcting Hand Signals and Posture
• Refer to something you will teach today in a song.

The key is to keep the distraction brief so they stay focused and keep the game interesting.

Make sure they maintain their singing posture while you distract.
Some Tools for your Toolbox
New Tool: Training the Ear
Moving Toward PITCH
Follow the Hand

1. Using FOLLOW THE HAND to develop the ear and the ability to connect the HAND to the PITCH

2. Using the bullseye

3. Drawing on a staff and pointing without regard for rhythm
Example: Solfege Ladder for the classroom

- Solfege Ladder
- What is unusual about this Ladder?
- DO
- TI
- LA
- SOL
- FA
- MI
- RE
- DO
Example: A Bullseye for your classroom
New Tool: Training the Eye
Written/Oral Warm Up Day 1 Lesson 5 Activity #1:

Review of Line and Space Notes on the Staff

Are these notes LINE notes or SPACE notes? 

\[
\text{\begin{music}
\begin{staff}
\line{8} \\
\note{C3} \quad \note{E3} \quad \note{G3} \\
\line{8}
\end{staff}
\end{music}}
\]

1) _  2) _  3) _  4) _  5) _  6) _  7) _  8) _
Example 2

Example 2 deals with stem changes. They can deceive the eye of the young singer.
Sight Singing Exercise
Day 2 Lesson 5

Ledger Line Example 1  \( \text{Mr D} \)

\[ \begin{array}{cccccccccc}
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot
\end{array} \]

LEDGER LINES:
Dashes that are above and below the staff. They are added in order to create more space.
New Tool: Varied But Comfortable DO

What is it?
Why do I use it?
When do I stop using it?
New Tool: CHAOS

What is it?
Why do I use it?
Pitfalls: Singing yourself in on the correct starting pitch.
When do I stop using it?
CHAOS – What Is It?

- Well, if you teach middle school, you already know about Chaos! 😊

- “Chaos” is highly structured (believe it or not) independent practice time that occurs once a Sight Singing example has been introduced and discussed.

- Once the “Chaos” period is over, you can discuss the example in more detail if necessary in order to guide them before they sing as a class. You could also give them a second period of “Chaos” before they sing the example as a group after the discussion.

- However, if the piece is quite simple, you can simply count them in after one round of “Chaos” and allow them to sing the example. Right now, the examples are simple. Later, we will take time to discuss specific survival strategies for the students to use.
1) Sing independently.
2) Everyone must sing, and you should sing at a normal volume at your own speed or pace.
3) Use Hand Signs.
4) Ignore everyone around you. Create your own Bubble World.
5) Keep singing until I tell you to stop (usually about one minute). You must sing the entire time even if you sing it perfect the first time. If you finish early, then go back and sing it again.
6) You aren’t allowed to sing with others or work together in any way.
7) If you encounter a difficult spot, go back and practice that spot until time is called.
8) The teacher will simply watch you work. This is one of the ways you will receive your daily grade.
This is a video of my 6th graders learning CHAOS. At the 3 min 46 second mark, they used CHAOS! for the first time. I had just taught the principles of it.

Click the link!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLNwln_cp8k
New Tool: Accents and Meter
ACCENTS and METER

Rhythm is easy by itself – use the rhythm exercises to establish solid accenting technique.

Revving of the voice

Taking the time to TEACH and PRACTICE counting in varied time signatures.

Counting yourself in.

Singing yourself in.
Written Warm Up: Follow accent rules learned in Lesson 7

Copy the Rhythm Example. Draw Accent Marks where they are supposed to go based on the rules we learned.

1. \(\frac{4}{4}\) \(\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\)
2. \(\frac{3}{4}\) \(\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\)
3. \(\frac{2}{4}\) \(\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\updownarrow\)
Group Rhythm Exercise

Do this exercise in 2 parts!

Mr D
Sight Singing

AWAKENING!

Which tools are still missing from your toolbox?

Pt 1

Pt 2

This example is very advanced!
You don’t have all of the tools for your toolbox yet. Let’s try it anyway.
While you try this example, I want you to ask yourself these questions:
Was I able to determine the first pitch? Why or why not?
What rhythms did I miss?
Sopranos (or Part 1) will read the top staff.
Altos (or Part 2) will read the bottom staff.
YouTube Links:

• The HMS Choirs beginning to prepare an exercise at LGPE in 2013 in a particularly high key! 😊

http://youtu.be/AoUwWbPrdn!

5 minutes later:

http://youtu.be/fBBQ93Nh0LM
How long will this take?

... About 10-15 minutes per day, for 6-7 months.

By then, your beginners will be able to Sight Sing 2 part exercises with very few, if any, errors.

....and best of all, they have a great time during the process.
What is the delivery method?

I offer the Lessons on my Teacher Pay Teachers website. There are about 30 lessons that will help you achieve the 2-part goal with your beginners.

I am using YouTube. Teachers can view the videos and see and hear how I deliver the method. They can also have their students watch the videos as they may find it helpful to see other students working on the same material. I am uploading the videos onto YouTube as I teach them to one of my beginning 6th grade classes. It is like a reality show of sorts! You can see them progress. You can see how we deal with the difficult moments in the program.
What do you receive in each lesson?

• Actual Sight Singing Examples to use in each lesson.
• Actual warm up lessons (written and/or oral).
• Actual rhythm exercises.
• Game descriptions.
• Teaching sequences.
• Teaching tips and techniques.
• YouTube videos of me teaching parts of the lessons to real students.
Some S-Cubed Video Links

http://youtu.be/JoO6R4OHSIY
Click above link for a description of the Game "Forbidden Pattern"

http://youtu.be/TlUd8v-BONs
Click above link for a video of Mr D teaching Forbidden Pattern to beginners.

http://youtu.be/94rxOLxqksE
Click the above link for a sample Ear Training exercise.

http://youtu.be/u60Y3sWGe9E
Click the above link to see a sample of "Follow the Hand" used with real beginners.

http://youtu.be/-fgeki7Dqc
http://youtu.be/LcbQcdV-Mp0
Click either of the links to see how carefully to “Train the Eye” of the beginner.

http://youtu.be/nLNwln_cp8k
Click the above link to see "Chaos" taught on the first day with beginners.

http://youtu.be/Msev4peMGZs
Click the above link to see teaching of ACCENTS/METER
Stay connected with Mr. D!

To find out when lessons are released:

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https://www.facebook.com/InTheMiddleWithMrDBlog?ref=hl

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https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuSVE1y-FTytfdmy7VtQ

Follow my blog where I share some of my classroom management techniques and horror stories from the past:
http://inthemiddlewithmrd1.blogspot.com/
Soon...My students began to LIKE Sight Singing!

I think the reason is...
They feel successful with each methodical step.
Success is celebrated.
We make FUN a big part of our everyday Sight Singing experience.
Questions?

Thank you very much for your attention today!