

2nd Annual Oregon Arts Education Congress Teambuilding Activity

Title of Activity: Choral Speaking

Facilitator Name: Christine Caton

Introduction: Choral Speaking is an activity in which literature is interpreted orally by an ensemble of speakers frequently using various voice combinations and contrasts. It takes great concentration, individual as well as group interpretative skills and focused teamwork to create a desired result.

Ideal group size for this activity: 25-30 voices

Age Range/Appropriateness: Choral speaking can work with any age from about 4 up—even with non-readers. For this activity and the selected excerpt, adults are appropriate.

Learning Outcomes: Throughout the process of learning a choral speaking piece, the participants acquire and strengthen life-long literacy skills necessary for strong and effective communication such as articulation, inflection, rhythm, listening, volume, rate, pronunciation, pitch and poise.

The goal of learning a choral speaking piece for performance is to please an audience. During the rehearsal process the ensemble works together until the piece is polished and refined.

Materials needed: a copy of the choral piece for each participant; pencils for marking parts.

Procedure: Leader...

1. Defines choral speaking and the combinations of arrangements used in the piece for example unison, antiphonal, line-a-choir, refrain and / or cumulative.
2. Casts the voices for highs, mediums and lows and assigns parts.
3. Reads aloud the excerpt from the *Declaration of the Myriad Oregon Friends of the Young* by Kim Stafford as it was originally written.
4. Directs ensemble's rehearsal of arrangement line by line with participants marking their parts.
5. Leads the ensemble in a performance of the choral arrangement of the poem excerpt.

Steps for the Speaker(s)

- Blend voices: listen to the speaker next to you and speak in a light, not loud, voice
- Pause: group needs to pause at the same places or the words will be indistinct.
- Articulate Clearly: speak clearly, with special attention to word endings.
- Use a wide range: when speaking in unison, each person should use a wide range in pitch and make their voice expressive.
- Pick-up Cues: each member needs to pick up the cues and keep the poem going as one story to achieve the unity and completeness of the poem.
- Keep the rhythm: each poem has its own rhythm and beat that provides the mood of the piece.
- Respond: respond continuously to the mood and meaning of the story in face, in bodily tension as well as in voice.
- Tell the Story: In addition to speaking lightly, clearly, expressively and rhythmically, each member must "tell the story." Speak with vocal energy and with continuous attention to telling the audience the mood and meaning of the selection. This "telling" quality makes the ensemble reading spontaneous and seemingly effortless.

Dynamics:

- *Crescendo:* grow in volume...louder
- *Diminuendo:* decrease in volume...softer
- *Accelerando:* speed up...faster
- *Rallentando:* slow down...slower