



The United States Army Field Band

The Joy of Singing

Companion Lesson Plans

THE JOY OF SINGING: BODY ALIGNMENT

This lesson is suitable for inclusion in a high school choral or collegiate "class voice" environment.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will participate in exercises to reduce physical stress.
- Students will understand relaxation techniques that will facilitate a relaxed and appropriate body alignment.
- Students will understand proper body alignment and be able to demonstrate it while singing.

MATERIALS:

- A large space where students can lie on the floor and move freely
- A book of similar size/weight for each student
- *The Joy of Singing* video

PROCEDURES:

1. Have students lie on the floor with their eyes closed, on their backs.
2. Ask students to compare the right and left sides of their bodies, starting from top to bottom. Which side is more relaxed?
3. Have students visualize relaxing different sections of their body as directed by the teacher, going from top to bottom, pausing with each section.
4. Following these steps, allow students to simply relax (still lying on the floor), asking them to concentrate on their breathing.
5. Have students place the books on their abdominal areas. Ask them to focus on how they are breathing and which muscles they are using as the book moves up and down.
6. Have students stand up with their feet shoulder-width apart, balancing weight equally on both feet.
7. Flex knees slightly, so the legs are not locked.
8. Slowly raise arms above the head, then lower them, allowing the rib cage and chest area to remain high. Gently swing arms back and forth, so that the rib cage feels as if it is floating.
9. Make sure the shoulder and neck area is relaxed and moving freely.
10. The chin should be parallel to the ground.

EXPLORATION:

1. Collaborate with the physical education instructor to create units about physical relaxation techniques as well as body movement awareness. Try to incorporate ideas from the Feldenkrais or Alexander Methods.
2. Collaborate with the drama instructor to create units utilizing visualization as a method to create physical relaxation.

ASSESSMENT:

- Were students able to physically relax?
- Were students aware of how and where they breathe while lying down?
- Were students able to maintain the high rib cage and chest area after lowering their arms?
- Were their neck areas moving freely and their chins relaxed?

RESOURCES: *Alexander Technique Manual: A Step-by-Step Guide to Improving Breathing, Posture, and Well-Being at Any Age.* Brennan, Richard O. Charles E Tuttle Co., Inc.: Boston, 1996.

Indirect Procedures: A Musician's Guide to the Alexander Technique. De Alcantara, Pedro. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997.

Singing with Your Whole Self. Nelson, Samuel H., and Blades-Zeller, Elizabeth. Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.: New York, 2002.

The Feldenkrais Method. Rywerant, Yochanan. Basic Health Publications: North Bergen, New Jersey, 1983.

NATIONAL STANDARDS*:

- 1b. Sing music written in four parts, with and without accompaniment.
- 8c. Explain ways in which the principles and subject matter of various disciplines outside the arts are interrelated with those of music.

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