Women's Chorus Blended Learning Initiative

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DESIGN PROJECT:
WOMEN’S CHORUS BLENDED LEARNING INITIATIVE

Emily Pulham
12/1/2016

Project Description

This project is a Blended Learning Initiative for BYU Women’s Chorus. Jean Applonie (referred to as “Jean” throughout this document), the director, and I originally developed the online curriculum content for the choir, and deliver it through BYU Learning Suite. We are restructuring the course into a blended learning (BL) model. The content is for auditioned members of the choir, which consists of 165 women, who range in vocal skill and ability from vocal performance majors to recreational singers.

Purpose

Currently, BYU Women’s Chorus members’ grades are based solely off of attendance, which does not indicate growth and progress in singing skills. As a choir of 165 women is too large for one-on-one coaching, and as each individual’s voice is at a varying level of skill and capacity, incorporating online autonomous, personalized exercises for singers can aid in improving the sound of the choir as a whole, and improving the underlying skills of the singers. The typical curriculum for an auditioned collegiate choir usually consists of a list of repertoire to be performed in concerts, and rarely includes explicitly stated vocal or choral skill sets and ideals.

Implementing an online component to the curriculum increases accountability for personal learning. The hope is that by helping singers identify their vocal goals, giving personalized training to meet their needs, and requiring personal goal progress reporting, that the quality of singing will improve and the basis of vocal/musical knowledge will increase.

The blended course will provide flexibility for student scheduling and eventually allow Jean to use 30 minutes of class time at her discretion, to personalize rehearsal time for specific groups of singers. We project that the use of a blended course, if the intended outcomes are achieved, could result in decreasing overall rehearsal time per week by 20-30%. We hope that this can increase the retention rate of singers in
the Women’s Chorus, as historically there has been a high turnover rate due to various factors, including the fact that this choir requires such a rigid time commitment.

Scope

This blended curriculum was implemented into BYU Women’s Chorus in the Fall 2016 semester. The design of content and structure of online activities took place from May to August of 2016. The curriculum has the potential for future use in subsequent semesters, and the blended curriculum model has potential for future use by other BYU Choir directors, depending on its success. Evaluations and surveys before, during, and after the curriculum were piloted guided the scope of the project as well.

I am the person primarily responsible for the structure of online activities, and Jean as the SME (subject matter expert) is primarily responsible for selecting the content assignments for various weeks.

Front-End Analysis

In order to best understand Jean’s instructional problem, I met with her many times to discuss the affordances of technology and her vision for Women’s Chorus. Her main objective in introducing a blended curriculum was to develop autonomous singers who can address their own vocal issues and take responsibility for their singing habits, both in and out of rehearsal time.

I personally observed three Women’s Chorus rehearsals in Fall 2016 to see what is effective and what could be improved. I participated as a member of Women’s Chorus from 2007-2008 in my undergraduate program and I currently sing in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, which allows my observations to be informed by both my personal experience as a singer in this setting and my experience in other large choral groups. My main assessment of the observations was that engagement of singers varied depending on the song being sung, and most singers appeared tired based on the posture and other body language cues. At times, the coaching Jean would give would only apply to some of the ladies in the choir. Some singers were very responsive to Jean’s coaching, while others lagged behind in following directions.

Learner Characteristics

BYU Women’s Chorus is comprised of 165 women singers at Brigham Young University. Within the choir there are four sections, Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto I, and Alto I, with each section having two section leaders. Section leaders act as shepherds who can handle musical or personal issues occurring with singers in their section, and they are typically returning members of the choir. They take care of checking on some students who may be ill, and listening to the musicality within their section. A leadership structure of president, vice president, and secretary also helps to serve the choir in leadership, administrative needs, and marketing for concerts. Some singers are music majors, and many others join the choir as an extracurricular activity. Many students are new to BYU, coming from many places around the United States and the world. The singers join the choir with a variety of vocabulary and understandings of vocal technique.

The Women’s Chorus website (byuwomenschorus.com/about) states,
The Women’s Chorus is a large group of select, versatile singers who perform a diverse repertoire extending from medieval and renaissance works to masterpieces of our own time. Folk music and other varied genres are included in the choir’s study and performances. The choir is well known for its beautiful, blended sound from pristine, quiet unison to the majesty of large textured sonorities. Sensitive musicianship and constant improvement are goals for each rehearsal and performance. An audition is required, and a two semester commitment is expected.

Current resources and training
The current structure of Women’s Chorus (WC) is as follows:

1) Women audition for the ensemble in August, prior to the start of school. The first week of classes is spent in subsequent auditions.

2) Each week the WC ladies arrive for rehearsal at 3 pm on Monday through Wednesday for a 50-minute rehearsal, and at 1:30 pm on Fridays for a 90-minute rehearsal. Ladies scan a QR code on their phones in order to log their attendance. Ladies take their assigned seats within their voice sections, and share music pieces with a “folder partner.”

3) A warm-up session begins with scales, arpeggios, and a variety of exercises based on the singers’ needs that day. All warm up together as a group.

4) The rest of the training in class is based on Jean’s immediate feedback in the face to face rehearsal. Training is reactionary to performance, rather than preventative and preparatory to singing literature.

5) Jean asks the singers to select a monthly “Singer Habit” that they want to personally improve, which can include anything from posture to diction to intonation. They report their progress to her using a half-sheet of paper that indicates the improvements they have experienced and what they have learned in the process of the month. This activity has no effect on grades. Some singers have reported to Jean that the focus on a monthly goal gives them focus during rehearsals, but I have not attempted to research the effects of this goal reporting system with any greater depth than Jean’s anecdotes to me in our consultations.

6) An evening WC retreat is held each semester to encourage camaraderie and to familiarize the girls with Jean, the section leaders, and choir leadership. Some service activities and other social gatherings have also been held at various times.

7) Concert weeks will involve extra time commitment, especially during the week of the Christmas concert in December.

The current online training for Women’s Chorus includes a makeup training video to prepare singers for a polished appearance in concerts. Current resources include Jean’s extensive knowledge of choral skills and abilities, and open online content such as blog articles, and legal Soundcloud and YouTube recordings of other choirs to model after.
Current resources and training

To gain a better understanding of blended learning in a choral environment, I searched out and reviewed research on the use of blended learning in higher education. The results and subsequent design implications from this review are reported in the literature review below.

Constraints

As this project is solely directed by Jean and myself, and there is no budget for it, we are constrained by the resources of our time and what the university already has to offer. Our launch date is the beginning of Fall semester 2016, so we have four months in which to develop the curriculum. Our constraint in software is the Learning Suite LMS, which has some affordances, including discussion forums, content pages, and assignment deadlines.

Another constraint to the development of online learning activities is the amount of time we have to produce our own content—whether in the form of a learning tool like Adobe Captivate or a video demonstration by Jean. High-fidelity Captivate modules may or may not meet the needs of the desired learning outcomes. As the resources to create captivate modules and pass data to-and-from Learning Suite is a capability, we may utilize it when we develop the content this summer.

Budget and Timeline

Preparing the curriculum will take place from May to August 2016. The product launch will be fall of 2016. There is no budget for this product, as it is using existing university resources for its implementation and design.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Estimated Hours</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select Concepts For Curriculum</td>
<td>May 25, 2016</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Specific Content for each Curriculum Concept</td>
<td>June 15, 2016</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling of Assignment Items</td>
<td>June 15, 2016</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Original Content Creation</td>
<td>June-August 2016</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
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<td>Deadline for Original Content Creation</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Auditions for Fall 2016 Women’s Chorus</td>
<td>August 2016</td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Distribution</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Course Evaluation Distribution</td>
<td>Sept 2, 2016</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iterative Development Phase: Formative Development Meetings with Jean</td>
<td>Sept - Dec 2016</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Course Evaluation Distribution</td>
<td>October 2016</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Course Evaluation Distribution</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

### Model

The Successive Approximation Model theory, developed by Allen Interactions, is informing the analysis, design, and evaluation components of this project (see Figure 1). Leading up to this prospectus explanation, I gathered information and prototyped a model of the blended curriculum that I personally developed on my own website. The iterative design phase began when this prospectus was approved.

The iterative development phase began in Fall 2016, when we implemented our Alpha design version in Women’s Chorus. Formative evaluations were ongoing with Jean, and a plan was put in place to administer an evaluation of the curriculum by the singers mid-way through the semester. Any changes made to the curriculum were included in the second half of the semester for the Beta version. Another evaluation followed at the end of the semester. Jean has discussed allowing other choral directors to see our model and to use it after we have tested it.

**Figure 1. Successive Approximation Model. Copyright Allen Interactions.**

Educational Interactions Theory (Anderson, 2003) is the main educational theory used to guide the design and development of this project. Its basic processes and ideas will simplify our vision for the content of the product, which simplifies the process for Jean (i.e., the client), as she is unfamiliar with theories...
surrounding blended and distance education. As it was decided to only include asynchronous online activities, the focus is more on what types of interactions are desired in the online space (see Figure 3).

Models from Blended Learning Literature

In designing the course, I extensively searched the research literature for other collegiate groups using blended learning activities. I found that the literature on blended learning in performing groups was sparse, and so I have used blended learning curriculum models from outside the musical domain.

In an early exploration of blended learning models, Twigg (2003) discussed five models of blended learning being implemented in higher education, including the supplemental model, replacement model, emporium model, fully online model, and buffet model. These models fall on a spectrum of higher face-to-face interaction, to increased online interaction, respectively. The supplemental and replacement models, which keep some traditional face-to-face class time, would lend themselves best to a choral group, considering the time-and-place needs of a choral group. Replacing current instruction and rehearsal time with online content would be the most appropriate BL model for a choral group in order to keep some rehearsal time intact, but to maximize on the abilities of the singers to use non-rehearsal days for further musical exploration in an LMS.

One example in research literature of a blended learning curriculum is the Holistic Blended Design Studio framework developed for collegiate architectural students (Saghafi, Franz and Crowther, 2013, see Figure 3). The Web 2 design studio allows for asynchronous online interactions and learning experience, while the Physical Design studio allowed a specific time and place meeting for instant feedback in the same location with students all together. The choral blended learning model I propose utilizes these two elements: online asynchronous activities that enhance flexibility, while maintaining emphasis on in-class rehearsal time.

![Figure 2. Holistic Blended Design Studio Framework. Copyright Saghafi, Franz and Crowther 2014.](image)
Design

Figure 3. A Blended Learning Framework for a Collegiate Choral Group. Copyright Pulham 2016. This framework utilizes educational interaction theory (Anderson, 2003) which shows what types of interactions may be missing from a F2F setting and could be included in asynchronous online activities.

The face-to-face component of Women’s Chorus will remain unchanged, except for the 30-minute discretionary time that Jean will use to personalize instruction for specific singer groups based on overall needs. Singers will have the same type of director and content interaction in rehearsals as previous.

Asynchronous Online Activities

The online portion of the course was hosted on BYU Learning Suite. Activities were required weekly. Twenty percent of the singers’ grades will be based on completion of online learning activities, with the other 80% accounting for attendance at rehearsals. See the curriculum section for the specific assignments that were built. The following are ways in which Jean and I incorporated the model of choral blended learning to utilize multiple interactions.

Student-Content Interaction

Jean as the SME, and I as a lesser SME have a combined amount of 50 years’ experience in the choral and vocal education field, and we used our combined expertise to hone in on the most important of vocal skills for students to learn in their first semester with WC. We grouped the singers (supplemental to their voice part sections of Alto I and II or Soprano I and II) based on how the girls performed in auditions. The inventories taken during the audition included: tonal quality and development, intonation, vowels, sight-singing, tonal memory, vocal color, vibrato quality, and response to coaching (see Figure 4).
We created a bank of content pages within Learning Suite that contained concepts about choral singing. We created original content for the course using audio/visual equipment, and utilized existing open resources from the web, including YouTube music videos by other choirs, or SoundCloud recordings. All online learning activities will be asynchronous, and be projected to take about 15 minutes of time for the singers to complete.

**Figure 4.** The Audition Form used by BYU Choirs to audition singers for Women’s Chorus, Men’s Chorus, Concert Choir, and BYU Singers ensembles. In the bottom half of the audition sheet are the pieces of data collected by auditioners for the use in placing singers in the appropriate choir.

**Student-Student Interaction**

Student discussion forums were created in Learning Suite to facilitate discussion between singers about the text of different pieces of music. By allowing singers a space to talk about choral concepts together outside of class, they can encourage each other to engage more fully in the meaning of the music. Online discussions were facilitated using a “round robin” style of discussion (i.e., students posting thoughts about a
song at a certain time, and then having them return to the discussion board before another indicated time to respond to a classmate).

**Student-Director Interaction**

Singers reflected upon their learning about these choral concepts by routinely reporting their learning and how successfully they completed the activities. Following the student-content interaction, the students submitted a reflection about how that content helped them change their singing behaviors in choir. Jean, me, and one of her graduate assistants read the reflections each week and responded to questions as needed. This increased the amount of time Jean spent on the course, which may be one drawback of adding this dimension to the choir. This is in effort to cultivate choral singers who take responsibility for their instrument both inside and outside of class, and who cultivate skills in foundational choral principles.

**Development Narrative**

I took on a very active role not only in development and implementation of the new curriculum but actually in teaching, using screencasts to clear up directions for assignments, and in coaching some singers every week. This project took much more time out of my week than I had initially thought that it would. However, it was worth the effort.

I kept somewhat of an audit trail based on consultations with Jean, so I will share some of that timeline here. From April to June we discuss the content structure of the course and determine curriculum goals. In July and August Jean recorded her own video for the curriculum using the Center for Teaching and Learning video specialists. It was a lengthy process to get the finished video to us, and we decided that producing a video ourselves using the girls in the choir we could get what we need faster. In September and October I wrote down ideas that we have for future implementation, and comments that we got from singers in the choir about their experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What we talked about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/26/2016</td>
<td>In this meeting we determined to prescribe certain curriculum, and that there would be 12 weeks of assignments, despite there being 14 weeks in the semester. We decided to sort the girls based on certain skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/2016</td>
<td>This week we talked about building a listening bank with good choirs’ music, and that we would select specific songs for the singers to listen to. We briefly talked about discussion prompt possibilities, determined to look for online sight-singing tutorials, and talked about which audition data would determine which groups the girls were in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17.16</td>
<td>Discussed separating girls into groups based on sight-singing skills, and vocal development skills based on the audition data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/24/2016</td>
<td>Decided to divide the ladies by desire to progress on to CC or Singers (or our perceived likelihood of them moving on) 4 total groups. Jean found the sight-singing curriculum for us to use. We still didn’t know what to do for vocal development, and decided to look around and read a little bit to figure out what we wanted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5/31/2016  | Determined to assign 10 units for the beginning sight-singers in first semester, 14 units for intermediate sight singers in first semester. Created a pre-course survey in google docs, created an assignment in Learning Suite. Decided to put beginning vocal development in group coachings, intermediate vocal development into individualized coachings. Looked at Vocal Development curriculum: Charles Hefferman book: Concepts “Create the Space” -- “Feeling Vibrations” -- “Relaxation”: exercises, listening, explicit teaching. Decided to create script for “Prepare the Tone” video. Decided to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/7/16</td>
<td>Discussion assignments during concert weeks, related to the text. For the Resonance and Relaxation: use the Mind, Body and Soul book exercises and scripting. We will record ourselves demonstrating the exercises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/13/16</td>
<td>I will make a video of contrasting air/muscle continuum (threshold).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/20/16</td>
<td>Shared the YouTube channel “Rejoice in your voice”: Tricia Pine videos, let’s use these for vocal curriculum rather than record ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28</td>
<td>Required for everyone: Art of breathing by Jessica Woolf DVD course reserve: look into it. Possible online discussion topics: “Breath of Kindness”, “Magnificat”, “River theme”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 18th</td>
<td>We will sort first and second years ourselves by audition data, and allow 3rd or 4th year singers to select which group they want to be in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 24th</td>
<td>Deadlines for getting finished video from CTL of “Prepare the Tone”. We also went thru and listened to some recordings of choirs for examples that we can put in our “Vocal Development” modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 29th</td>
<td>I finished putting content in its proper locations, sized my videos to correct liking, and made a video of myself doing Unit 3 Sight Singing (I made a Unit 1 video earlier this week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13th</td>
<td>We created our file where the Orchid ladies will sign up for coachings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We assigned Me (daisy), Jean (orchid), Kenny (Rose), Kameron (Lily) -- these are the groups we will be in charge of reading their weekly reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>The file submissions are sometimes incorrect so we can’t grade things-- technical difficulties. Talk to all the ladies in the choir about this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>Received a comment from a sight-singing student that it would’ve been easier to have been assigned partners at the beginning of the semester instead of trying to find their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One girl said sight singing was way too easy for her-- assigned her the Bach Chorales for a challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One girl requested to switch groups-- to Orchid to get better coaching. We allowed it once but are not allowing others to switch over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>Finally sent out a mid-course evaluation to 10 ladies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25th</td>
<td>the WC has “December” sound in October. Good batch of girls-- lots more support and help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post concert prompt: respond to any one of your group mates-- and share your experience with singing at the Fall Concert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEXT SEMESTER: We are going to change the grading for those who are assigned to attend coachings-- they will get dinged for not going to coachings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choir-wide Online Curriculum

No matter what skills were assessed at the beginning of the semester, there were some activities and concepts we felt important for everyone to experience. These consist of the following curriculum pieces:

1) **Makeup Tutorial**: This was an existing video that had been created in years past to give a tutorial about concert makeup for the choir. There was a quiz in Learning Suite to make sure all the singers watched this.

2) **Choir Window Article**: I found this article for everyone to read about finding their space on the riser, which Jean hoped would help them realize how to take charge of the singing space for singing concerts on the risers.

3) **The Art of Breathing Video** by Jessica Wolf (pw: calm): Jean had seen this video before, and she knew she wanted all the singers to view it! This video demonstrates the process of deep breathing at different levels of the body. We worked with the library to secure permissions for the girls to view the video online.

4) **Prepare the Tone Video**: I suggested to Jean that she could make a series of instructional videos about different vocal concepts. She said she had one idea that was already prepared and ready to go: “Prepare the Tone” – so we wrote out a script for the video and it was filmed by the video department at the Center for Teaching and Learning.

5) Group discussions: I placed girls into groups of between 4-7 singers based on their last name, and provided them with the following prompts that would encourage reflection on the performances

   a. **ACDA Discussion**:
      i. Write your initial thoughts about ACDA. Respond to someone else’s comment, and tell your group about your experience at ACDA by Friday at midnight.

   b. **Fall Concert Discussion**:
      **Round 1**: Respond to **ONE** of the following prompts by Friday (Nov. 4th) at 5 pm. 1) What is your favorite song on the concert, and why? 2) Rivers are in a lot of musical texts (Proud Mary and Moon River). Rivers can be symbolic. How does music relate to a flowing river, and how does a flowing river relate to music? 3) Relate a story of a time you felt the Savior’s love or that your heart was filled with peace.

      **Round 2**: By Monday (Nov. 7th) before Women’s Chorus (3 pm), respond to **THE PERSON WHO COMMENTED RIGHT BEFORE YOU DID** -- what do you think about their response to the prompt? Then share how the concert went for you.

   c. **Christmas Concert Discussion**:
      **Round 1**: Select **ONE** of the following prompts to respond to before the Christmas Concert (by Friday at 7:30 pm) 1) What Child Is This: What do you think verse 3 means? Specifically, "So bring Him incense gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own Him. The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone Him. 2) Mary Had a Baby:  a) The arranger composed a great ending starting on page 16. What elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, texture) does he use and how to build momentum? OR b) The arranger incorporates Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from his 9th Symphony, starting on page 10-14. What common themes and feelings do each of
these pieces share? 3) See Amid: Describe how the birth of Christ is "redemption's happy dawn."

Round 2: Respond to someone else’s comment, and tell your group about your experience with the concert by Monday at 7 pm. (The Monday after the concert).

Group-specific Online Curriculum
We decided to place girls into one of four groups based on their skills assessed in their audition, and provide different curriculum to these groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Target Skills Needed</th>
<th>Assigned curriculum activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lily Group</td>
<td>For singers needing elementary sight-singing instruction (scored a 1 on sight-singing abilities).</td>
<td>• <strong>Units 1-10</strong> (approximately 1 unit per week) of <em>Creative Sight Singing</em> by James Owen Boyer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Group</td>
<td>For singers needing intermediary sight-singing instruction (scored a 2 on sight-singing abilities) who are interested in joining a higher-level choir in the future (such as Concert Choir or BYU Singers).</td>
<td>• <strong>Units 3-16</strong> (approximately 2 units per week) of <em>Creative Sight Singing</em> by James Owen Boyer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy Group</td>
<td>For singers needing elementary vocal technique instruction (scored well below average on vocal technique skills).</td>
<td>• <strong>Videos by Tricia Pine, Jean Applonie, and Emily Pulham about vocal technique</strong> &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Listening Tracks</strong> &lt;br&gt; • Group coaching with Kameron or Kenny, the graduate choral assistants to Jean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchid Group</td>
<td>For singers needing intermediary vocal technique instruction, who are interested in joining a higher-level choir in the future (such as Concert Choir or BYU Singers).</td>
<td>• <strong>Videos by Tricia Pine, Jean Applonie, and Emily Pulham about vocal technique</strong> &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Listening Tracks</strong> &lt;br&gt; • <strong>Personalized Coaching with Jean or Emily outside of choir</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sight Singing Curriculum
Jean came prepared to utilize *Creative Sight Singing* by James Owen Boyer for those singers who struggle with sight-singing, as a license for the curriculum had been previously purchased by Rosalind Hall for BYU Men’s Chorus, and it came highly recommended. I personally recorded video introductions to each unit that we assigned the girls so that they could get an overview of how to do sight-singing activities on their own outside of class. We paced each group differently so the more advanced sight-singers would have a chance to test their skills, and the beginners would not feel overwhelmed. A password-protected PDF file of each
individual unit was placed on the different content pages so singers would have an easy time navigating through the exercises.

Each unit introduces new concepts, practices rhythm syllables, solfege hand signs, conducting while sight-singing, and occasionally group singing exercises. It is based in the Kodaly method, building the singers’ foundation on folk songs and scales before introducing a complete seven-note scale.

Jean also told me that as a back-up she had some Bach Chorales that could be used by any of the girls wanting something a little more challenging than what Creative Sight Singing has to offer.

Vocal Technique Curriculum
When it came time to pick other vocal concepts, Jean knew she wanted to address vocal space, threshold singing, resonance, and relaxation. We knew it would take a long time for us to produce our own content, so I searched the internet for some open content that would get the message across, using a female singer who was well-trained. We were fortunate to find Tricia Pine’s YouTube channel which has many high-quality videos about correct vocal technique, and decided to use many of her videos to illustrate the principles we wanted to share. I personally produced just one vocal technique video about threshold singing.

The Lily and Orchid groups went through the same sequence of the curriculum.

Group and Personal Coaching
Because vocal technique is fairly hard to evaluate in a distance setting, we wanted to allow our singers who we placed in these tracks to have some time for feedback from trained choral and solo singers. Jean and I decided we would take care of coaching the more advanced girls on vocal technique (Orchid Group), while Kameron and Kenny took small groups (4-5 at a time) out of Women’s Chorus on Wednesdays to coach on basic breathing and phonation skills (Daisy Group). We left this curriculum unplanned due to the nature of tackling individual singers’ problems. We let the singers guide the coachings based on perceived individual needs, or on needs we assessed based on vocal characteristics. Over the course of the semester, Orchid group members were supposed to have had 6 coachings, and Daisy group members were supposed to have had about 5-6 coachings as well.

Accountability Measures for Assignments
In my initial readings about the substance of a blended course, I read that “assignments that help students find value in goal setting, strategic planning, self-observation (i.e., self-reflection), etc., ...need to be promoted in the BL environment as well as in [classroom instruction]” (Bernard et. al, 115). We decided that rather than build quizzes, that we would allow each member of Women’s Chorus be accountable for their own learning and report their own grade as to how thoroughly they went through the content provided for the week.

The weekly reflection assignment directions are:
“Reflect on how you completed your assignment for this week in about 100 words. What went well? What did you learn? Let us know if you have any concerns! Then give yourself one of the following point grades for the week:

Did the assignment thoroughly and mindfully (5 pts)

Did the assignment partially (3 pts)

Did not do the assignment (0)”

Once their reflection was submitted, Jean, Kameron, and I each took 1/3 of the class and entered the grades they gave themselves in the gradebook, and responded to questions or concerns as they arose.

The Online Discussions were graded on the basis of completion of 2 comments within their group. They were asked to answer a prompt before the concert, and then before Tuesday’s choir rehearsal, respond to another person in the thread (see the discussion group assignment details above). If the singer posted twice in their discussion thread (for round 1 and for round 2), they received full credit for participating in the online group discussion.

Group Sequence of Curriculum

Lily Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 2</td>
<td>Watch Makeup Tutorial, Take Syllabus Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Find Your Choir Window, Pre-Course Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 3</td>
<td>Complete the “Prepare the Tone and Art of Breathing” module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 3 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 4</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 1 and 2” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 4 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 5</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 3” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 5 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 6</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 4 and 5” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 6 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 7</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 6” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 7 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 8</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 7” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 8 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 9</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 8” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 9 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optional: ACDA Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 10</td>
<td>Fall Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 11</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 9” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 11 Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Week 12</td>
<td>Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 10” Module on Learning Suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit Week 12 Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Due Week 13
Thanksgiving: Nothing due

## Due Week 14
Christmas Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text

## Due Week 15
End-of-Course Evaluations

### Rose Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Due Week 2 | Watch Makeup Tutorial, Take Syllabus Quiz  
|           | Find Your Choir Window, Pre-Course Evaluation |
| Due Week 3 | Complete the “Prepare the Tone and Art of Breathing” module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 3 Reflection |
| Due Week 4 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 3” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 4 Reflection |
| Due Week 5 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 4 and 5” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 5 Reflection |
| Due Week 6 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 6 and 7” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 6 Reflection |
| Due Week 7 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 8 and 9” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 7 Reflection |
| Due Week 8 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Unit 10” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 8 Reflection |
| Due Week 9 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 11 and 12” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 9 Reflection  
|           | Optional: ACDA Discussion |
| Due Week 10 | Fall Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text |
| Due Week 11 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 13 and 14” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 11 Reflection |
| Due Week 12 | Complete the “Creative Sight Singing Units 15 and 16” Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 12 Reflection |
| Due Week 13 | Thanksgiving: Nothing due |
| Due Week 14 | Christmas Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text |
| Due Week 15 | End-of-Course Evaluations |

### Orchid Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Due Week 2 | Watch Makeup Tutorial, Take Syllabus Quiz  
|           | Find Your Choir Window, Pre-Course Evaluation |
| Due Week 3 | Watch Art of Breathing Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 3 Reflection |
| Due Week 4 | Watch Vocal Threshold Module on Learning Suite  
|           | Submit Week 4 Reflection |
| Due Week 5 | Watch “Prepare the Tone” Video on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 5 Reflection |
| Due Week 6 | Watch “Creating Space” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 6 Reflection |
| Due Week 7 | Complete “Creating Space” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 7 Reflection |
| Due Week 8 | Complete “Resonance” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 8 Reflection |
| Due Week 9 | Complete “Resonance” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 9 Reflection  
| Optional: ACDA Discussion |
| Due Week 10 | Fall Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text |
| Due Week 11 | Complete “Tongue Relaxation” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 11 Reflection |
| Due Week 12 | Complete “Neck Relaxation” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 12 Reflection |
| Due Week 13 | Thanksgiving: Nothing due |
| Due Week 14 | Christmas Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text |
| Due Week 15 | End-of-Course Evaluations |

### Daisy Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Due Week 2 | Watch Makeup Tutorial, Take Syllabus Quiz  
| Find Your Choir Window, Pre-Course Evaluation |
| Due Week 3 | Watch Art of Breathing Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 3 Reflection |
| Due Week 4 | Watch Vocal Threshold Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 4 Reflection |
| Due Week 5 | Watch “Prepare the Tone” Video on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 5 Reflection |
| Due Week 6 | Watch “Creating Space” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 6 Reflection |
| Due Week 7 | Complete “Creating Space” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 7 Reflection |
| Due Week 8 | Complete “Resonance” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 8 Reflection |
| Due Week 9 | Complete “Resonance” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 9 Reflection  
| Optional: ACDA Discussion |
| Due Week 10 | Fall Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text |
| Due Week 11 | Complete “Tongue Relaxation” Module on Learning Suite  
| Submit Week 11 Reflection |
Due Week 12
Complete “Neck Relaxation” Module on Learning Suite
Submit Week 12 Reflection

Due Week 13
Thanksgiving: Nothing due

Due Week 14
Christmas Concert: Learning Suite Discussion about Text

Due Week 15
End-of-Course Evaluations

Implementation

The following guide is provided as a checklist for future use of this curriculum.

- Decide on a Learning Management System to use (e.g., Canvas, Learning Suite)
- Sort the singers into groups based on their demonstrated abilities at the audition (by ambition to join a higher-level choir, by sight-singing development, by vocal development)
- Time management
  - Set up a time to meet weekly with the director of the choir to go over any possible issues. Several months of meetings may be necessary.
  - Set aside time to grade the weekly reflections (2 minutes per singer’s reflection)
    - Respond ASAP to any concerns or requests from individual singers
    - Send messages to singers who don’t complete the reflections, encouraging them to do so
- Prepare your content curriculum, which could include any of the following, though it isn’t limited to this:
  - Choral Recordings
  - Pedagogical Videos
  - Articles
  - Vocalises
  - Sight-Singing exercises
- Prepare the Discussions
  - Decide on the timing of your discussions
  - Select a prompt that will encourage thoughtful discussion
  - Place singers into groups small enough to have an intimate discussion. Too large of a group will make it unwieldy.
- Own a computer with a web-cam and screencast capabilities
  - Create videos on an as-needed basis to address process issues with completing assignments
- Decide your assessment measures: I recommend quiz-style assignments that auto-grade so that more time can be spent responding to actual concerns reported through the LMS messaging system or e-mail.
**Evaluation Plan**

We evaluated our success in this design and development by whether we met three main criteria for success. In consulting with the client (i.e., Jean), we decided success would indicate that all of the following criteria were met:

1. The administrative technicalities do not take Jean too much away from the work she does in preparing for rehearsal.
2. More than 80% of the students in Women’s Chorus regularly do the assignments in Learning Suite.
3. Students exhibit improvement in key content areas: breathing, intonation, sight singing, resonance factor, and tonal memory. We will also use the difference between pre and post-course surveys to determine the singers’ perceived personal improvement.

My plan for evaluating the blended learning curriculum includes developmental evaluation, formative evaluation, and a summative evaluation, which are summarized in this table. Both Jean and the ladies of Women’s Chorus represented the stakeholders providing evaluative feedback, though Jean is the primary stakeholder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Developmental Evaluation</th>
<th>Formative Evaluation</th>
<th>Summative Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singers</strong></td>
<td>I checked Learning Suite weekly for assignments turned in or quality of online discussion and edited accordingly.</td>
<td>Pre-Course Survey and Formative Survey halfway through the course.</td>
<td>End of course survey from the singers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jean Applonie</strong></td>
<td>Jean’s feedback about administrative workload and technical difficulties, as well as whether she sensed improvement in the singing quality of the singers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>End of course interview with Jean about the success of the project, whether to keep for future semesters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Pre-Course Survey: Jean will evaluate all singers joining the choir in the audition process, but we will issue a brief pre-course survey for singers to assess some of their own perceptions of their singing ability, and online learning capabilities. We will use some of this data to compare how singers perceive their abilities and to measure whether we’ve been successful on our own. Questions may include:
   a) How comfortable are you with navigating in BYU’s Learning Suite? (1-5 scale)
   b) Have you ever set a personal singing goal? (y/n)
   c) How well would you say you understand your own vocal needs and deficiencies? (1-5 scale)
d) How comfortable are you with discussing ideas online with your peers? (1-5 scale)

2) A Mid-course formative survey of the singers, requesting feedback on the online portion of the course will allow us to adjust the online activities as needed. Questions may include:
   a) If you’ve taken Women’s Chorus before this year, how would you compare the old curriculum with the new one for this semester? Better/Worse/ Same? Explain.
   b) How valuable are these online activities to you?
   c) What improvements do you see in your own singing, if any?
   d) What suggestions do you have for the online setup of the class?

3) Ongoing formative evaluations with Jean throughout the semester. We will meet regularly to discuss how the online portions of the class are working for her, and whether adjustments need to be made.
   a) Is the online portion of class increasing your time commitment unduly?
   b) Did this provide you with more time in rehearsals?
   c) Did you see improvement that you don’t normally see in the way the singers are performing?
   d) How well did the online activities work?

4) A post-course survey will request input on effective practices of the blended learning activities and suggestions for improvement. I may also conduct post-course interviews with 3-5 singers, representing a stratified sample of the choir in order to get feedback on the efficacy of the online part of the course.
   a) How comfortable are you with navigating in BYU’s Learning Suite? (1-5 scale)
   b) To what degree did reflecting on the online content affect your understanding of your vocal needs/ deficiencies? (1-5 scale)
   c) How well would you say you understand your own vocal needs and deficiencies compared to the beginning of the semester? (1-5 scale)
   d) How well did the online group discussions facilitate your learning? (1-5 scale)
   e) How valuable were the online activities to you? (1-5 scale) Please explain.
      i) Discussions
      ii) Videos
      iii) Audio
      iv) Readings

5) A summative evaluation interview with Jean about whether or not to include this curriculum in future semesters.
   a) Would you like to use this curriculum next semester?
   b) What were the most successful/least successful parts of arranging the course this way?
   c) Would you like to share what we have learned with your colleagues in the school of music?

Evaluation Results

Pre-Course Survey Results Summary (Data)
As I read over these results, I recall that our focus when we first started designing the curriculum was on personal ownership and goal-setting, but the nature of the assigned curriculum made it so that singers were
no longer focused on their own goals, but the goals that Jean had for them when she put them into the different groups. So some of these questions became non-important toward the end of the semester and are not included in the post-course survey. This survey gave us some demographic data and helped us know who might be interested in coachings, etc. We had a very high response rate (n=154).
Mid-Course Survey Results Summary (Data)
Because only four of the ten singers completed this survey, and only two groups were represented in the sample, I did not dwell too much on this survey. I also did not follow up and make any specific changes, as the semester was well underway and too much change tended to cause confusion for students. In the future, I will probably administer this survey in person, or turn it into an interview so that I can get some more interaction from the student on what is working well and what is not. Due to the lack of substantive questions that I asked, I don’t think that I got good enough information from the singers to make any changes. The end-of-course evaluation proved to be much more informative about what to do in the future as far as changes to the course, and because students had been through an entire semester of curriculum, they saw it more holistically than just the halfway point when we were still working out the kinks in administration (e.g., catching up with grading, changing assignment deadlines).

Most mid-course changes made were based on Jean’s assessment of the amount of time that things took to grade, about the timing of turning in assignments, and about the amount of time that individualized coachings took.

Ongoing Informal Formative Evaluations with Jean
Because I maintained weekly meetings with Jean at the beginning of the semester, I was able to ask her about the curriculum and what was working well, and what was not. Here are a few of the questions I posed do her during the semester.

Q: Is the online portion of class increasing your time commitment unduly?
A: No. It takes about 30 minutes to grade 55 singers’ reflections, but I like grading them to read their comments. I also take about 2 hours during the week for coaching singers, but it’s time very well spent, so I don’t think it’s a problem.

Q: Did this curriculum provide you with more time in rehearsals?
A: Not necessarily.

Q: Did you see improvement that you don’t normally see in the way the singers are performing?
A: Yes. In October, the singers were producing “December Sound,” which means they are singing with better technique, and like they’ve been together longer, but they got to this point earlier. Also, by the time we started rehearsing Christmas music, the sight-singing abilities of the group as a whole were much improved, and most girls didn’t have to write-in the solfege syllables as we sight-sang in class.

Q: How well did the online activities work?
A: They worked fine. The only activity that caused trouble was the partner singing activity for sight-singers. Many of them struggled to find a partner and the right time to complete the exercises. Next semester we will pair them up or give class time to complete the activity.

Post-Course Survey Results Summary (Data)
I did not conduct post-course interviews, but opted to read comments on the post-course survey and review the quantitative data. We had a fairly good response rate (n=115), although it is less than the pre-course survey.
**How comfortable are you with navigating Learning Suite?**

What's Learning Suite?:
- 1: 0 (0%)
- 2: 0 (0%)
- 3: 0 (0%)
- 4: 2 (1.7%)
- 5: 24 (20.9%)

I am very comfortable using Learning Suite and Digital Dialogue: 89 (77.4%)

**How well do you understand your own vocal/musical strengths and deficiencies? (consider sight singing, intonation, breath support, diction, resonance, expressivity, etc)**

I don't understand my strengths and deficiencies at all:
- 1: 0 (0%)
- 2: 0 (0%)
- 3: 2 (1.7%)
- 4: 32 (27.8%)
- 5: 40 (34.6%)

I know my strengths and deficiencies very well:
- 6: 32 (27.8%)

**To what degree did reflecting on your weekly assignments affect your understanding of your vocal needs and deficiencies?**

The reflections didn't help me at all:
- 1: 2 (1.7%)
- 2: 16 (13.9%)
- 3: 18 (15.7%)
- 4: 32 (27.8%)
- 5: 29 (25.2%)

The reflections helped me a lot:
- 6: 18 (15.7%)

**How well did the online group discussions facilitate your learning?**

The discussion groups didn't help at all:
- 1: 6 (5.2%)
- 2: 12 (10.4%)
- 3: 28 (24.3%)
- 4: 32 (27.8%)
- 5: 22 (19.1%)

The discussion groups helped me very much:
- 6: 15 (13%)
This data is very informative, and shows that the singers most valued the personal coachings, the sight singing activities, and the listening tracks. In hindsight, I realize that this questionnaire has some issues in how the questions were asked, and that singers likely misinterpreted some of the question items. If I were to go back and re-administer this survey, I would be much more specific about which curriculum assignments were valuable (e.g., separate between listening tracks of rehearsal recordings and listening tracks of other choirs singing, delineate between group coaching with Kameron and Kenny vs. personal coaching with Emily or Jean). It is interesting that the online discussion groups were the least valued of the activities, but that might simply be because in a community-building activity like that, the goal is less of a “learning goal.”

I ran a paired sample t-test to evaluate whether singers in the choir improved in understanding their own strengths and deficiencies from beginning to end of semester, and found no significant difference demonstrated (p>.05).

Summative Evaluation Interview
In summary:

a) Yes, Jean would like to use the curriculum next semester, with a few tweaks. She will likely give class time for sight-singing groups to do partner singing activities, and re-think the schedule for turning things in so that there is a day every week during which she reinforces online activities.

b) The most successful parts of arranging the course in a blended setting were the positive impact of coaching on singers, reviewing the reflections, and the increased accountability. The least
successful parts were the communication issues about deadlines, lack of direction on sight-singing partner assignments, and grading so many reflections (165) on a weekly basis.

c) Yes. She has been talking to everyone about her successes and pitfalls this semester. We attended an Arizona Music Educator’s conference in February to discuss the curriculum.

Lessons Learned

The process of building a choral curriculum was exciting and stretching for me. The design and development process was extremely collaborative, and I think a partnership like the one Jean and I had was the critical element to our success. I also learned much about using an LMS for content delivery—there are a lot of times when the LMS will not have the capability that you want for it, but you need to be creative and willing to try some different things out. We really wished that we could assign our various curriculum groups different assignments so that they would only see their own assignment content, but Learning Suite didn’t have that functionality. I would advise any person looking to design a supplemental blended curriculum with a faculty member that they understand the subject matter very well, and be vigilant in looking for resources (open source or proprietary) that have already been created. It is very hard to develop a total curriculum on your own, so find things that have already been created. Jean’s video that we produced together took a long time, but it was a favorite of the singers, so I think she will try to produce more of her own curriculum videos in the future. I liked being involved by coaching singers each week, though it added a large chunk of time to my plate. I recognize that not always is a designer also an SME, so I felt very lucky that Jean and I had that in common and the ability to work on a professional level in that way.

1) 10-minute long coachings with two singers at a time simply isn’t enough time to complete everything! We lengthened our times to 12 minutes for two singers at a time and found that to be more reasonable. We also learned that scheduling more than an hour of coaching at a time can be taxing, so for future semesters we will reduce our scheduled blocks of time to be just one hour (enough to see 8 singers in an hour).

2) Once you select your “turn in” time for assignments, don’t change it (and select your deadlines carefully)! We had girls finishing their assignments right before 11:59 pm on Friday and their work wouldn’t get saved, and it caused a headache. So we decided to change the deadline for weekly assignments to 5 pm on Fridays, which caused an even bigger problem—many girls didn’t get the memo and were upset at the abrupt change.

3) Reminding singers about coachings. Some singers would completely forget about their coaching times, especially those who signed up for a time during Women’s Chorus. So we learned it was best to announce the girls who had coachings at the start of choir as a quick reminder. We will also build in accountability for attending coachings next semester to make sure the singers do not slough off.

4) Staying on top of assignment grading and sharing responsibilities. The weekly reflection responsibilities often got too difficult to manage, and I would often take on more grading in order to help others get caught up. It’s also important that if we ask the singers for how they are doing, that we provide feedback if possible. It’s not possible to provide timely feedback if you aren’t reading the reflections in a timely manner. Next semester we will make the “reflection” assignment a quiz style
assignment that will self-grade and provide other avenues for reporting personal issues or asking for help.
References


