



# Core Class

## 11 Ways to Strengthen Your SongWorks Teaching

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When we stand solidly grounded, when we continually strengthen our core, when we challenge ourselves with more weight or more repetitions, we build our own base of strength, agility, and resilience.

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| 1. <b>Singing</b>               | Sing with expression and vitality.                 |
| 2. <b>Singing Rhythms</b>       | Rhythm syllables facilitate linguistic performance |
| 3. <b>Selecting Music</b>       | Is music worthy of children?                       |
| 4. <b>Chunking</b>              | Note grouping is core infrastructure.              |
| 5. <b>Performing</b>            | Performing is making music.                        |
| 6. <b>Giving Feedback</b>       | Observation is core to teaching.                   |
| 7. <b>Remembering Context</b>   | Your colleague is not you.                         |
| 8. <b>Leading and Following</b> | Be a leader who follows.                           |
| 9. <b>Being Quiet</b>           | Appreciate quiet watching, listening.              |
| 10. <b>Balancing</b>            | Aim for balance within spectrum.                   |
| 11. <b>Studying</b>             | Actively seek learning and doing.                  |

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### 1 Singing

**SongWorks 1** "For most of us, but especially for those in the early stages of vocal awareness, choosing a starting pitch that is higher or more lifted than our usual speaking voice is recommended." (p. 56) "Once a familiar song is started and students are participating in the singing, you should relax your hold on being the lead singer." (p. 57)

### 2 Singing Rhythms

**SongWorks 2** "The advantages of the Gordon syllables lie in the fact that they do not represent note values or durations." (p. 72)

### 3 Selecting Music

**SongWorks 1** "How quickly we learn a song may be of less importance than how often we want to hear it." (p. 52)

### 4 Chunking

**SongWorks 2** "Because a song chunk is an interaction of melodic, rhythmic, language, and stress relationships, it preserves context and musical flow even when separated from its whole. For this reason, song chunks maintain a musical shape, making musical singing possible even when focusing on a single element." (p. 15)

## 5 Performing

Although we often hear 'performance' used to indicate a staged solo or ensemble concert, all making of music is performance. To de-elevate the aura of performance could give us an expanded view of how we communicate with our students about their music-making. (Bennett)

## 6 Giving Feedback

**SongWorks 1** "How we respond to answers our students give is as important as the kind of question we ask. . . Teachers can encourage independent thinking, provide for fuller and more detailed answers, encourage divergent thinking, gather more information, and be more sure that students understand, if [we] are careful about the way [we] respond to [our] students' answers." (pp. 182-183)

## 7 Remembering Context

**SongWorks 1** "Lists of age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate sequences for music activities can be helpful for planning, organizing, and experiencing success with various activities. Relying on age and developmental guidelines, may, however, blind us to what our students can learn when they are not limited by our preset boundaries." (p. 216)

## 8 Leading and Following

Be a leader (of ideas, of behaviors, of understandings, of knowledge, of openness, of communication, of change) in your classrooms, your schools, your districts, your regions, and your profession. (Bennett)

## 9 Being Quiet

**Quiet** [According to cultural historian Warren Susman] "In the Culture of Character, the ideal self was serious, disciplined, and honorable. . . . But when [society] embraced the Culture of Personality, Americans started to focus on how others perceived them. They became captivated by people who were bold and entertaining. 'The social role demanded of all in the new Culture of Personality was that of a performer,' Susman famously wrote. 'Every American was to become a *performing self*.'" (p. 21)

## 10 Balancing

Finding balance in our teaching is not something we find 'once and for all.' Changing conditions, changing knowledge, changing incentives, and changing students are just some of the conditions that cause moments (or longer!) of disequilibrium. Seeing our balance as sliding on a continuum, rather than placing ourselves in categories of good/bad, strong/weak, or got it/lack it, can help us pay attention to our need to rebalance without leveling harsh self-judgment in the process. (Bennett)

## 11 Studying

If we want people to listen to us, we would do well to consider these disadvantages of specializing in a method: a missionary zeal that can "turn off" colleagues; appearing cliquish or exclusionary; a different, "right choice" for me doesn't mean you made the wrong choice; numbers of "members" do not equate with success or viability of a Method; with short exposures, focus tends to be on techniques, materials, and personalities rather than the principles behind those practices; rather than being "cautious consumers," we can become closed to the strengths and weaknesses in our chosen Method and follow "expert opinion" without question. (Bennett 1990, 1986)

## References

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