



When I read the Ann Landers column, featuring the article, “ABC’s of Successful Child Rearing,” I thought how appropriate most of the key words were for children’s choir directors. The author, Jo Frisbie von Tiehl, articulated clearly her ideas on successful parenting. Her article inspired me to play a word game of my own, thinking of alphabet words that identify with my own philosophy of teaching children’s choirs in the church.

As you read these key words, why don’t you jot down your own list of ABC’s? You may consider sharing your additions in a letter to the editor. It might be fun!

—Helen Kemp

ABC’s of Successful Children’s Choir Training

- A** is for Attitude. In working with your choristers, think in terms of potential and development, rather than problems and deficiencies.
- B** is for Beauty. Introduce children to the Beauty of sound and melody, and words full of wonder.
- C** is for Courtesy, Cooperation and Concentration. Help children know the importance of these 3 C’s. The 3 C’s for directors?—Commitment, Creativity and Communication.
- D** is for Distributing Delight! This is one of the rewards for both directors and choristers.
- E** is for Enthusiasm, which means God in you. E is also for Encouragement and Enrichment.
- F** is for Faith and Formation. The texts and songs you choose can influence both the above. And let’s not forget the importance of Feeling, Focus and Fairness.
- G** is for Gratitude. One of our Goals should be to teach a child to say “Thank you” to God, to parents and peers. Singing is a Great way to express Gratitude.
- H** is for Harmony. Help your children to know that Harmony happens in more than music. It happens when life is in tune with our Creator.
- I** is for Inspiration. Children of all ages need our best ideas to continually pique their Interest and Inspire their desire to grow.
- J** is for Joy. It is a gift to your choristers to enable them to express Joy in their singing and in their living.

- K** is for Knowledge of the subject you teach and Knowledge of age-appropriate methods of teaching.
- L** is for being a Lover of children, music, beauty, God.
- M** is for the art of Motivation; it is for the Magic that happens when a song enters a soul; it is for the importance of Management of our groups; it is for the wonder of Memory and the treasures we can help children store there.
- N** is for Nurture. Our most important assignment is to Nurture the bodies, minds and spirits of our children.
- O** is for Order. There is not time for chaos in the choir room. Time is a precious commodity. Organize your rehearsals and schedules.
- P** is for Process, which is as important as Performance. P is also for Preparation, Participation, Praise, Purpose, Patience and Positive outlook. There are lots of P’s in this pod!
- Q** is for the continuous Quest for Quality. A good teacher/director is a “student forever.”
- R** is for Reverence. What a Responsibility and privilege is ours to help our choristers to Revere and worship.
- S** is for Spirit, Sensitivity, Sharing, Surprise and Sparkle.
- T** is for Trust, Training and Technique. But most of all, it is for the Transformation that takes place when notation on a page becomes a living song.
- U** is for Unison. It is for Understanding stages of development in learning to sing in tune with each other.
- V** is for Vitality and Vision.
- W** is for Worship, Wonder, and Welcome!
- X** is for eXpression, helping choristers to internalize and eXpress emotions through their choir eXperience. It is also for the eXcitement music can create.
- Y** is for Youthfulness, an attitude toward life—not just a number of years. And Y is for Yes. I love the enthusiasm expressed when I announce the next song in rehearsal and some chorister says, with arm and fist thrust upward, “Yeesss!”
- Z** is for the Zest and Zeal we put into our rehearsals, hoping that these weekly encounters will help our children to “increase in wisdom and ability, and in their desire to serve and honor God.”