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A New Idea For Student Retention in the High School Chorus

***Guest Article from one of our ACDA Southern Division R&S Chairs**



Thomas Yackley
ACDA Southern Division
R&S Chair
High School Choirs
Alpharetta High School
3595 Webb Bridge Road
Alpharetta, GA 30005
770-521-7640 ext. 154
yackley@fultonschools.org

Retaining students in chorus seems to have become more difficult with each passing year. It seems there are new graduation requirements added constantly which squeeze the arts out of students' schedules. In recent years the Georgia state curriculum has dropped a fine arts requirement. At the same time the science requirement has increased and the math curriculum has undergone a change that leaves many students in need of remediation. We are competing for a slice of a shrinking pie. I know our neighboring states are facing similar challenges.

In my program, I see students each year who would like to continue with chorus but find themselves unable to fit it into the school day. All three of my own children took summer school classes and online "virtual" classes to stay in chorus. It was their idea. Despite the cost, I felt it was worthwhile for their education. However, not every parent is as supportive of music as this dad.

My choral association used to offer scholarships to encourage our choral students to take voice lessons. Now we offer scholarships to help students pay for online or summer classes. We currently have five students enrolled who would not be in chorus this semester if not for those scholarships. Over half of the students in my advanced chorus have taken online or summer school classes!

Dedication and initiative are required of the students to take these classes. The counselors do not generally suggest an online class to the students or inform them of their availability. But the students who know what they want out of a high school education can find ways to create their own schedules.

It is amazing that there are students willing to do this. And it is a sad thing that they have to.

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