

Choralosophy: Mark Bailey

"The Success and Growth of a Title 1 Choral Student"

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Defining the conversation - NOTE: All information provided is readily available by the Texas Education Agency's and the Department of Education's websites.

- How do we define the Title 1 program?

The Department of Education (2023) states, "Title I provides supplemental funding to state and local educational agencies to acquire additional education resources at schools serving high concentrations of students from low-income homes. These resources are used to improve the quality of education programs and ensure students from low-income families have opportunities to meet challenging state assessments."

- By Texas Education Agency Standards, high poverty schools are defined by more than 80% of the student body being economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
- The Department of Education (2023) states that, "Low-poverty schools are defined as public schools where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Mid-low poverty schools are those where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Mid-high poverty schools are those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. High-poverty schools are those where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In fall 2021, about 10.5 million students attended high-poverty schools, or almost 20% of the US Public school population.
- How do we define the Title 1 School?
 - Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment are eligible to use Title I funds to operate schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students.

Local Educational Agencies must also must use Title I funds to provide Title I services to eligible children enrolled in private schools. (Department of Education, 2023)

- How do we define the Economically Disadvantaged student?
 - An economically disadvantaged student is defined as one who is eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. (Department of Education, 2023)
- How do we define the At-Risk student?
 - A student at-risk of dropping out of school is one who is under age 21 and who meets one or more of the state's 13 different criteria. (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
 - 1. **is in prekindergarten, kindergarten or grade 1, 2, or 3 and did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or state assessment** instrument administered during the current school year;
 - 2. **is in grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 and did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects** in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester;
 - 3. **was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years**; (Note: From 2010-2011 forward, TEC 29.081 (d-1) excludes from this criteria prekindergarten or kindergarten students who were not advanced to the next grade level as a result of a documented request by the student's parent.)
 - 4. **did not perform satisfactorily on an State assessment** instrument administered to the student under TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument;

- **5. is pregnant or is a parent;**
 - **6. has been placed in an alternative education program** in accordance with TEC §37.006 during the preceding or current school year;
 - **7. has been expelled** in accordance with TEC §37.007 during the preceding or current school year;
 - **8. is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release;**
 - **9. was previously reported to have dropped out of school;**
 - **10. is a student of limited English proficiency**, as defined by TEC §29.052;
 - **11. is in the custody or care of the Child Protective Services** or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official;
 - **12. is homeless**, as defined NCLB, Title X, Part C, Section 725(2), the term “homeless children and youths”, and its subsequent amendments; or
 - **13. resided in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.**
- How many public schools are in the US?
 - 98,577 (Department of Education, 2023)
 - How many public schools in the US are considered Title 1?
 - 54,632 or 55.4% of public schools are Title 1 (Department of Education, 2023)
 - How many public school students are there in the US?
 - 2021 statistic from the DOE website: 49.5 million (Department of Education, 2023)
 - How many public school students are considered Economically Disadvantaged?

- Unknown, but 52.3% or 25.8 million are eligible for free or reduced lunch, with 10.5 million students, or 21% enrolled in high-poverty schools. (Department of Education, 2023)
- How many public schools are in Texas?
 - 9,100 campuses are public or public charter schools. (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
- How many public schools in Texas are Title 1?
 - 4,547 or 49.0% were eligible for Title 1 and 3,959 or 43.5% had the Title 1 School status. (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
- How many public school students are there in Texas?
 - 5,427,370 students were enrolled in the 2021-2022 school year. (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
 - But due to falling birth rates and other factors, demographers are projecting statewide enrollment to begin a gradual decline during the next decade. (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
- How many public school students are defined as Economically disadvantaged in TX?
 - 60.6% or 3,288,986 students (Texas Education Agency, 2023)
- Comparing from micro to Macro (*2022 Accountability Reports*. 2023)

	PDHS	District State	US	
○ African American	18.3%	10.5%	12.8%	15%
○ Hispanic	57.2%	46.3%	52.8%	28%
○ White	10.7%	34.6%	26.3%	45%
○ American Indian	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	1%
○ Asian	11.1%	5.0%	4.8%	5%
○ Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	?
○ Two or More Races	2.0%	3.0%	2.9%	5%
○ Eco. Disadvantaged	79.1%	67.2%	60.7%	52.3%

○ Special Education	11.0%	14.0%	11.6%	32%
○ ELL	23.1%	16.8%	21.7%	10%

One report stated that Emergent Bilingual students will make up 25% of the Texas population by 2025.

(Zong J. & Batalova J. 2015)

Mark Bailey - Personal stories and observations about teaching in a Title 1 or high-poverty

These kids are dedicated

- Student whose father had died of cancer the day before the contest. She still showed up and performed with us. When asked why she was there, she stated, “I didn’t know where else to go. This choir is my family and I can grieve and be real here.”

These kids have grit and know how to persevere

- Student who works 2+ jobs as a father at age 16 to provide for his girlfriend and young child. He showed up to every concert and dress rehearsal, was at after school rehearsals as much as possible, and still participated in UIL. Days he was exhausted and going on 2-3 hours of sleep. Amazing student.
- Student who tried out for All-State choir EVERY year and never made it (was close always, making it to the AREA competitions consistently). While they never made All-State Choir, they did receive a massive scholarship to a university seeking a degree in Vocal Performance and Music Education. They are now a music teacher. I have over two dozen students who are in music or music education as a professional career.

These kids seek opportunities to shine

- Here at Palo Duro HS, students have gone through at least 4 Directors in the past 6 years. Haven’t had someone who will be consistently there. Choir program numbers dwindled each year someone left. Haven’t won sweepstakes in 45 years. I made sure everyone had bought into my

goal for them of “All choirs, All sweepstakes” and “We are a sweepstakes choir”. They had the talent, they just needed someone to believe in them.

- Student who, in her junior year of high school, was a paid cast member for the Houston Grand Opera. Went on to sing in the chorus at her university.

These kids need a teacher who believes in them

- How we measure success is different in Texas. One benchmark is consistently receiving Sweepstakes Trophies at the annual University Interscholastic League competition in Texas.
 - At the 3 public high school choir programs I have led, there was a dry spell for winning at UIL
 - La Porte HS - Eco Dis: 45.7% - Title 1 school (47 Years since UIL Success) + increase in retention and recruitment.
 - Experience at Brazoswood HS - Eco Dis: 57.1% - NOT a Title 1 School (16 years since UIL Success)+ increase in retention and recruitment. School CHOOSES to not accept the Federal funding from the Title 1 program. Is there a stigma with schools being called, “Title 1”?
 - Experience Palo Duro HS - Eco Dis: 79.1% - Title 1 School (45 years since UIL Success)+ increase in retention and recruitment. High poverty campus, refugees (40+ languages spoken in our hallways, dozens of faiths, many are first generation Americans or are working on citizenship, they and their parents have fled wars, atrocities, famines, violence, genocide).

These kids need a passionate teacher who sticks around for the long haul

- The mindset that these kids are stepping stones in your career is just wrong. You’re there for a few years, serve your time, then leave for bigger and better things. Title 1 Schools deserve veteran teachers who see the students as the PINNACLE of their career, not a stepping stone to an

“Easier” position or a more “successful” or popular program. We’re not in this business to become famous. We’re in the business of changing lives and making a difference for future generations, and I believe music and having students plugged into the performing arts can do that.

- Programs that lack success have probably gone through a number of directors in recent years, often they are first year or inexperienced directors who can’t make it.
- In Title 1 schools, you have to be firm, consistent, fair, but find opportunities to show grace.
 - Students who have multiple jobs, is the caregiver for family members, has a parent or guardian who is sick
- We need VETERAN and MASTER level teachers to step up and serve at Title 1 Schools. Servant hearted leaders are needed to reach communities with so much untapped talent.

How has it affected your philosophy?

- Music, but most importantly the people in music, changes the lives of those around them. Music has the ability to change the soul and trajectory of someone's life. Music and the arts are the REASON many of my students get out of bed each morning to come to school. We need to make a culture and an environment in our classrooms where our class and more importantly the people in it, become the reason someone has chosen to get out of bed and continue for another day. Music is the tool I use for connecting students with others, exploring new ideas, cultures, and experiences, discovering events in history, and view the world from different perspectives. It allows our students to be intentionally inwardly focused, while also empathizing with others through human connections. Music reminds us of how much we need others and how much they need us.
- Growth mindset is the #1 thing in a choir program of a Title 1 school (or any program for that matter). These kids have been told time and time again that they are worthless, will never amount to anything, and any past failures will be held against them. My philosophy is one of we have to be careful what soil or mindset we root ourselves in and what we’re communicating to our

students. They are told by culture, “Your life is over if a,b,c or d happens, or if you make this choice” and that there’s no coming back from a mistake. The growth mindset is one of, “I’m not there yet” or, “I’m still learning”, and, “Failure IS an option, IF I’m learning how to grow from it”. Failure MUST be an option for this generation, because it is the greatest way to learn. It can be frustrating and they feel defeated, but that’s ok. Their goal has to be centered on learning and growing, not avoiding failure or mistakes.

- There is a season for everything. Some seasons are good and some are not. It is grit and perseverance that makes you who you are. Appreciate the good seasons and remember them during the bad. For both good and bad seasons of your life, do not forget, as King Solomon stated in the old Persian fable, “Good times or bad, this too shall pass.”.
- Excellence in music will NOT happen without an inspiring and passionate teacher, whose focus is first upon relationships and building a culture of excellence. The music IS the outcome, the medium, and the tool for making human connections. Music is NOT the goal. Changing and inspiring the lives of our students and community through music is our goal. The most valuable commodity in the world are the lives of those around us. It is people, or in this case our students, who are the most cherished and valued. That is my mindset.
- The text is everything in the repertoire. Choose impactful music! Choose music that speaks to the heart and mind! DO NOT dumb down your repertoire choices, in fact, you need to raise the bar of the text; be careful of the skill level necessary for student success in repertoire. You’ll have to do your research and find GOOD pieces of music. There are some very approachable arrangements of classics being written these days. (For example: Gary Lewis is a full-time vocal music educator at Solon High School, in Solon, OH). Music published by Excelcia music consistently makes approachable arrangements of classic works. Focus upon the text; if you find it moving, the students will find it moving. Connect the text with their everyday lives.

- Music literacy must be tied with impactful repertoire in your classroom. If all you focused upon was vocal technique, aural skills/sight-reading, and impactful repertoire during the rehearsal stage of your instruction, then that you will do well.

Benchmarks and strategies for program building

What does a successful Title 1 Choral program look like?

- A focus upon relationships, building community, a culture of excellence, and student leadership. Relationships are EQUALLY as important as musicianship and performance success. Growth is the #1 priority. Little successes are a big deal!
- Highly structured, with a daily routine and order (Welcome, warmup, stretch/announcements, ear-training/sight-reading, repertoire, one final thing (Send off phrase) and classroom norms.
- High expectations and a challenging (but attainable) environment in the rehearsal setting and for your students outside the classroom; they are the ambassadors of your program and should wear that badge of honor seriously.
- One that meets the students where they're at; know their strengths, their struggles, how teachable they are, and what repertoire/music literacy system and level is ready for each student and each ensemble. Don't walk in having already selected what pieces you want to perform, have them perform the repertoire that they need to help them grow and learn musicianship, literacy, IPA, rhythm, character and ethics.
- Be flexible and be quick to change your instruction, should the need and opportunity arise.
- How you measure success is different in Title 1 programs; small successes are HUGE compared to low poverty (non-Title 1) schools. Set attainable goals, 1 year at a time. If contest success is your goal, make it attainable - (UIL Non-Varsity Waiver is a MUST for Texas educators). Recruitment and retention are huge! You can't afford to lose kids, but

when you do, make sure it's a positive experience; a healthy relationship doesn't end when they leave your classroom.

- Recruitment and retention is you and your kids advocating/excited about your program. Support your feeders! You must go to your feeder programs or no one will. You need to be that positive influence in the classroom of your feeder programs so the students will WANT to keep singing with you in high school.
- Be a positive part of the culture of your school. Greet students as they enter each day, support your admin by helping when you can, go out of your way to encourage students. I play music on my stereo in the foyer each morning and greet my students.
- Does it work?
 - This year, we had around 60 in choir. Next year, we will have between 100 - 120+.
 - If you're a high school director, set time aside every day to support your middle school directors and students. Middle school directors must go to support their elementary directors and students. These students are the future of your programs!

Know your audience

- I teach the greatest kids in the world and no one will ever tell me otherwise!
 - Ignore negative attitudes about your campus, both from outside and inside sources.
 - Know that with poverty comes trauma, past and present; these are often the realities of our student's lives, in particular the high poverty student
 - Trauma takes multiple forms: Emotional/Physical/Sexual Abuse towards themselves, siblings, parents/guardians, or friends/family members, food insecurities, housing displacement, refugee status, citizenship status, the list goes on.

- Remember, there is more than one kind of poverty than financial; emotional and social poverty are extremely important
- Knowing this, how you approach your students must be based upon one thing:

The Relationship

- The professional relationship you have with your students (and faculty) are a critical part of program success; being a relational teacher, who has high-expectations, but also is a gentle, firm, and neutral guide in the learning process, is the a fantastic way to direct your program
- Yelling at your students does not work. Being inconsistent or not keeping promises, does not work. Beginning the year without attainable goals does not work. Lack of communication to all stakeholders does not work
- What DOES work is being a consistent, present force for good in your classroom and community. You are their biggest cheerleader, who is the constant encourager, with high expectations and high energy; be a passionate educator and show your kids you love what you do.
- Most importantly, you have to show them that
 - #1 - They matter
 - #2 - You care about them
 - #3 - You're not going anywhere; they are not the stepping stone on your journey to the next big thing; they ARE your big thing.
They are the culmination of your career, this is especially true for veteran teachers.
- I tell my kids every day that they are, "Brilliant, talented, and beautifully made. I also tell them each day, "I love you, you matter, and I'm so blessed to have made music with you today."

- How you make them FEEL, and the promotion of healthy norms, boundaries, and emotional/mental health is the #1 focus of your classroom.
- Kids will remember how you made them FEEL, before how well you sang, how many Sweepstakes trophies you won, or how many kids made All-State Choir. These are outcomes of healthy professional relationships within your classroom; high levels of musicality, performances, and student success are the outcomes when you are focused upon a classroom with high expectations and healthy boundaries. Music is the tool, the medium, to capture kids' hearts, to give them something worth waking up to and going to school for each day. It's an attainable future, a lifelong skill that they can do the rest of their life.
- **Give your students structure**
 - No day should be a surprise to you or your students. Always have a plan and a CONSISTENT routine. Do not change it up unless you have communicated this to your students.
 - Routine
 - Start AT the bell, even if everyone isn't in the classroom yet. You will set an expectation that the rehearsal does not begin when they are ready, but when you are ready. They will meet this expectation: you will HAVE to practice this norm, yes. You will need to walk them out in the hallway and practice putting bags away, getting quickly on the risers, and stand/begin singing when you begin warmups
 - Warmups

- Downbeat - begin with a vocalize of some kind, do NOT begin with announcements
- After the first or second warm up, transition into stretches (say, “Mirror me, do what I do, and listen to announcements”.) This allows you to give announcements while they are focused on stretching and breathing.
- Make sure you focus upon the big things first: Breath, Tone placement, Vowel choice (I always go with the Oo, Oh, and Aw shaped vowels for the first 2 semesters for warmups).
- Add daily and routine solfege patterns to begin each day; they will start to internalize these and can connect them to sight-reading; will get to this soon
- Sight-Reading
 - EVERY DAY! Without fail. Doesn’t have to be the same thing, but it MUST be a part of your routine, no exceptions.
- Repertoire
 - PLEASE choose good repertoire! Don’t dumb down the music. You have to do your homework and find good music. You need to be online and score constantly. Choose healthy, age and ability appropriate repertoire that has wonderful text that students of all ages can emotionally connect to. Do NOT give them cheesy or pop pieces ALL the time; there is a time and place for that, but the first of the year is not the time nor the place. Set your high expectations early.

Building your Title 1 program? Believe in these big ideas:

- It's all about the kids, not you. Their success and personal growth are the most important part of your day. Your EGO has GOT to GO!
- You teach the greatest kids in the world! Make it fun and relevant!
- Lives are changed by passionate educators, whose focus is upon building relationships and having high expectations for your students. You are a guide in their education, a mentor, and sometimes a parent.
- You are the biggest advocate and the face of your program. While it's all about the kids, everyone is watching you and looking to you to move things forward. Be present, but be future focused and have a goal in mind as to what you want to create.
- The potential is LIMITLESS at Title 1 schools. Are challenges and barriers found more often in Title 1 schools? Yes, but the IMPACT you have to change lives is worth it.

Having the right people in place from the top down matters:

- The Texas Music Educators Association and Texas Choral Directors Association leadership, our Region level leadership
- Amazing Leadership at the District level
 - Doug Loomis, Kevin Phillips, and Dr. Christopher Reidlinger - servant leaders. A belief in the Fine Arts to change student's lives. Direct quote from our superintendent, who was speaking to members of his Fine Arts Council, "You and your programs are the reason our kids come to school every day."
- Leadership at the Campus level
 - Amy Dorris, Heath McLaughlin, all the APs and our amazing and passionate colleagues who support and encourage the fine arts

Be your own advocate, immerse yourself in the school culture, be the most passionate and engaging teacher on your campus, have a servant-leader mindset, and teach your kids to be just as passionate as you are. Their success and growth is your #1 priority when you are on campus.

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