

# Selecting Repertoire for K-6 Choirs

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1/23/16

# Elementary Music in Previous Years

- Lowell Mason
  - Singing as the basis of elementary curriculum
- 1950s
  - Space race
  - Interest in core subjects
- General Music
  - Academically-driven climate
  - Measurable standards
  - Focus becomes literacy



# Elementary Music Today

- General music is often the required musical experience
- Lack of time for both choir and general music
  - One music teacher to fill both roles
- Lack of emphasis on child vocal pedagogy and singing opportunities (Gackle, 2004)
- Community choirs developed to fill this need
- Repertoire & Standards Committees



# Composition of Elementary School Choirs

- Grade divisions between buildings often determine choir composition
- Younger than 5<sup>th</sup> grade often cannot join a choir
  - Perform in school productions
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders are very capable choristers (Wilson, 2003)
  - Providing young students with opportunities to sing in structured groups “affords students the opportunity to use their voices in ways that will provide maximum vocal development” (Wilson, 2003, p. 33).



Ideally



HOW?

Reality



# Importance

“Few singers are able to overcome difficulties caused by repertoire that is not suited for their voices” (Nix, 2002, p. 217).

- **Inappropriate literature:**
  - Impair vocal development
  - Hinder good technique
- **Ideal literature:**
  - Manageable
  - Challenges students
  - Encourages musical growth



# Purpose and Guiding Questions

This presentation will provide educators criteria by which to select elementary choral repertoire and how to help students meet Core Arts Standards (2014) in elementary choirs.

1. What types of repertoire are appropriate for elementary choirs?
2. What criteria should be considered when selecting repertoire for elementary choirs?
3. In what ways can elementary choral experiences help students meet Core Arts Standards (2014)?



# Types of Literature

- Folk Songs
- Songs from Multiple Cultures
- Spirituals & Gospel
- Art Music
- Popular/Contemporary music
- Patriotic Songs



# CONSIDERATIONS

(Gackle 2006; Cox 2006; Apfelstadt 2001; Nix 2002; Marshall 2005)

# Considerations for Selecting Repertoire

- **Musical/Educational**
  - Physical Considerations
  - Vocal Considerations
  - Expressive & Emotional Considerations
  - Musicianship
  - Quality
- **Extra-Musical Considerations**
  - Students
  - Resources
  - Community
  - Program



# Physical Considerations

## Elements related to physiological development

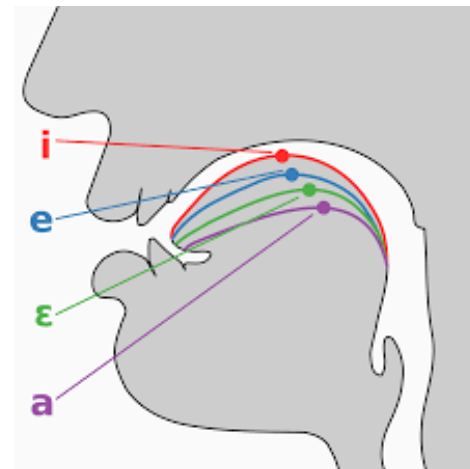
- Age
- Technical problems
- Experience



# Vocal Considerations

## Elements concerning the act of singing

- Range
- Tessitura
- Placement of vowels throughout tessitura



# Expressive & Emotional Considerations

**Expressive and emotional considerations address a group's ability to express the emotional content of the repertoire.**

- Director enthusiasm
- Emotional maturity
- Temperament/Personality
- Text



# Musicianship

**The ability of the singers and conductor to negotiate the composer's instructions accurately**

- Individual development
- Melody
- Harmony
- Accompaniment
- Voicing
- Unison



# Quality

***Internal quality*** concerns the compositional elements of a piece.

***External quality*** concerns the role of a piece within the performance and the enjoyment by the audience.

- Composition
- Facilitation of vocal development
- Encouragement of musical development
- Diversity
- Context/Audience





# Extra-musical Considerations

**Considerations that address elements outside of typical musical considerations**

- **Students**
  - Learning Styles
  - Attention Span
  - Interests
- **Resources**
  - Budget
  - Personnel
  - Facilities
- **Community**
  - Values
  - Culture
- **Program**
  - Purpose
  - Length
  - Portion and Position in Performance

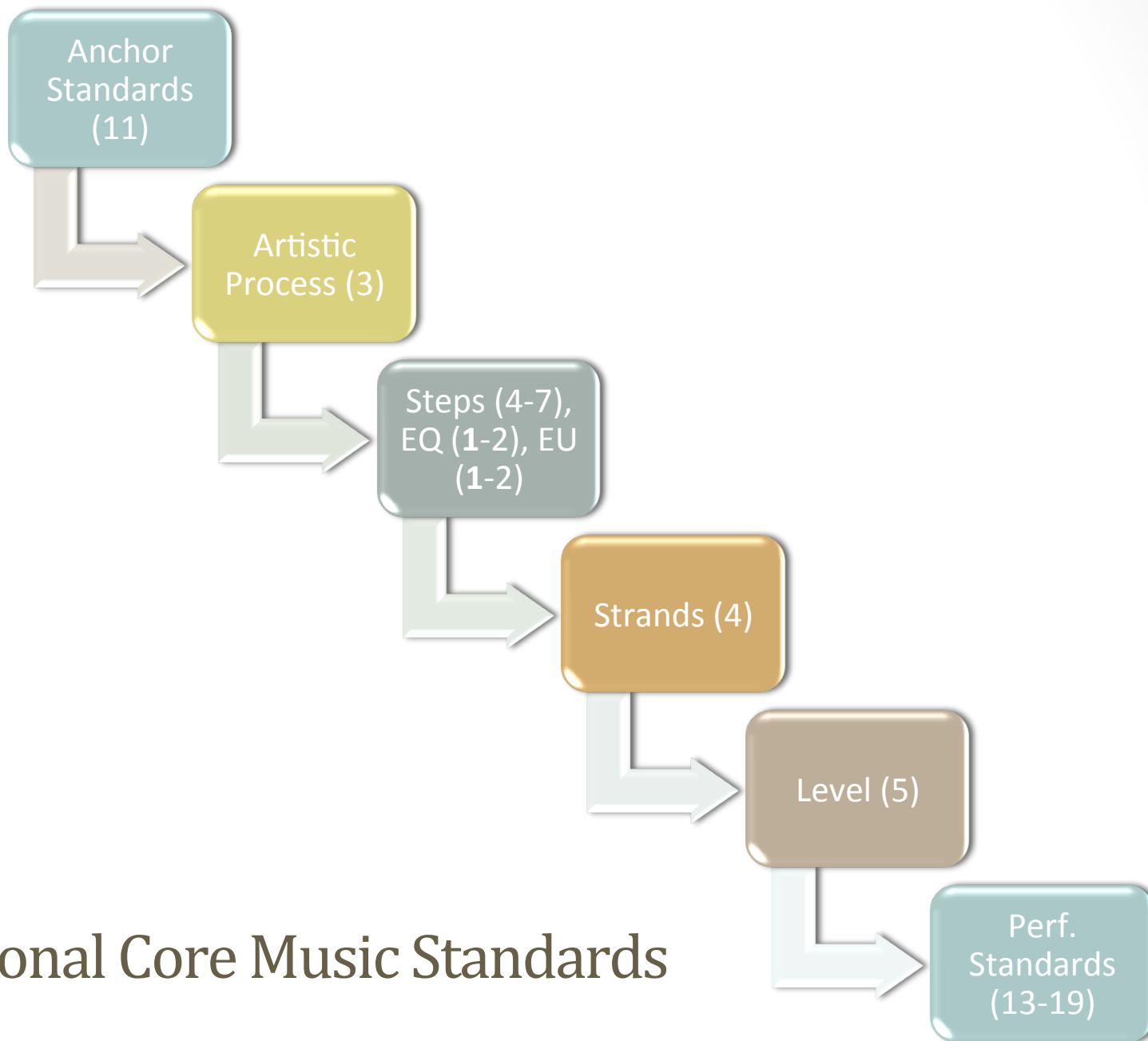


# ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

# The 1994 National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

(as cited in Rutkowski, 1989, p. 25)



# National Core Music Standards

# National Core Music Standards: Anchor Standards

- #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- #3. Refine and complete artistic work.
- #4. Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation.
- #5. Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.
- #6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- #9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

# National Core Music Standards: Artistic Process and Steps

- *Artistic Process: **Creating***
  - *Steps:* Imagine; Plan and Make; Evaluate and Refine, and Present
  - Address Anchor Standards 1-3
- *Artistic Process: **Performing***
  - *Steps:* Select; Analyze; Interpret; Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine; and Present
  - Address Anchor Standards 4-6
- *Artistic Process: **Responding***
  - *Steps:* Select; Analyze; Interpret; and Evaluate
  - Address Anchor Standards 7-9
- \*Open-ended **Connecting** outcomes
  - cross-reference to Creating, Performing, and Responding performance standards and are an essential part of each artistic process.
  - Address Anchor Standards 10-11

# National Core Music Standards: Strands & Levels

- **Four strands:**
  - Theory and History
  - Harmonizing Instruments
  - Music Technology
  - **Traditional and Emerging Ensembles**
  
- **Five levels:**
  - **Novice** (5<sup>th</sup> grade\*)
  - **Intermediate** (8<sup>th</sup> grade\*)
  - **Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced** (High School)

\*Nominally assigned

# Considerations for Addressing the Standards

## Musical/ Educational

- Tempo
- Key
- Meter
- Tonality
- Range
- Tessitura
- Language
- Style
- Voicing
- Quality

## Extra-Musical

- **Students**
  - Learning Styles
  - Attention Span
  - Interests
- **Resources**
  - Budget
  - Facilities
- **Community**
  - Values
- **Program**
  - Purpose
  - Length





# Planning for Success via Considerations

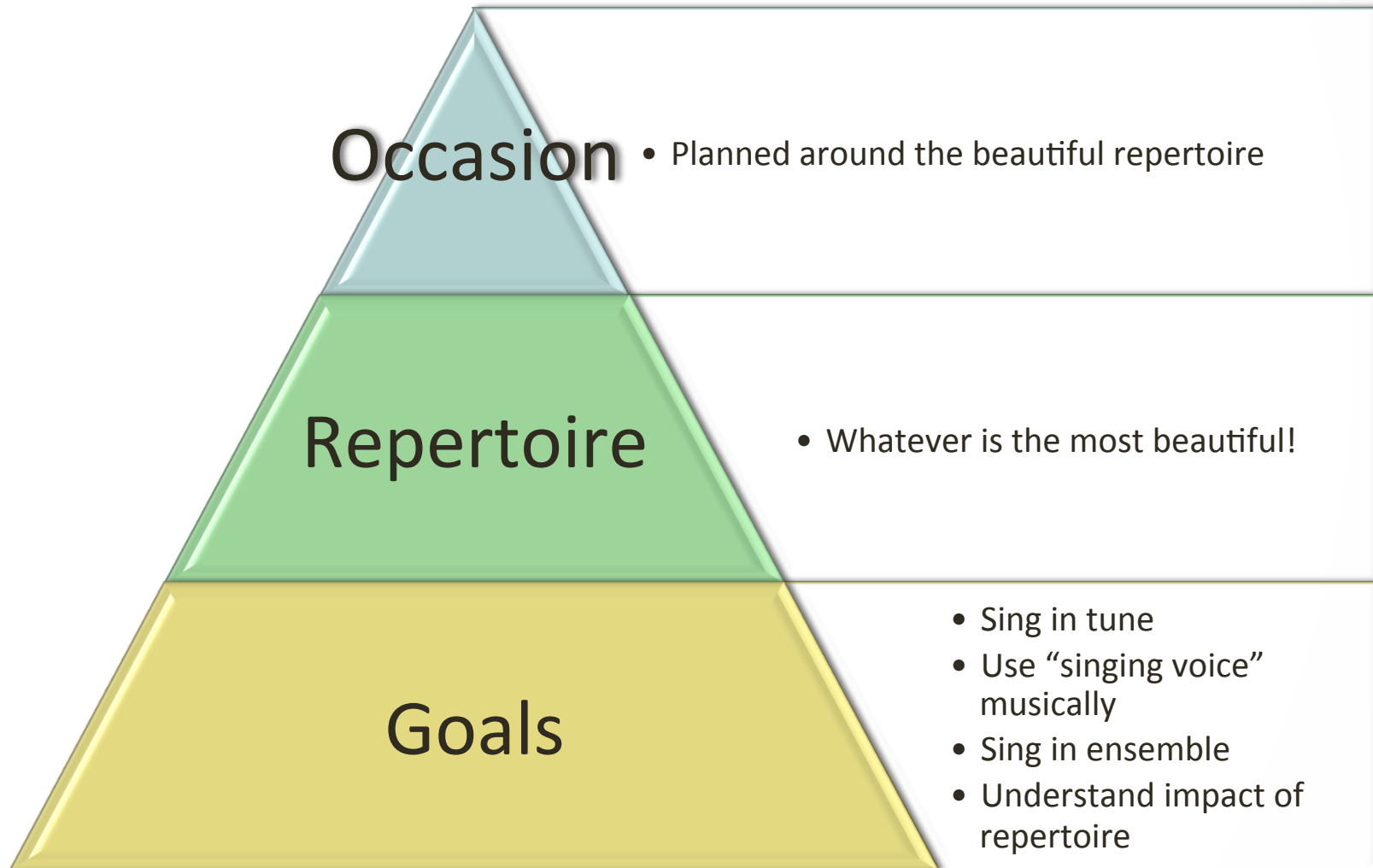
## Musical / Educational Considerations

- What should students learn?
  - Learn to sing in tune
  - Learn to use the "singing voice" musically
  - Learn to sing in ensemble
  - **Learn the influence of repertoire on audience response**  
(ACDA, 1989)

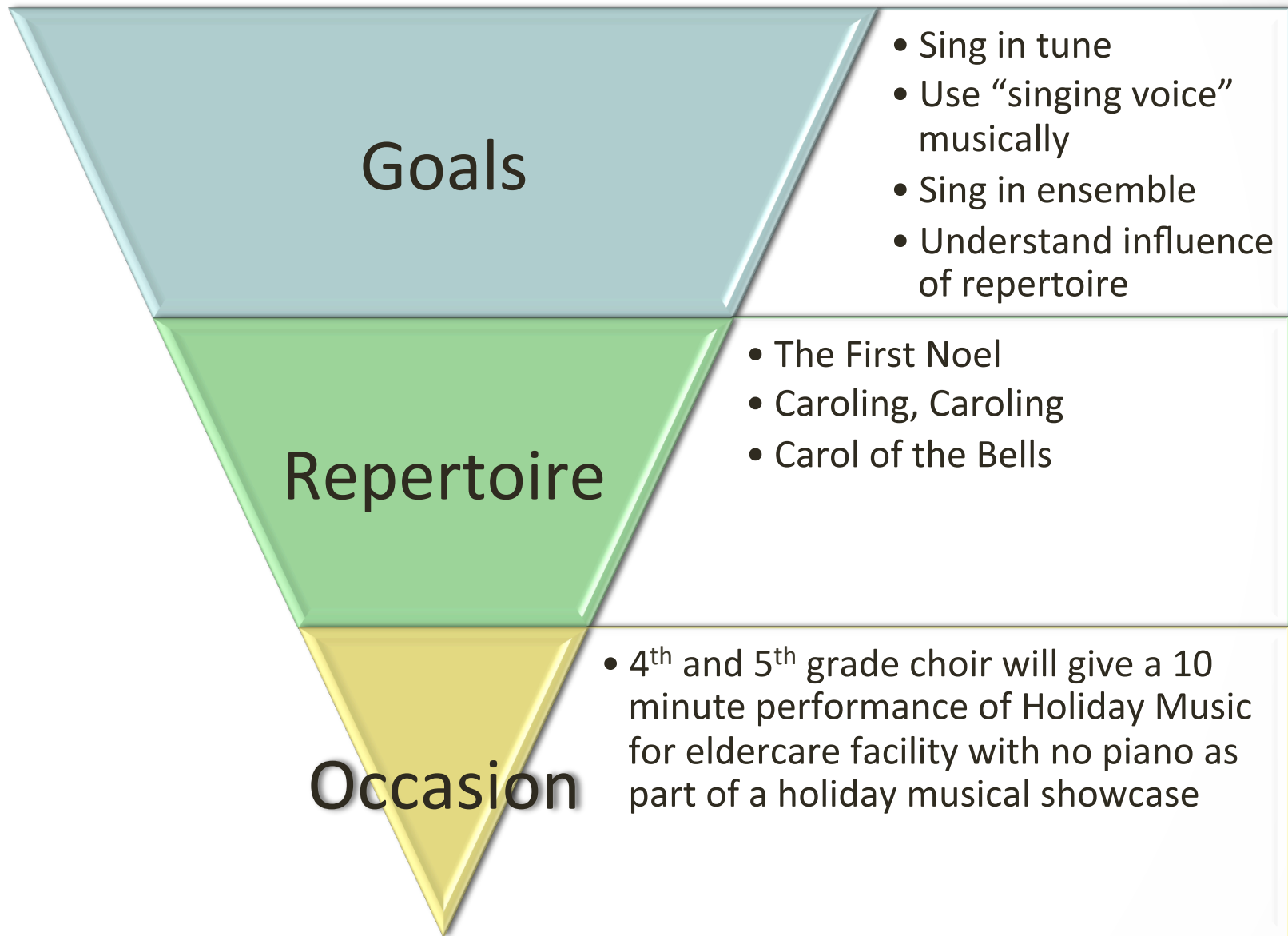
## Extra-musical Considerations

- What performances are coming up?
  - Occasion: Holiday, Spring, Memorial Day, Commemoration
  - Length
  - Facilities
  - Audience

# Planning for Success by Design



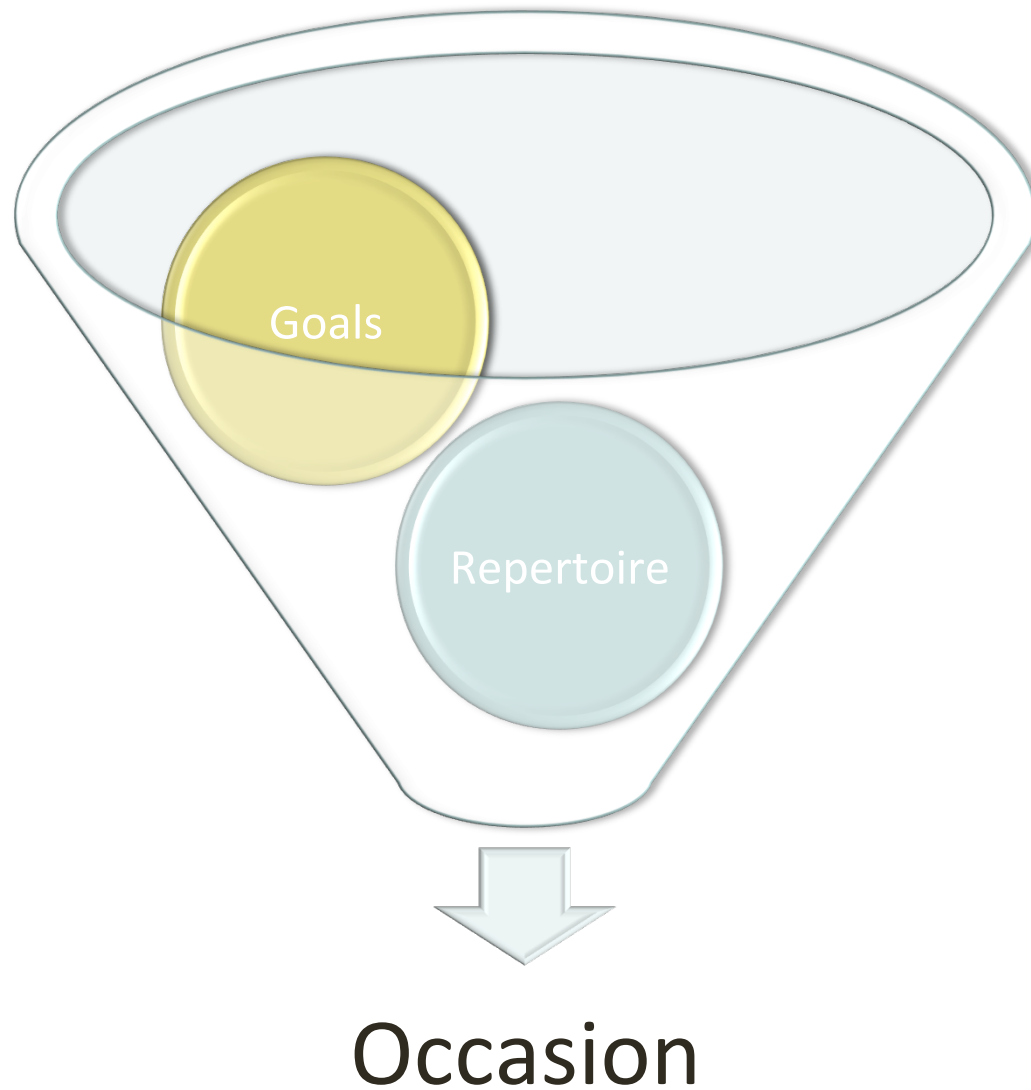
# Planning for Success by Design



# Standard Addressed When Considering an Occasion first

- **Anchor Standard:** Common Anchor #6, Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- **Artistic Process:** Performing
- **Step: Present:** Perform expressively, with appropriate interpretation and technical accuracy, and in a manner appropriate to the audience and context.
  - **Enduring Understanding:** The context and how a work is presented influence the audience response.
  - **Essential Question:** How do context and the manner in which musical work is presented influence audience response?
- **Strand:** Ensemble
- **Level:** Novice
- **Performance Standard: MU:Pr6.1.E.5a** Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music.

# Planning for Success by Design



# Additional Considerations for K-2 Choristers

- **Involve movement**
- **Scaffold learning SLOWLY**
  - 4 measures, 8 measures at a time
- **Scheduling**
  - Ask classes to meet during other music times
- **Conducting**
  - Don't be tied to a pattern
  - TEACH your gestures
- **Types of Music**
  - FUN and engaging
  - THEN beautiful and melodic
  - You have to be excited!
- **Amount of Literature**
  - LESS is MORE
  - 3 holiday, 5-7 spring
- **Voicing/Arranging**
  - Unison -> Partner Song -> Canons -> Rounds
  - Assign grades to parts
    - Arrange part music so that kindergarten always has melody
    - Give harmony to 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (**particularly 3rds**)
  - Assign verses, all sing chorus
  - Add extra voices to songs in common domain
- **Accompaniment**
  - Guitars, pianos, orchestral instruments, recordings
  - Ask accompanist to arrange for a melody
  - Senior students play
  - Choristers play instruments

# Final Thoughts

- Choosing repertoire is the **greatest task**
- Repertoire can:
  - **Enhance musicianship**
  - **Impede otherwise talented students** and
  - **Stunt musical growth**
- **Choose a few selections carefully** (Smith, 1987)
- The outcome of any repertoire should be to enhance musicianship (Smith 1987; Gackle 2006; Marshall 2005; Nix 2002)
- Overall educational value should be of the utmost importance

Thank you!

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS



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