

SONG LEADING FOR THE RELUCTANT SONG-LEADER!

Paul Weidig

Friday, April 4, 2008 4:30 – 6:00 pm

WHY:

Singing brings people together in ways that nothing else can. When we sing together, we are all equals – camper, counselor, cook, director – we are all an essential part of the whole. Our voices move together and become one thing; at times more organized and orderly than others, but one thing. We hear each other, we feel each other; we can't separate our own voice from those around us. It breaks down barriers between people, and opens doors. It can be an amazing experience, and one that continues to unite us long after the song has stopped.

The task of the song leader is to create the environment, and the moment, that allows the magic to take place. It can be raucous, tender, surprising, comfortable – but at all times safe, fun, and satisfying!

WHO:

Anyone. You don't have to sing well, you just need to be willing to truly lead! Take charge of the song – it's gives them the confidence to follow. Have help. Get people involved. It's about the group, not you.

WHEN / WHERE:

Places that are enclosed and comfortable invite participation; where it's easy for them to see and hear you. The more you sing in these "safe" settings, the more likely they are to sing during other parts of the camp day.

WHAT:

Be sure to do songs that give them a chance to really sound good! (in addition to the fun, goofy ones). Cover a wide range; mix it up.

HOW:

By ear, "repeat after me," songbooks, projected words – different ways for different types of songs. Arrange them so they work in your setting. Make them easy and accessible. Break the songs down – chorus, then verses – let their skill build. Remember: participation is primary; it's the experience we're after. Be playful! It keeps them interested. It's not how good they are, it's how many are singing.

WITH:

Accompaniment can help, or hurt. Whether using guitar or piano, give them rhythm, rather than correct notes. Remember: music is 80% rhythm... maybe more! We want them to be "feeling" the song, not "thinking" about the notes!

MOST IMPORTANT:

HAVE FUN! Have a plan – for the song, and the song session. The start - the middle - the end. If you take suggestions, fit them into your plan. Just like a hike, you need to know where you're going. Control the pace and the mood; make them secure and comfortable in your leadership.

THE BIG TOOLS AND TIPS

- PRACTICE – be ready, and comfortable, with how you do the song.
- SPEED – fast or slow, but be steady.
- BOYS / GIRLS / BOTH – what’s different; what’s the same?
- KEY – do you fit you, or the group? Get help? How can you tell?
- LISTEN – notice how they sound; respond to the group you have.
- ACTIONS – use your body to LEAD! Show them what’s coming.
- TAKE LIBERTIES – choruses, verses, repeats!
- DYNAMICS – lead them through loud, soft, start, stop.
- YOU – confidence vs. talent; making yourself comfortable.
- BONUS: THE SECRET TO GOOD SINGING – Breathing!!! (that’s it!)

“Songs are funny things. They can slip across borders, proliferate in prisons, and penetrate hard shells. I believe that the right song at the right moment can change history.” – *Pete Seeger*

“A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.” - *Maya Angelou*

”Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” - *Red Auerbach*

“Without music, life is a journey through a desert.” - *Pat Conroy*

”If you can walk you can dance. If you can talk you can sing.” - *Zimbabwe Proverb*

“Music is an outburst of the soul. ” - *Frederick Delius*

"Do, or do not. There is no try." - *Yoda*

“I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing.” - *William James*

“Those who wish to sing always find a song.” - *Proverb*

“Some days there won't be a song in your heart. Sing anyway.” - *Emory Austin*

“As long as we live, there is never enough singing.” - *Martin Luther*

“The total person sings, not just the vocal chords.” - *Esther Broner*

”Country music is three chords, and the truth.” - *Harlan Howard*

“If we just start and end at the same time, it'll sound pretty good!” – *Paul Weidig*