

**The relationship of mindfulness breathing exercises to performance
anxiety and vocal technique in high school choir**

by

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Abstract

A key component of mindfulness is the practice of breathing exercises. Few studies have examined the relationship between mindfulness-based breathing and improved singing technique. My objective was to study this response, particularly among students experiencing heightened performance anxiety, and to develop exercises that would promote positive mental agility.

To begin this project, I conducted an informal survey of thirty-eight vocalists in our Advanced Treble and Chamber Choirs to understand their firsthand experiences of difficulties with breath support under performance pressure. Based on that information, I developed specific warm-ups for the two rehearsals leading up to our contest and concert performances. Each exercise stems from Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) interventions, designed from the singer's perspective, focusing on sustaining long phrases, building breath awareness, and the performer's body alignment. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the developer and founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, explains that mindfulness in education is the domain of being, rather than the domain of doing (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

At the conclusion of the performance cycle, students had the opportunity to share personal narratives reflecting on their experiences with mindfulness breathing. Through my newfound self-awareness, I have discovered the importance of intentionality when implementing these exercises. Mindful breathing supports focus and mental stamina, especially under the pressure of adjudicated performances. This takes students to a vulnerable place, and it is imperative to do so with authenticity as an educator. Additionally, it is promising that these mindfulness breathing exercises could promote the longevity of a healthier vocal singing technique when integrated with year-long curriculum goals. My design was to create a well-

developed guide or series of lessons that incorporates the partnership between MBSR and vocal pedagogy, serving the whole-child body, mind, and breath.

My development as a teacher during my Master's program has transformed my philosophy and pedagogy. Attention to different learner modalities not only redesigned my rehearsal scaffolding and long-range planning, but also has helped me individualize instruction to meet students' needs as they become well-rounded young adults and musicians. My goal as an educator is to provide lifelong resources that enhance students' focus and support effective learning. During my study of vocal pedagogy, I wanted to explore methods for developing healthy singing techniques. The concepts we cover include isolating vocal faults, identifying them accurately, and establishing tools that choral directors can use to address them during rehearsal. This report illustrates how MBSR exercises and activities integrate with strategies that enhance both a singer's vocal production and emotional artistry. This is the culmination of my coursework and demonstrates the vision that drives my educational ideology.

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I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the students at Glendale High School. Your consistent dedication and drive for success have challenged me to explore innovative ideas in our classroom. Your willingness to grow not only as musicians but as young adults has inspired me to be better. Implementing mindfulness practices has truly transformed my perspective as your director and has even further deepened my admiration for this choir family. Always remember: “I am awesome. I am talented. I belong here. I am ready!”

Dedication

This report is dedicated to my partner, my husband, and my friend, Josh Tracy. Thank you for bringing mindfulness to my world and for supporting this journey. I could not have done this without your love and encouragement.

Preface

Performance anxiety overwhelms the body and can often disrupt the natural breathing cycle of a performer. Singers in my classroom struggle with breath management in high-stress situations. I want to explore healthy and sustainable breathing exercises that combat this phenomenon and provide singers with the tools to overcome poor breath support induced by anxiety. My learning prior to this report focused on mindfulness strategies and their impact on students' social and emotional health. Studies have shown a correlation among mindfulness practices, de-escalation techniques, and classroom management strategies.

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Introduction

Education is the foundation upon which everything else in our society rests. It is the empowerment of knowledge that informs future generations. If done with intentionality, education can positively impact civilization. This teaching philosophy will outline several beliefs and values that influence my perspective as an educator. At the foundation, humanity is a key focus, and teaching the whole child through music education can equally develop both the intellectual and the emotional literacy of our communities.

Philosophy of Formal Education

There are essential functions of a formal education system that are necessary for a sustainable society. First and foremost, education should be available and equitable for all. It is a human right to receive an education. A formal system should be designed with resources and curricula that encourage critical thinkers and well-informed citizens. The concept of schooling and the classroom provides social interactions that teach behavior by building connections. John Dewey believed that education is not something imposed from without; instead, children should be dynamic agents in the acquisition of knowledge (Hodges, 2016, p.188). Systematic engagement requires experiences that are designed with active learning in mind. This is a core component of the framework for education in America today.

The value of education is evident across generations of advances in academic development. As society refines educational institutions, it also evolves to meet the students' needs. Education is a public service intended to help students become well-rounded individuals. Although the content has changed over hundreds of years of formalized education, the core purpose remains the same. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire said it best in his book on critical

pedagogy, “What the educator does in teaching is to make possible for the students to become themselves” (Freire, 2018, p. 51). The purpose of formal education is to foster a learning environment that supports and enables students to grow into the best versions of themselves.

Along with the establishment of education, specifically public education, there is a need for resources that support such a system. A large part of education now includes emotional and behavioral health. This perception of education encompasses the full scope of a child's developmental needs, promoting long-term development and success. To serve students in this capacity, advocacy for specialized learning is paramount.

Philosophy of Music Education

Music is a form of knowledge in the sense of self. We as humans use music as an outlet to process complex emotions. Music makes us more empathetic, and that empathy manifests itself in humanity. This knowledge is only obtainable through art. With music, we can convey a variety of emotions, feelings, or moods. Whether listening to or performing a piece of music, it gives an identity to those expressed emotions. Maxine Greene made the point that the beauty and emotion of an aesthetic object, such as music, are not external physical things, but are created in the mind (Hodges, 2016, p. 64). This allows us to respond to music with sensitivity, guided by emotional values and our theoretical understanding of its beauty.

Music education enlightens this experience. To conceptualize music for learning, we must balance the emotional art of teaching with the intellectual. Nelson Goodman agrees that art can be valued for illuminating the human experience. “The arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding” (Goodman, 1978, p. 102). Music education provides us with a structured way to academically enhance a child’s perceptions.

Music classrooms provide communities where students are seen and feel safe. This environment allows students to share in moments that nurture personal and communal well-being. This musicking experience encompasses many social aspects that build character through musicianship. Within these experiences, students acquire musical and artistic literacy. A praxial approach balances action and reflection as simultaneous parts of learning.

Connection Between Education and Music Education

Educational systems are designed to impart knowledge and skills that prepare individuals not only for the workforce but also for social and personal development. Together, these elements shape the cognitive growth and cultural traditions of civilization. Music can integrate critical thinking, problem-solving, and core subjects through meaningful real-world experiences.

Music teaching and learning synthesizes people, processes, and products, a concept David Elliot called social praxis. He stated that students should be engaged in “critically reflective action dedicated to supporting and advancing human flourishing and well-being, the ethical care of others, and the positive transformation of people’s daily lives” (Elliot & Silverman, 2014, p. 52). Music education offers a holistic approach to understanding music, actively engaging with it, and thoughtfully reflecting on shared musical experiences.

The purpose of music in education is to teach the shared civic, ethical, and cultural traditions of society. This is crucial for fostering empathetic citizens. Music education is relevant within school systems because it exemplifies the harmonious nature of human character. Aristotle recognized that music should be included in education because it is “an amusement and a refreshment... a service in the conduct of life and an assistant to prudence” (Aristotle, 350 BCE). Music education can joyfully engage students and positively impact their pursuit of personal virtue.

Relevant Issues

The educational system is meant to enhance the lives of all its students. A continuing limitation across schools of thought is a lack of respect for diversity. As educational reform shifts, divisions over race, equity, and cultural competence persist. Through the social praxis of the music classroom, teachers can integrate ethical sociocultural contexts into music teaching and learning. Music education can help cultivate compassionate, kind-hearted citizens. Dewey summarizes this by stating, “Art is not the possession of a few writers, painters, musicians; it is the authentic expression of any and all humanity” (Dewey, 2005, p. 35). As teachers, we have a professional responsibility to celebrate students' diversity intentionally and to be considerate towards all humankind.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

My educational philosophy aligns with program goals that focus on comprehensive cognitive development. At the forefront of my teaching, I prioritize students' positive mental health. I incorporate social and emotional well-being alongside artistic expression. I believe that unity of the body and mind improves a singer's vocal technique. Performing with emotional depth requires vulnerability, and to protect that, we must facilitate environments of acceptance.

Throughout my experience in the classroom, I have observed how breath affects a young musician's focus and body awareness. When practiced authentically, breath can support self-regulation. Boston and Cook call this the responsive breath, noting that “Our breath is closely related to all elements of our humanity... to our internal and external environments, and to our psychic responses to those environments such as intuitions, inspirations, and thoughts” (Boston & Cook, 2009, p. 185). The connection and cultivation of humanity outlined in this teaching philosophy will be reflected through the rehearsals of the following chapter.

Chapter 2 - Rehearsal Plans

Mindfulness activities have been shown to enhance students' focus and support effective learning. Rather than emptying the mind, mindfulness promotes accepting the present experience, allowing for thoughtful responses. Mindfulness is used today to reduce stress and improve focus. In a mixed methods study from 2021, Czajkowski, Greasley, and Allis investigated the effects of the Mindfulness for Singers course on vocalists' music education and performance. They found that upon the completion of the eight-week course, students “described more focus and attention, positive effects of increased body awareness on singing technique, enhanced socio-collaborative relationships, reductions in performance anxiety, and benefits whilst performing, such as more expressivity and enjoyment” (Czajkowski et al., 2021, p. 1). The authors note that a future study would be useful to investigate which individual mindfulness exercises are most effective for different aspects of singing.

The following rehearsal plans integrate mindfulness breathing and social-emotional strategies into a rehearsal warm-up routine. It is important to note how I address the value of time during a rehearsal. Overall, educators may be hesitant about whether mindfulness is a worthwhile investment during a rehearsal or lesson. To combat this, I designed a blended instruction that is embedded into the standard steps of a daily warm-up routine. This cohesive system allows teachers to adapt and incorporate strategies tailored to students' needs without sacrificing precious rehearsal time before big performances. The first rehearsal plan takes place just before an adjudicated contest performance, while the second takes place just before a concert performance. Focused goals include sustained breath support, vocal technique, and body posture, with an awareness of physical and mental health in the context of performance anxiety.

The graph below shows each skill-building practice and how it was specifically applied to meet the needs of my rehearsal plans. It is listed with the exercise name, the related educational study, and the application to the music goals of the rehearsal. Study name: MBSR represents Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), and SEL represents Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2021).

Table 2.1 Skill Building Practices

SKILL-BUILDING PRACTICES		
Exercise	Study	Application
Body Scan	MBSR	Body alignment, posture, and focus
Three Breaths	MBSR	Stress reduction and physical awareness
Box Breathing	MBSR	Breath support and self-management
Nostril Breaths	MBSR	Resonance of tone and vocal anatomy
Affirmations	SEL	Intrapersonal efficacy and confidence

Rehearsal Plan 1

2014 Music National Standards

Perform - MU:Pr5.3.E.IIa Develop and apply appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music and evaluate their success.

Connect - MU:Cn11.0.T.IIa Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students are preparing for their MSHSAA large ensemble contest performance. Their prior knowledge includes a foundation in notes and rhythms in their literature and an understanding of the regulation procedures for the sight-reading portion of this adjudication.

Rehearsal Objectives

1. After completing the Box Breathing exercise, students will be able to apply core breath support to sustain four-bar phrases in the repertoire.
2. Students will practice strong diaphragmatic breathing during Three Breaths to reinforce the consistent development of tone throughout the rehearsal.
3. After completing the Affirmations, students will be mentally focused and positively energized for the discipline required in their sight-reading strategies.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

Each of these objectives is ongoing in the preparations for this contest performance. The assessments for this rehearsal were informal, using an aural evaluation of students' ability to maintain consistent tone production and breath management over longer phrases. Regarding affirmations, this informal assessment will be based on my observation of students' behavior and engagement as we transition from the warm-up rehearsal into sight-reading exercises.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Many 11th-grade students in this class will be taking an EOC (End-of-Course Exam) during the first part of the rehearsal. Modifications may be needed to review mindfulness exercises throughout the latter part of the lesson once all students have returned to class.

Instructional Materials and Resources

Mindfulness breathing exercises: Three Breaths and Box (Square) Breathing.

Affirmations: Glendale Choir Affirmations Poster

Figure 2.1 Glendale Choir Affirmations



Note: These four affirmations reframe negative thoughts and build self-esteem.

Rehearsal Plan 1 – Warm-ups for Contest

Table 2.2 Contest Rehearsal Plan

Time	Exercise	Purpose of Exercise	Sequence	Assessment
30 sec	Vocalizations	Register awareness	Activation	Passaggio of tessitura
30 sec	Body Scan	Physical awareness	Direct Instruction	Vertical alignment
1-2 min	Three Breaths	Diaphragmatic breathing	Guided Practice	Supported tone
2-3 min	Box Breathing	Breath management	Guided Practice	Sustained phrasing
1-2 min	Affirmations	Social-emotional	Independent Application	Attitude towards performance

Post Rehearsal Reflections

The goals of this rehearsal were to review proper body posture for performance, engage core breathing to support tone, and mentally prepare for sight-singing. The students learned expectations for good posture that allow the breathing mechanism to function efficiently. Instructional strategies included guided practice of two mindfulness breathing exercises, with assessments that tied back to the rehearsal of the repertoire. Listening for tone connection with the breath, full sustained phrases, and agility when crossing the passaggio (voice break) are ways to build formative assessments into the rehearsal that reinforce the warm-up. The continuation of adjustments to this instruction will be based on effectiveness and conceptual mastery. This instruction expanded my social and emotional goals within a blended curriculum that has the potential also to enhance students' vocal technique throughout my teaching practice.

Rehearsal Plan 2

2014 Music National Standards

Perform - MU:Pr5.3.E.IIa Develop and apply appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music and evaluate their success.

Present - MU:Pr6.1.E.IIa Demonstrate mastery of the technical demands and an understanding of expressive qualities of the music in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire representing diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students have competed at the MSHSAA large-ensemble contest and the Music in the Parks Festival. Their understanding of the repertoire emphasizes poetic phrasing, dynamic contrasts, musical form, and cultural connections.

Rehearsal Objectives

1. After completing the Body Scan, students will be able to self-assess areas of tension and redirection using relaxation techniques.
2. Students will practice the three stages of natural breathing using Three Breaths and be able to control the suspension of breath consciously.
3. After completing the Alternate Nostril Breath exercise, students will be able to utilize skills related to the repertoire's style using vocal anatomy identification.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

Each of these objectives is ongoing in the preparations for this concert performance. Many assessments for this rehearsal were informal, focusing on students' self-assessment of postural tension and on physical awareness to consciously manage their breath suspension. My informal assessment will be an aural evaluation of the ensemble's tone in relation to the repertoire's style and diction. One formal assessment will involve students giving feedback during the alternate nostril breathing exercise, allowing them to share sensations that help identify when the nasal passage is active.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

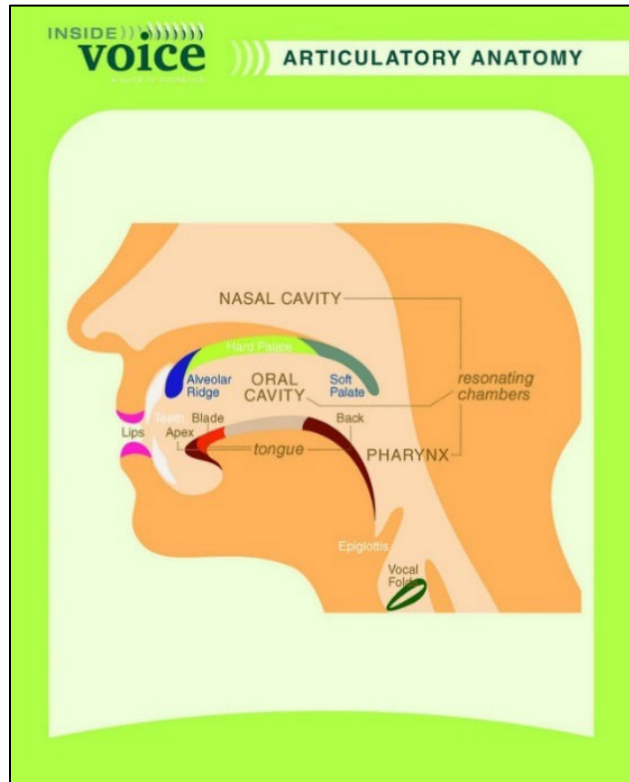
During this rehearsal, most of the lessons will be led by my student teacher as he prepares his piece for the upcoming choir concert. Given that my time with the ensemble is brief, there will be modifications to pacing and intentionality to address feedback from our recent adjudicated performances.

Instructional Materials and Resources

Mindfulness breathing exercises: Three Breaths and Alternate Nostril Breaths.

Vocal Anatomy: Articulatory Anatomy - Phonetics Poster

Figure 2.2 Articulatory Anatomy



Note: From *Phonetics Poster* [Photograph], by Bruce Myher, 2010, Flickr (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/34125897@N08/4689080430>). CC by 4.0.

Rehearsal Plan 2 – Warm-ups for Concert

Table 2.3 Concert Rehearsal Plan

Time	Exercise	Purpose of Exercise	Sequence	Assessment
30 sec	Body Scan	Physical awareness	Direct Instruction	Performance posture
2-3 min	Three Breaths	Stamina of breath	Guided Practice	Hold suspension
1-2 min	Alternate Nostril Breaths	Tone placement	Guided Practice	Vocal anatomy identification
1-2 min	Student Share Out	Response to learning	Reflection	Self-assessment
30 sec	Alternate Nostril Breaths	Redirection of air	Independent Application	Resonance of tone

Post Rehearsal Reflections

The goals of this rehearsal were to release postural tension, isolate the suspension of breath, and demonstrate proper resonance for our repertoire. The students learned how to identify the nasal passage in the context of articulatory anatomy. Instructional strategies included guided practice of two mindfulness breathing exercises, along with self-assessment and reflection on students' experiences. Appropriate nasal tone and stamina during the rehearsal will guide formative assessments that reinforce the warm-up. Moving forward, adjustments to this instruction will focus on diagnosing and correcting vocal problems in adolescent high school singers. This instruction has further drawn a correlation between mindfulness and vocal technique within my teaching practice.

Student Journal Reflections

At the conclusion of our performance season, students were allowed to share their own personal narratives. The prompt for this assignment was twofold.

1. Recall an experience/story when breathing exercises affected your sustained breath support, vocal technique, or body posture while singing.
2. Recall an experience/story when breathing exercises affected your mental health during performance anxiety at a contest or during a concert.

Three students volunteered to submit their writing for this Master's Report. Their varied performances share similar experiences from honor choir auditions, a choir concert, and a state solo contest, each of which greatly underscores the value of this teaching.

Figure 2.3 Student Reflection Journal 1

There have been many times when the breathing exercises Tracy taught us has helped me. A big time that it helped me was when I was about to audition for Honor Choir. I was very anxious and didn't want to go in the room with the fear I was going to fail. Tracy saw this and came up to me helping me breathe through the stress. Soon, I was able to regularly take a deep breath without any shakiness or fear. While before I had been close to crying I later had not a single tear. Tracy has been so influential in the many years that I have known her. She had taught us many ways to breathe and calm down. Whenever I begin to feel stressed about anything, I use the exercises that Tracy has taught me to help me calm down so I can think regularly and begin to figure out how to further help myself.

Figure 2.4 Student Reflection Journal 2

My sophomore year of high school, I was given a solo at Glendale's winter choir concert. I was struggling with stage fright, I could do my solo perfectly in the shower, or a practice room but the moment I was in front of my peers, my chin would quiver and my eyes would well up. I would start uncontrollably shaking and almost hyperventilating. I would sing and each note would come out just shy of correct. A week before the concert I started doubting my ability to perform. During a Rehearsal I expressed my anxiety to Mrs. Tracy and she brought me in front of the class placed two hands on each of my shoulders and coached me through four deep breaths. With each breath my anxiety melted away, and my shakes began to calm. Our accompanist plucked the introduction to the song and Mrs. Tracy maintained eye contact and whispered words of encouragement. With one final deep breath I started my solo, I sang it with perfection and confidence. My anxiety did not go away after that but I learned how to manage it through deep breaths. At the concert on stage I took a deep breath, stood straight, and focused on perfecting each note. That night I sang my solo the best I ever had. My family had no idea I was nervous, everyone in the audience said that I looked comfortable and ready. Taking a moment to become in tune with my body and mind before singing improved my technique and assuaged my worries. I am forever grateful for Mrs. Tracy teaching me how to prepare myself, as it is a useful tool in all aspects of life.

Figure 2.5 Student Reflection Journal 3

When I was on the bus to state for my solo I was so nervous, I was the first one to perform and have never been to state before. Mrs Tracy sat by me and helped me control my breathing with box breaths and reminded me what the right way to breathe was when singing because anxiety makes me forget sometimes. Those things get me into the right headspace and make a huge difference. She said the I statements with me, "I am awesome, I belong here, I am ready" those words help me so much with my esteem and my confidence in the work I've done. I love Mrs. Tracy so much and it's the little things she does that make the biggest difference in myself and my singing.

The student reflection journals provide clear examples of exercises that have supported both breath management and positive mental health during periods of performance anxiety. Students have learned the strategies and tools that they can use to help them feel better in stressful or anxious situations. A recurring theme in these reflections is the applicability of regulation exercises as a lifelong skill.

Upon further review, an area of examination would reflect musicality. More specifically, I would reflect on how MBSR exercises influenced the repertoire through the integration of vocal technique. This report has demonstrated that these exercises enhance emotional artistry. Moving forward, I can implement mindfulness exercises more pragmatically, employing strategies that enhance a singer's vocal production. My goal would be to create a more intentional longitudinal culture, channeling it into the classroom's future development.

I am proud of the work on this Master's Report and optimistic about its outcomes. Looking ahead, I am eager to explore other mindfulness exercises for choir and to advocate for mental health in the arts classroom.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

My time in the Master's program at K-State has truly re-energized my teaching. After completing my Bachelor's degree, it took me ten years to finally find the confidence to go back to school. This program is designed so that I can take my learning and immediately apply it in my own teaching, in my classroom, and in my personal life. The direct success of that influence comes from the kindhearted community at K-State, the hybrid learning model for this Master of Music Education, and the specific coursework that challenged my beliefs and brought new perspectives to my scholarly academia.

The first class that really began to shift my pedagogy was Theories of Music Teaching. Several intriguing aspects of this course challenged me to recognize diverse learning styles among my students. In the group project portion, I was assigned to create a presentation and report on the Growth Mindset. This theory resonated with my beliefs as an educator, and even more so as a new parent. While teaching my high school students and raising my toddler, I felt a connection to Growth Mindset. As Carol Dweck, the developer of the theory, states, "Students engage deeply with the power of 'yet'" (Dweck, 2014). As someone who battled with imposter syndrome early in my career, I struggled with self-confidence. Going back to school to get this degree was a long process that took many years and a pandemic to overcome. The idea that I, too, can still grow as a learner ultimately led me to discover my own power of 'yet' throughout the Master's program. This culmination has marked the beginning of what feels like a new chapter in my career.

Teachers wear many hats. From designing lessons and assessing data to classroom management, parent communications, travel, finances, etc. The one part of the job that has become a calling for me is social and emotional health in teens. As someone who works with

underprivileged populations, I have seen how anxiety, depression, academic pressures, and social dynamics take a toll. We must build supportive environments, break the stigma, and provide stress management programs and strategies. I started to wonder how to proactively help my students. I asked, “Is there a way I can integrate support systems into my teaching?” That was when Growth Mindset, Social and Emotional Learning, and Mindfulness theories began to take on value in my daily rehearsals.

Interest sparked passion, pairing these views into an educational philosophy. Going through my Master's forced me to rethink and reprioritize. I want to be a role model in empathy and self-compassion. To do that, it was important to experience my own journey with mindfulness. As defined in Patricia A. Jennings' book, “Mindfulness for Teachers,” mindfulness is being fully present and engaged in the moment, without judgment. It involves being aware of thoughts, feelings, and surroundings with an open mind. Jennings addresses the emotional art of teaching: “Education became the very transmission of culture that allowed humans to adapt to a wide variety of environments” (Jennings, 2015, p. 35). This reflection of society and education became the new foundation of my teaching framework.

During the second summer at K-State in my Research in Music Education class, we were given a series of assignments to explore multiple types of research on a topic we found engaging. This opened the door to discovering studies that aligned with my theories. Research has demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness in music practice. In the article “Mindfulness for Singers: A Mixed Methods Study” from the *Music and Science Journal*, there is clear data that aligns with themes of mindset changes, effects on musicianship skills, and effects on personal and interpersonal skills. The research is well-versed regarding the benefits of performance anxiety and its connection to emotional withitness. Participants reported that they had developed

greater acceptance of their experience of MPA (Music Performance Anxiety) symptoms, accepting them in a non-judgmental way (Czajkowski et al., 2021, p.11). However, the article does not identify specific mindfulness strategies or exercises that were implemented most effectively for the different elements of singing. I wanted to see this outlined as a curriculum or rehearsal plan that voice teachers and choir directors could utilize. This piqued my curiosity about mindfulness practices, specifically those that were both successful and resourceful.

That same summer at K-State, I took an Advanced Vocal Pedagogy course that changed my thinking about vocal health and its relationship to technique. In my reflection on the musical capabilities of my choir program, I identified consistent areas for improvement in our adjudicated performances: balance, blend, and tone. After spending years adjusting my teaching practices to address these areas, it was not until I took this Vocal Pedagogy class that my mindset shifted toward the value of incorporating vocal technique into the rehearsal. While studying James C. McKinney's text, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*, I quickly drew a connection between mindfulness breathing exercises, and the breath-support exercises musicians use. McKinney points out in his chapter on breathing and support that correct procedures are a foundation of technique. "Do not yield to the temptation to move to more interesting tonal and musical goals before posture and breathing are secure technically" (McKinney, 2005, p.57).

Through this discovery, I identified a gap in the body of mindfulness research that also aligned with an area I wanted to prioritize and improve in my own choir program. Connecting vocal techniques that support a healthy tone with social and emotional health strategies is the key essence of this Master's Report. Jane Boston and Rena Cook outline the body-mind-breath relationship clearly in their text, *Breath in Action*.

The close connection the body and vocal tract have with the emotional centres of the brain is a major determining factor both on mindset and the ability to perform well under pressure. Performance anxiety and breath lie at the heart of our ability to think positively and control our nerves. This profound inter-relationship between the mind, breath, and performance continually affects our daily lives, both through self-image and self-esteem. (Boston & Cook, 2009, p.94)

The collective ideas from several courses in this Master's program have reshaped my view of teaching. I have enjoyed sharing insights from this Master's Report with other professionals in the field. I have been grateful for the opportunity to present this topic at the Missouri Choral Directors Conference, the Tri-M Music Summit Conference through the Missouri Music Educators Association, and to be featured in the Webinar Series for the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education. None of that would have been possible without the wonderful influence of the faculty and staff at Kansas State University.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the transformation the Master of Music has brought about for me. I leave this program reinvigorated, no longer living in imposter syndrome. The journey through each class has awakened my rehearsal strategies, revised my educational mission, and solidified my purpose as a teacher and lifelong learner.

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