



Seasoned or New – We Are All in This Together!

By Billy Talley, President

By the time you read this, I will have experienced my 36th First Day of School. And even though I already know most of the students in my choirs, I will still be nervous. I will have trouble sleeping the night before school begins. I will wake up very early. I will worry about what I should wear (guys, don't judge me!). My palms will sweat when that opening bell rings. The students will file into the choir room and make their way to the risers. I will sit at the piano and begin a vocal warm-up and all will be well in the universe!

For many of our colleagues across the state, this will be their FIRST First Day of School. They will experience everything I mentioned earlier except the last line: all will NOT be well in their universe. They will be unsure. They will be anxious about being accepted by their students and their peers. They will be overwhelmed by all of the administrative minutia that comes with the job. They will feel isolated and alone and hopeless. They will question their decision to ever become a choral director. And that is where we come in.

There is someone close to where you teach that needs your support. They might be in the same region, same school district, or even the same school as you. So offer your time to a rookie to answer their questions, fill them in on upcoming deadlines, and talk to them about classroom discipline, procedures, and choral literature. If nothing else, just be there to listen. Be a friend. Be a mentor. Make yourself available to someone who may be struggling. You may be the difference for whether that young director continues to teach or finds another direction for their lives.

For those of you who are just beginning in this wonderful profession, please remember this:

- You can do this job.
- You are well-trained to teach choral music.
- You will not have all the answers (ever!).
- You will make many mistakes, but you will get better.
- Your bag of tricks may be empty, but you will learn quickly what works and what does not.
- It is OK to ask for help.
- You are the choral music authority in your school.
- You are making a difference in the lives of your students, even on days it doesn't seem so.
- You will not become a master teacher overnight. Be patient with yourself.

We have all felt the things you will feel. DON'T GIVE UP!!! If you cannot find someone in your region to help you, please feel free to contact me. I will help if I possibly can. My email is billy.talley@amaisd.org. If you know a first year choral director that needs some encouragement, please copy this and send to them. Those of us who have been around the block a few times have a responsibility to reach out to our young directors. They can benefit from our experience and our lives will be enriched as well. We are all in this together!