



## **The All-State Choir, is it worth it? And, will making the All-State Choir make a difference on a college music audition?**

By Randall Hooper, VP College/Community

Yes! No and But...

As I prepare for the All-State Choir camp at my university, I have once again been thinking about the Texas All-State Choir audition process and how our camp can offer the most valuable, authentic and musically satisfying experience for the campers. This summer thousands of high school students will begin the all-state choir audition process that will culminate in the all-state choir concerts at TMEA in February. These students will be competing for one of just hundreds of seats in one of the four all-state choirs. The question to ask ourselves is, are we making this a valuable education experience for our students? Even though the math will never work out to allow all of these students to have the all-state choir performance experience, what they each learn along the way is a valuable part of their music education and growth as a person. If the student simply accomplishes the successful completion of a screening audition at the individual high school level and isn't selected to move forward in the audition process, the student leaves the process with new knowledge and experience. The student has had the opportunity to learn two to three quality pieces of choral literature that otherwise would not have been pursued. The student has learned about the composer, the style of this musical genre, and improved his singing and sight reading ability. As the student progresses through the process, this education continues to compound. Students are also given the opportunity to learn independence, problem solving, and critical thinking as they prepare independently through the guidance of weekly coaching sessions with their choral teacher. With each step in the process the student must prepare with greater attention to musical details including, vocal ability and control, diction, and musical nuance. All students on the other side of the rounds of auditions, no matter how long or short their journey, come out a better musician, student and person. Although I do not believe music is a competitive sport, I do believe that healthy competition plays a positive role in a young person's development. As teachers, clinicians, vocal coaches and private voice instructors, we should work to insure our students mature and learn through each step of the series of auditions. All students can be winners throughout the process if the goal is always set on personal growth musically and personally. We need to constantly remind our students it is the process that is the most important part of the journey. The additional benefit is the mountaintop musical experience of singing with the all-state choir in rehearsal and performance.

As a university choral conductor, our department auditions to select students into our program who display the greatest potential to learn and grow as a musician at our institution. Does being a member of the all-state choir give a student an upper hand in the audition process? Not really. However, do we notice this accomplishment? Of course we do. Primarily, we concentrate on what the skills needed to navigate the rigor of the audition process demonstrates about that student's work ethic and personal drive. We are reminded through our department auditions that all students who participate in the all-state audition process (those who make it to an all-state choir and those who do not) are generally the students who have learned self-discipline to prepare for competitive auditions with vocal control, attention to diction and musical nuance on a very high level. In our auditions, we are most interested in what achieving this goal demonstrates overall about this young person's potential as a music student.

As we all enter into a new season of all-state choir rehearsals and preparation, let us continue to remind ourselves and our students what is most important to learn from the audition experience. This exercise is about growing and inspiring a new generation of musicians who have tasted excellence and can apply what they learned to all aspects of living and learning.