



Use of the Voice

Vocal Health Tips for Parents and Teachers

The SongWorks approach promotes the idea that it is of utmost importance that teachers and parents display an appropriate vocal model. Using the ideas on the following chart can help make us proper vocal models for our students.

POSTURE

Cultivate:

- A tall alignment of the body for both sitting and standing by lengthening the spine.
- A lifted rib cage, shoulders down, jaw not too high or too low.

Avoid:

- Any tension created by a straight, rigid posture.
- A sunken chest with shoulders forward and jaw hyperextended.

BREATH ENERGY AND MUSCLE

Cultivate

- Supporting your voice with breath energy and airflow.
- The balance of breath and muscle in vocal production.
- Using more breath when your voice is tired.

Avoid

- Forcing your voice with muscle and inadequate breath.
- Loud whispering with an already hoarse voice.
- Speaking in quiet tones with a lack of breath energy. For example, talking on the phone with a fatigued sound.

VOICE USE

Cultivate

- Variety in pitch, placement, pace, loudness
- Teaching strategies that allow vocal rest. For example, use nonverbal attention-getters, and schedule periods of silence.
- Warm-ups before extended voice use: sigh glides, breathing, hissing, tongue flutters, or buzzing with lips.

Avoid

- Excessive coughing, raucous laughter, throat clearing.
- Shouting or talking over loud backgrounds: recess, cafeteria, music ensembles.
- Overuse in singing or speaking: too loud, too soft, too high, too low, too long.

GENERAL HEALTH

Cultivate

- Drinking adequate amounts of water: 8 glasses daily; urine should be pale. Do not rely on thirst for drinking liquids.
- Proper nutrition and exercise.

Avoid

- Antihistamines and conditions that dry your voice and your environment.
- Smoking
- Large amounts of alcohol and caffeine: These are diuretics that dehydrate your body.
- Touching your face with your hands: Germs and viruses are easily spread to the mouth, eyes, and nose.