

TIGER TALK

Making musical connections

By Theresa Hamp
There is an unexplainable magic that happens when a choir sings. There is a different energy, an overwhelming feeling of belonging and chemistry that a singer feels from the people around them.

This energy then flows from the group into the room, capturing the hearts and minds of the listeners.

This is why I teach choir.

It has been almost five years since I was a part of the University of Jamestown Concert Choir. The first year after graduation, it felt like a part of me was missing. I didn't have that time in my day to go see all the people who brought me so much joy with their encouraging words, hugs and singing. I couldn't go to Dr. McDermid for help when I was struggling with a conducting pattern or piano piece.

I was on my own teaching K-12 vocal music and was quickly feeling like I was drowning under the workload.

That same year, I ended up taking a group of students to an honor choir event. I was able to sit back and watch the same "magic" I experienced in choir unfold before my eyes. I could see the musical "light bulbs" come on for my students as their sound improved and chords began lining up.

They all came to me during their lunch break fired up about how amazing the music was beginning to sound and how much they were learning. It hit me at that moment that it was now MY job to make that same magic happen for them!

Since then, I have made it my mission to expose my students to the world of music beyond the walls of grade school. I have brought in guest conductors ranging from community experts to college professors.

They have shared their journeys of where music has taken them and how to stay involved in music after graduation.

Taking field trips to

see musicals, performing groups and collegiate choirs have sparked so many great conversations about the aspects and levels of performance while still inspiring students to work hard and improve their skills.

I have received many emails from past students informing me that they had joined a music ensemble at their university and were loving their experiences and new friends. I hope to foster an appreciation for music and help students realize that it is a lifelong skill and hobby.

In closing, my first year as a PR-B Tiger has been nothing short of amazing. I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to come back to my home area and teach the next generation of PR-B students. I have had the opportunity to take students to participate in voice festivals, prepare them for contests and have the honor of my alma mater, the University of Jamestown Choir, making PR-B a part of their spring tour.

I was honored when they asked me to continue the tradition and join them in singing "Praise to the Lord" to end their concert in Sebeka, serving as proof that "once a Jimmie, always a Jimmie."

As a fourth-year teacher, I can finally say that I have students who will be attending the University of Jamestown for their next level of education, one of which is following my own path into music education. I could not be more proud and excited for them to experience the same camaraderie and high level of music making that I did during my time there.

It is the most fulfilling feeling to know that my experiences in music have finally come full circle. I hope that upon graduation, all of my students will come away with a love and appreciation for music and continue to learn and grow as musicians throughout their adult lives.

Theresa Hamp is the Pine River-Backus High School choir director.

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