

# Help! I'm New at This!

## *A Guideline for Assisting Teachers Work Through the Circle the State with Song Process*

Circle the State with Song is a choir festival opportunity sponsored by the Oklahoma Music Educators Association that works as a great way to build the vocal program at your school. Through your students' participation, they will become the music leaders in your choirs and provide a benchmark for good choral sound. But, if you've never had students participate in the festival before, the task of preparing and "what to do" can seem a little overwhelming.

Here is a suggested process for helping you have a positive experience that will benefit both you and your students.

1. Make sure your OkMEA/NAfME membership is current as you must be an active member to enroll your students.
2. Look on the OkMEA website to see how many students you are able to take to the festival according to your school enrollment. <http://okmea.org/circle-the-state/eligibility/>
3. Send home a note to parents explaining the process and what the festival entails including the date of your region festival and cost of your registration. This information can also be found on the website as well as a sample letter that you can download and change to fit your situation. (Look under "Circle the State with Song">"Region Coordinator Templates">"Registered Teacher Communication">"Student Recruitment Letter")
4. Begin preparing your students for your school audition. A suggested audition process would be to use the Children's All-State procedure found on the website.
5. Audition your students for your school selection. The names of your students and student registration fees must be turned in to your Region Coordinator by September 23 (1st deadline - \$30 per singer) or September 30 (2nd deadline - \$35 per singer) so it is a good idea to audition them around the 2nd week of September.
6. Once your singers are selected, send home a note of congratulations to parents. (A sample letter is available for download on the website. Look under "Circle the State with Song">"Region Coordinator Templates">"Registered Teacher Communication">"Student Acceptance Letter"). Include in the note a place for them to fill in their singer's height and t-shirt size as well as a place for them to sign showing they understand when the date of the festival will be. Make sure they are also aware of the obligations of their singers in preparing for the festival. If you have dates set for your rehearsals, include these at this time. Also, attach the downloadable Medical/Media Release Forms (found on the website) for the parents to fill out and return.

7. Go to the OkMEA website and download the CTSWS registration form. You will have to divide your singers up evenly into vocal parts. For example, if you are taking 12 students, the division would look like this: Sop - 4, Sop Mid - 2, Alto Mid - 2, Alto 4.
8. Send your registration form and fees directly to your region chair. This can be done electronically if you have a PO #. The Medical/Media Release Forms do not need to be mailed to them but you will need to hold on to these as you'll need them on the day of the festival.
9. Download the CTSWS rehearsal tracks from the website. These tracks are password protected so once you've registered your singers, your region coordinator will send you the password for access. You can then create CD's for your singers or create a shared folder via Google Drive or Dropbox for your singers to access.
10. Purchase the CTSWS packets for your singers and distribute these to them. Include in the packet a rehearsal grid asking them to practice their part of each song at least 20 times. (A rehearsal grid can be found on the website. Look under "Circle the State with Song">"Region Coordinator Templates">"Registered Teacher Communication">"Student Practice Log") Consider making this a requirement to be completed before the first live rehearsal takes place. Also, include in their packet the CTSWS notes. These can be found on the website.
11. Begin your school rehearsals. You can start these early and have them once a week for 30 minutes or start preparing 4-6 weeks ahead of time with more frequent contact time. If your singers have listened to their recordings as indicated through their practice grid, they will be better prepared and cut down on the time it takes to "learn the notes."
12. The week of the festival, distribute the festival t-shirts to your singers as well as tickets. The ticket template will be mailed to you by your region coordinator. Also, send home a note to parents covering all of the details of the festival. (A sample letter can be found on the website. Look under "Circle the State with Song">"Region Coordinator Templates">"Registered Teacher Communication">"Final Reminders Letter").

This will be an exciting experience for you and your singers! Enjoy the festival!