Understanding the Choral Assessment:
a guide for adjudicators and directors

Stage Assessment

Thank you for your interest in learning more about VMEA Choral Assessment! Whether you are an adjudicator or one whose choir will be adjudicated, this guide will help you understand the protocols of assessment.

Adjudicator training classes are offered online and through this self-diagnostic tool. Contact Mary-Hannah Klontz, mhsongbird@gmail.com or Annabelle Mills, annabelle.mills14@gmail.com to be placed on the mailing list for the training.

Here are some important points to remember:

1. For VMEA stage assessment, **Adjudicators will always give written feedback** using the provided rubric and a score of I, II, III, IV or V. **They may also be asked to record** verbal comments - these can be a supplement to written comments or vice versa. **Adjudicators may also be asked to provide a short clinic** to the choir following their performance.
2. Two songs are rated on the same form for one composite rating. Listen carefully to both rated songs for your summary commentary. A choir may also perform a warm up selection that is not to be judged, but a few comments may be made regarding this warm up piece.
3. Comments should sum up the things that are heard, rather than be a "blow by blow" commentary. Rubric terms should be used in the comments: don't assume that the recipient will make that connection. Aim for two to three strengths/weaknesses in each of the 7 categories. Adjudicators should check in with themselves and occasionally with the other judges. Are you rating all the categories or just focusing on one or two to make your judgment? It is suggested to follow this pattern when possible:
    a. Compliment
    b. Critique
    c. Course of Action
4. Use of non-gendered terms for performers: "Singers," "Musicians," "Trebles" or similar, not "ladies," "gentlemen," etc. is expected.
5. Adjudicators will ensure that their final score is an accurate representation of the 7 different categories which are equally weighted. They may use a + or - in a category but NOT in the final rating. A plus or minus in a category does not alter the point value. A simple majority can determine the score, but when there is a

mix of scores add & divide by 7, i.e. I, I, II, III+, II, I, I = 11/7 = 1.57 = II, Excellent. Guidelines for determining ratings are found here.

6. Consistency throughout the entire event is vital. Grades should be made according to the rubric & standards should not change after already having judged some groups. Comments that compare a group to other choirs, such as "You are the best choir I've heard today," are not appropriate.
7. Adjudicator ratings must be within one rating from each other. If final ratings such as I, II and III result for the same performance, judges will confer and adjust so that the ratings become I, II, II or II, II, III or I, I, II, etc. There cannot be a 3-way split.
8. Note that the criteria for judging "Tone" says age-appropriate tone. Listen to the examples in the drive and others on Youtube to hear the sound of developing voices. Remember choral timbre and diction may change appropriately for different styles of music, i.e, classical, folk, gospel, etc.
9. Choirs should not be judged by the quality or style of uniforms they are wearing. Look for expression in the physical presentation when judging "General Effect."
10. Adjudicators should not clinic a choir that they will later judge in assessment.

Sight Reading Assessment

1. While there is often a separate judge in a separate room for sight reading, sometimes sight reading is done on stage immediately following the performance.
2. Please read the rules carefully. Directors and adjudicators are both responsible for reading and knowing the rules ahead of their planned assessment. If you are unclear about expectations contact your District Chair and Event Host.
3. Directors should begin sight reading practice early in the year to ensure that the parameters for sight reading are clear and that students are adequately prepared.
4. An updated document may be forthcoming that will clarify some questions that have arisen. One important question is whether the judge may interrupt if the director is not following procedures to correct them and allow them to try again. For now, check with your host ahead of time and then be consistent in your practice.