Student Attitudes Toward Choral Participation in the Twenty-First Century

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by Jill Emmert

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Don Ester

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
May 26, 1996

Date of Graduation May 4, 1996
The main purpose of this paper is to understand how today's students view choir. If teachers are aware of the misconceptions students have toward choir, then they can adjust their choral programs accordingly. This analysis concentrates on the different reasons students do not join choir. It uses student responses and a pre-existing survey as background material. Trends that have been found will be discussed and used to develop my hypothesis. Since I am student teaching at Center Grove High School, I decided to use my own students in the questionnaire. Their responses were encouraging.
Over the past couple of decades, choir participation, along with other art genres, has declined. Since I wanted to be a choir teacher when I graduated, this decline frightened me. I had read articles on students' attitudes toward music and choir and decided to conduct a little questionnaire with my students at Center Grove High School. I wanted to compare my findings with previous research, and see if there were any patterns to help explain this decline. I selected 23 boys and girls from grades nine through twelve, and asked them ten questions concerning choir. The students were questioned separately and their responses recorded on a tape recorder. Some students' responses were lengthy, while others were short. I attempted to choose students who appeared to have different backgrounds and attitudes in music with the hopes that I would receive a variety of answers. There was no follow-up interview, mainly due to time limitations and the desire to get only their first impressions. In the paragraphs that follow, I have analyzed and compared my findings with previous research, and deduced some ideas as to how to assist choir teachers in alleviating this problem.

In my survey, there were three main areas concerning choral awareness that I wanted to pursue. The first area, which can be seen in questions one, two, four, and seven, was aimed at finding out why students join choir, and whether there were certain students more likely to participate. The second area, posed by questions three, five, six, and eight, focused on what the students actually learned in choir, and whether they thought other students should participate. Lastly, questions nine and ten asked students what their overall impressions of choir had been, to see if choir had affected their lives in any significant way.

In the first questions, it seemed that many of the students liked to sing and therefore joined choir. Only a few were forced or influenced by friends and family. The only students who did not express a desire to rejoin choir were the ones who saw choir as nothing more than an elective class. These students, although they liked to sing, felt no
commitment to the choir system. It did seem that students who had musically oriented parents or supportive friends had a more positive attitude toward singing in choir.

Many of the students seemed to feel that a lack of ability or self-confidence in singing was a major factor that kept students from joining. Others, especially the boys, talked of student-body perceptions and name-calling associated with choir as a reason for not joining. However, it is interesting to note that none of them talked of being “made fun of” for joining. Other students felt that it was a lack of knowledge that kept students from joining. Because they never saw choir performances or practices, they did not know what they were missing and therefore never thought of joining. The students who stayed in choir for a while expressed a great love for singing and a feeling of belonging to a group.

When the students were asked how much or what they had learned in choir, there were a variety of answers. Although one student said he had learned nothing, everyone else said he or she had learned at least one thing. The younger students tended to focus on the technical aspects of singing that they had learned. Things such as sight-reading, breathing, pronunciation, and posture were often cited as things learned in choir. It is interesting, that as the students got older, the answers to these questions became more broad. Some talked of self-confidence and discipline while others mentioned getting along with a group and making new friends. Some students even talked of gaining an appreciation for different kinds of music and expressing themselves through music.

Although most of the students said that there were things one could learn in choir, they disagreed on exactly how much. Some felt that a person’s attitude greatly affected how much they really learned. Others, however, said that all students learn, they just may not be aware of what they are learning.

Considering that most students felt that there were things to learn in choir, it is surprising everyone did not recommend it for others. About half of the group said they would only suggest choir to those who really liked to sing and were willing to work at it. The other half said everyone should take it no matter how strong their voice or desire.
These students seemed to feel that all students could benefit from choir, while the others did not.

In the last group of questions one can see the differing degrees of how much choir has affected students' lives. For example, some students talked of choir as nothing more than a fun class, while other students, who really seemed to love music, expressed very strong feelings to the questions. Some talked of how they felt they belonged to something, and that they couldn't imagine what their high school lives would have been without it. For many of them, it has been their social outlet and self-expression valve. Most of the students seemed to love performing and sharing music with others. Some even expressed that joining choir had changed the kind of person they were. Some of the students who talked of choir in such a loving way, although not particularly talented, could tell that music had enriched their lives. Many of the students interviewed said they would like to continue doing something with music, such as singing in church or college. Some students even wanted to major in music. These responses to music are not a single situation at a single school, they are common throughout the country. To validate this, some existing surveys will be discussed.

One example of this is the survey by Mizener, which is similar to many other music perception surveys that have been done. Mizener interviewed students from seven large urban schools in grades three through six. She posed questions such as, "Do you like to sing?" and "Do you want to sing in choir?" She also asked questions concerning what the students liked to do in choir and what they thought of their own musical ability. Besides the questions, she also conducted a short singing exam to determine their innate musical ability.

From her survey she found that positive responses declined as the age level increased. She also found that there was a strong relationship between wanting to sing in choir and liking to sing (Mizener, 236). Most of the students said that family and friends did not influence their decisions concerning choir participation (Mizener, 237).
musical ability also did not seem to influence students' desires to join choir (Mizener, 240). Students who either could sing well, or thought they could sing well, did not always want to join choir. It is surprising that, overall, singing was considered, by the students, an activity that was well-suited for both boys and girls. However, Mizener believes that boys are more reluctant to say they like singing because males are not encouraged in American society to be recreational singers (Mizener, 242).

From the responses of my survey, I have developed some opinions on the participation in and importance of choir for students. As far as I could tell, the students that continued with choir and had positive attitudes toward music either had a basic love for singing or a positive exposure to it through friends, teachers or family. I could also tell that old stereotypes such as "choir fags" are still prevalent in today's young males. This is unfortunate, in my opinion, because in reality these boys have no reason for concern. Many choir boys in grade school are straight, and overtime many boys, who have success in choir, experience some form of acceptance from their peers. I believe this because the boys who were in Sound System, the top choir at Center Grove, had many friends and family who supported them in their music. These responses, however, support the view that Americans generally do not encourage male recreational singing. Another factor that I think influenced student participation, was the combination of a lack of confidence in ability level and lack of exposure to choral programs. This combination provided no background to form impressions or desires. Also, choir at Center Grove was seen as rather elitist, since the prestigious groups, such as Sound System and Debtones, had fairly talented students and, therefore, seemed too difficult to join.

Hopefully, one can see that the survey from the Center Grove School is not much different from the other survey. It has been shown that students lose interest in choir as they get older. This is why there are only 300 students in a school of 2,000 involved in choir at Center Grove High School. Although this is a low figure, it is above average compared to many schools. Mizener says that in high school there are more choices, such
as sports, that decrease interest in choirs. A great example of this is my freshman student, Matt Wray, who has decided that his baseball interests will be too demanding to allow time for choir. I do not agree with this "jock" opinion because it simply is not true that you can not do both, yet this is how some students think. I think they feel this way because they see how much commitment Sound System takes, and they assume incorrectly that all the other choirs require the same amount of time. As far as musical ability is concerned, I can tell that at Center Grove it has no real bearing on students’ decisions to join choir. Some of the students who love choir do not have great voices, and some students who have wonderful voices do not wish to be in choir.

I really feel that all the students surveyed enjoyed choir. For some it was just a break in the day from the traditional classes. For others, it was a love and a way of life. I do think that the longer the students stayed in choir and attained a certain amount of success from it, the more they could tell they had gained something. I am a strong believer that choir not only serves as an emotional outlet and performing venue, but as a character builder as well. It teaches life skills concerning discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. It is nice to see that these things were expressed by the students themselves. It is also encouraging to me that all the students were strongly in favor of keeping music in the schools. Even those who are not staying in choir seemed to realize that choir is not just an ordinary class, but one that is important to the learning processes.

So what should I do as a choir teacher to get students involved? I think the first thing to do as a high school teacher is to publicly promote the choirs. Also choirs should perform for their peers, so that others will at least be exposed to them. Teachers do need to be careful that the performance shown will be viewed by the peers as "cool", or else it could lead to teasing. I believe that a well-rounded program is needed so that all students, regardless of musical ability, will feel comfortable joining a choir. This helps to erase the elitist feeling from the arts. Mizener also talks of having positive male role models participating in the classroom so boys can see that there is a place for them in choir.
I strongly agree with this because boys need encouragement from the school to join choir. They are not likely to get this from home, since recreational singing for boys is not encouraged in our society.

Teachers in the elementary and middle schools should have the task of making choir an enjoyable and rewarding activity, since these areas are where most students first join choir. Students are very impressionable at this time in their lives. According to Mizener, students' attitudes toward music are well-developed by the age of eight (Mizener, 242). This means that music teachers in the lower grade levels do not have much time to help develop positive attitudes toward music, so they must start immediately. Also, a trend that both Mizener and I noticed was that a positive attitude in the home environment can help kids develop healthy musical opinions. Some of the students I interviewed talked of parents who sang or friends and family that told them they had good voices. Therefore, teachers should always try to get students' families and friends involved in the student's choral life. One way a teacher might do this, is to start an adult or community choir to help expose these people to music.

Interviewing the students at Center Grove High School was a fun and eye-opening experience. The students encouraged me by indicating that singing, for them, was still an enjoyable and rewarding activity. The decline in choral participation is a real problem, but I do think it can be solved. Society needs to be retaught that singing is an experience that all people should become involved in. The desire is there in most people, we just have to find a way to bring it to the surface.
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Why did you join choir?
2. Did you have friends in choir before you joined, did that influence you?
3. What have you learned in choir - if anything?
4. Are you going to stay in choir. Why or why not? Why did you stay in choir? (asked of seniors)
5. Would you suggest other students join choir. Why or why not?
6. Do you think most students gain something from choir or only a select few?
7. Why do you think students don’t join choir?
8. Do you think choir should continue to be offered in the school curriculum or should it be extracurricular. Why or why not?
9. Overall, would you consider your experience in choir an enjoyable one or not so great one?
10. Do you see yourself continuing to work with music in any way after graduation?
Student Responses

Aaron Nikon  Freshman  Age 14
1. "Partly because my mom made me, and just for fun to get a credit."
2. "No, I didn’t know anybody here."
3. "Now I know how to read notes, not too well, and I’ve learned how to sing and practice my voice."
4. "Probably- I would like to be in a good choir and perform. Like I wouldn’t mind being in Opus One (jazz choir at CG)."
ASKED WHY MOM MADE HIM JOIN
"They said I had a good voice and I could stay on pitch. Also my mom was in choir when she was in high school."
5. "I think everyone should know how to read music at least, and be able to sing a little bit. Anything you can do in life will help, in my opinion."
6. "Yes, it’s food practice to be in front of others."
7. "Because they don’t know. Either they don’t think they can sing or are too afraid to get up in front of a bunch of people and sing."
8. "In the curriculum. I think everyone needs to learn how to sing- should have the knowledge of it."
9. "I think it’s fun. Mr. Andersen always had jokes. I think a lot of it has to do with his teaching."
10. "I think if I make Opus One and keep practicing, I might sing in churches and stuff."

Brittany Wilson  Freshman  Age 16
1. "Cuz it was kind of just a class to be in, and I did it in 7th and 8th grade- and I liked it."
2. "Yes, they said it was fun."
3. "How to sing properly and have the right notes."
4. "No, cuz it was kind of just a class to take and I have another class to take."
5. "Yes, it’s fun and you can talk sometimes."
6. "I think the people who really want to do it and go far in it, then they benefit from it."
7. "They don’t like to sing." ASKED IF AGE OR GENDER AFFECT- SHE SAID, "No."
8. "Yeah (meaning curriculum) it’s fun and you get credit for it."
9. "Yeah, I like it. It's more active (than other classes) and get to talk."
10. "No."

Chris Mills Freshman Age 15
1. "Been interested in singing all my life, and enjoy all types of music."
2. "No, first year at Center Grove."
3. "How to sight read, keep time. I've developed a better singing voice."
4. "Yes, it's the only place I sing and I like to sing."
5. "Depends if they have a love for music and especially have a good voice- but no if have no interest in choir or any music."
6. "Few, depends on the person. Some just go to sing. Some go to learn."
7. "They're self conscious about their voice."
8. "Curriculum. It has to do with arts. People are always wanting us to go back to England and learn about music back then- and in choir you can do that."
9. "Enjoyable. Mr. Andersen makes it really fun. He has good skills. He can be serious or fun."
10. "Yes I do- choir in college."

Matt Wray Freshman Age 14
1. "I used to sing when I was in 6th grade and quit 7th and 8th- and wanted to get back in it because it was fun in 6th."
2. "Yeah, but didn't influence me."
3. "Nothing really."
4. "No, because I'm gonna play sports. Won't be time for both because I have to make it."
5. "Yeah it's a good thing. You have fun. You go places. If your a freshman or sophomore and if nothing else to do. If you're not going to play sports and you're not going to be dedicated to the sport."
6. "Only a few. Sometimes you have geeks in class that screw around."
7. "Friends will think you're a dork or (they) won't accept it. Think you're a fairy boy."
8. "Extracurricular. If you're not going to do a sport then you could make it a kind of sport and practice everyday."
9. "I've had fun (like) -Circle The State, did a lot of things."
10. "No."
Jonathan Christopher  Senior  Age 18

1. “Been around almost all my life. Parents were in choir in college. Indianapolis Children’s Choir was recommended, so have been in that since third grade and continued with choir.”

2. “Yes, but didn’t influence me.”

3. “The way things work. Different effects created by things like how and when to crescendo. How it can make you feel different ways.”

4. “It’s something I do. Gives me a purpose- and makes you feel good about yourself.”

5. Depends on the person. Music isn’t everyone’s thing- different likes of different types of music.”

6. Depends on the teacher. Some you’ll get a lot from. Some you don’t. Most people do come away with something from choir though. The things you do learn in choir influence you in other areas of life like how to react towards people. It helps you express your feelings, and helps you to understand others’ feelings.”

7. “Some things have a bad rap. The artist thing seen as strange- and some don’t have the urge to sing.”

8. Curriculum- but needs more to it than just choir. Need to learn the theory. It’s done some but not enough.”

9. “Mostly enjoyable. Some things haven’t been perfect, but I remember most of the good things. It’s been fun overall.”

10. “I do like to in church, but not as a career.”

Brandy Hogue  Freshman  Age 14

1. “Because I love to sing- and it has always been something I wanted to do.”

2. “Yes, a lot of friends tried to get me to try out for it. They pushed me, because I didn’t think I had the voice to do it.”

3. “Learned the notes. How to breathe. Posture. Everything you need to know. The steps about singing.”

4. “Yes, cuz I love singing and want to be really good at it- just keep trying and trying until I get my personal best.”

5. “Yes, I think everybody. If they don’t have a good voice they can keep on trying and make it (voice) what you want it to be- and it’s fun and around friends your own age and it’s just really neat to try.”

6. “A lot. Cooperate with others. How to learn well with others. Just to be a group and not be by yourself, and just be a part of everyone else.”

7. “Guys will make fun of them for singing or don’t think they have the greatest voice will get made fun of. Most girls will but some might think they don’t have the voice.”
8. "No one should be made to do it, but I think it should definitely be in the school. Everyone should have the choice."

9. "Very enjoyable. I love to sing. I do it in my sleep."

10. I'd like to. It has always been my dream to be a singer."

Anne Sabatino  Freshman  Age 14

1. "I enjoyed singing."

2. "Yes I did. It influenced a little bit but I would have been in it anyway, because I liked it a lot."

3. "I've learned a lot of things to make my voice better and stuff. Already knew rhythm from playing the piano."

4. "Yes, I really enjoy singing. I love music class and I would really like to make the showchoir."

5. "Wasn't asked this question, ran out of time."

6. "It depends. A lot of people don't take things seriously. I guess if you take it seriously and want to learn you can get something from it, but if you're just taking it for credit and you don't care, then it doesn't really matter to you."

7. "Because they can't sing- afraid of criticism- because friends think it's stupid or afraid they'll get made fun of."

8. "Curriculum. Good that they keep it in school. Some would be doing nothing if they weren't in choir. A lot of people get stuff out of it. Sports aren't really my thing so I can get into something like this. It is good."

9. "I like it. I enjoy most of the songs we do and I really like Mr. Andersen. I like to sing."

10. "I don't know. I never really thought about it- studying music- so I don't know."
Josh Owen  Sophomore  Age 16

1. “Talked into it by Mr. Andersen, he kept harping on me”
2. “No”
3. “Sight reading, to sing, to sing right pitches, that I like the music field”
4. “Yeah, only if I make it (sound system) don’t like Mr. Nevell as a teacher, doesn’t teach like Mr. Andersen”
5. “Some yes, depends on what they feel cuz it they don’t like to sing - then no- but if do they shouldn’t be afraid to be in it”
6. “Just the ones that want to, anybody can”
7. “Afraid people are goona call them a choir fag, I didn’t care, I wasn’t afraid”
8. “Curriculum, most need an elective, if don’t have it then they won’t have enough classes, some find they like it so it keeps bringing students into the music field”
9. “Enjoyable, meet people, go places, different competitions, pretty fun”
10. “Plan to major in music education”

Brian Parton  Junoir  Age 16

1. “I have a talent for singing, I’ve been told that my whole family does”
2. “No, it was my own decision”
3. “I learned to contort my voice to do what I want it to do and self discipline somewhat”
4. “Yes, now that I do have friends (in choir) it is a lot more fun to do”
5. “Definately if they have a singing talent -if can sing in any region - there are differnt choirs for different levels, it is fun and so are the directors, anybody can sing”
6. “I think in the upper choirs you can learn -lower ones (choirs) it’s just a credit”
7. “Cuz think they can’t sing or have no interest really in singing, I have friends like that”
8. “Definately just a regular class, cuz some people it is something they want to do and it gives you a credit, which is like an extra bonus- it helps me attend more”
9. “Enjoyable, a lot of fun, like Opus”
10. “Not sure, possibly , could always fall back on, definately (would sing in church or community)”
Luke Britt  Sophomore  Age 16

1. “I’m interested in music - like to broaden my horizons as far as the arts and music program is concerned, it’s a lot of fun”

2. “Yes, I’ve been in choir since elementary, so it did influence me”

3. “Better singing, appreciation of music, learned to make friends, better understanding of music theory”

4. “Yes, lot of fun - learn a lot of new things and new people”

5. “Depends on their interest - if want to pursue interest in music than it would be beneficial - if don’t have interest in choir than no”

6. “Depends if there’s interest - they’re exposed but it’s up to them if they want to appreciate it - those who do gain a lot”

7. “Some afraid of what others might say, make fun of them, some just not interested or shy”

8. “Both, choirs that require extra practices should be, but the others should stay, some do to schedules and sports couldn’t practice after school, so they would be left out, don’t have an opportunity”

9. “Enjoyable, a lot of fun - the people - and I love the music, the people pretty much make it happen and their influence and guidance help a lot”

10. “Yeah, like to, just being around it and helping others share in the music experience, that would be neat”

Andy Mauser  Sophomore  Age 15

1. “Was in it in 7th grade and stuck with it”

2. “Yes, but didn’t influence me, it was the curriculum that made me do it”

3. “Responsibility, like showing up for practice, and reading music”

4. “Hopefully, only if I make it (Sound System choir - the show choir at CG), SS is fun the other choir was boring we just screwed around”

5. “Yeah, it’s fun, get to travel, meet new people”

6. Few, some don’t take it seriously, take it just to take (for different reasons), but some do major in it”

7. “The repetition of guys being called names”

8. “ Depends on the choir if a lot of dancing than maybe should be extracurricular”

9. “Yes, I like to sing, that’s why I stayed in it”

10. “Probably not, like to do other stuff in college”
Chad Quinlan  Senior  Age 18

1. “I was in it in 7th grade, in Collector’s Edition (auditioned choir)”, liked to sing”
2. “Yes, I just wanted to sing”
3. “Vowel sounds, learned about different kinds of music, made new friends, and how to
   read music”
4. “Sound System was the big thing to be in, I wanted to sing and dance like them, it was
   bigger than band”
5. “Yeah, if they really want to learn about music, and if they want to have a future in
   singing”
6. “Few, some just take to get an elective, those who really care learn from it”
7. “Think it’s dumb I guess, I read an article in the ‘underground newspaper’ that said the
   guys in SS were fags, people think it’s a blow off class, not worth their time”
8. “Curriculum, younger people who may want careers in it, if you didn’t do that you’d
   have a lot of upset people”
9. “Enjoyed, didn’t like middle school teacher, didn’t seem to know what she was doing
   but like high school had cool people and had more fun with the music”
10. “I play guitar, so I might try and minor in it in college”

Rachel Yates  Sophomore  Age 16

1. “I really enjoyed music, wanted to do it in high school, something I could meet people in”
2. “No”
3. “How to sing right, to be part of a group and how to express myself through another
   form of music not just instrumental (she plays piano)”
4. “Yes, I enjoy it a lot, nice break in the school day”
5. “There are many different places, you don’t have to be extremely talented, but benefits
   are rewarding to experience music and meet people, feel like you belong in something
   especially those who don’t play sports”
6. “All do, though many don’t realize they do yet, they think back and see you get
   something out of everything you do”
7. “Embarrassing, don’t think they can sing, don’t think they have the talent”
8. “Curriculum, it uses your mind and you need something more creative in the school
   day”
9. “Enjoyable, I don’t mind hard work, learned a lot, made more friends”
10. "Definitely, playing piano, I plan to always do, might go into it in college"

**Jennifer Davis**  Senior  Age 17

1. "I've been involved with music my whole life, my mom's a music director, always enjoyed music so it gave me a chance to be in it in high school"

2. "Yes, easier to be a part of something if already have friends in it"

3. "How to work together, be a part of a group without fighting, teamwork is helpful"

4. "I enjoy performing and singing. it's a lot of fun, takes dedication, there is a reward for it"

5. "Everyone should, music is special in everyone's life, everyone listens to the radio, it helps you develop an understanding for it, music is one of the more beautiful parts of life, it gives you a solid base, It keeps you going, I learned so much like in Opus about jazz, I understand it more"

6. "Majority gain something, friendships, sight-reading, in this choir (SS) you meet people you normally wouldn't meet"

7. "I don't think a lot of people are subjected to it and not given the opportunity, some don't have that luxury of being around music all their life and to realize how much fun it could be, you often don't see how much fun until your in it"

8. "Curriculum, it's a serious subject that is important and yet it's fun, it is a tension breaker, yet your still learning and your having fun, I think that's important"

9. "Definitely enjoyable, it has it's ups and downs but it has been a lot of fun, I have developed a lot of strong memories"

10. "I hope to, like to sing in church, I play handbells and piano as hobbies, maybe I will minor in it or sing in a college choir"

**Katie Wipperman**  Sophomore  Age 15

1. "I was in choir in middle school, I hurt my knee in basketball so I decided to try out for the fun of it and made Debtones my freshman year, choir became a big part of my life"

2. "I did, but I didn't know them really well, it's (choir) a good social aspect and have made good friends"

3. " Aside from the vocal stuff, how to get along with people and accept their differences watch how people interact with each other-guys and girls- I'm more confident and sure of myself because of performing, I couldn't live without it - the rush"

4. "It's a part of my life, can't imagine not being in it, all my friends are involved, that's me, that's what I am"

5. "If they like to sing but if they don’t they would be in an uncomfortable environment even if they can’t sing well that can be helped, it gives you a group of people you can say you belong to, they are friends I can always go to. If you don’t have that you’ll
"be lost without a base. Choir provides that."

6. "Everyone can if they want to. Some get defensive because the voice is something you can’t really control, so might not be comfortable with. You can gain confidence and have friends. Everyone can come up with something that means something to them."

7. "People see SS and Debtones and think all the choirs require that much time, or think they can’t sing. I don’t think it matters if you can or not, just if you want to and if you like it. That is what it is about. I do it for the fun of it- the rush of entertaining."

8. "Extracurricular because some have so much time out of class-but some don’t. So it needs to be in school, especially if they’re in sports. They wouldn’t have time. It would be more beneficial (if during school day) because so many more people have the opportunity."

9. "It’s been wonderful. I’ve learned so much- become a better person- had more experiences good and bad that I’ve learned from- and I’m a better singer."

10. "I would love to do something with music after, but don’t know if that will happen, but I would love to stay in a choir as long as possible."

Jamie Aprile  Junior  Age 16

1. "I love to sing- been doing it since I was young and I like to make beautiful music."

2. "I did it because I had the love to do it, not because of friends."

3. "Learned music, sing, breather, people things, learned about other people whom I wouldn’t normally associate with."

4. "Yes, in Opus, but really wouldn’t want to be in the lower choirs but I would because I love to sing."

5. "Yes, it’s fun. You can learn about a lot of things and if you aren’t in other arts it’s a fun way to get your music elective."

6. "Few. People gain what they want. If don’t want to than they won’t, but if want to they’ll learn music and have a good time. It’s a self motivation thing."

7. "Boys think it’s for sissies. The younger ones think they’re too cool for it and girls might think so too. Also depends on whether you’re raised toward showchoir or concert choir. The showchoir ones seem to be driven to it."

8. "If band is curricular, than choir should be. I think they’re similar, but if band was extracurricular, I think it would be hard for choir because it takes a lot of time. So it needs to be in school."

9. Under Mrs. Meeks I didn’t like choir a whole lot, I was stuck with people who didn’t want to sing so I felt held back, but I love it in Opus. It’s more challenging and Mr. Andersen doesn’t judge you by your parents but by your ability."

10. "I hope to continue singing in college."
Brie Pedigo    Sophomore    Age 15

1. "Part of it was because I like music a lot, and I wanted to do something with my school- and that was an easy thing. I know how to sing and I feel I'm talented in that area- and I figured why not- and knew I could do it- and I thought it would be fun and I could learn a lot."

2. "Yes, but I would have done it anyway."

3. "I've learned a lot more about sight singing, cuz I really didn't know that at all. Especially in chamber choir I've learned about jazz that I didn't know- and to appreciate it more and other types of music."

4. "Yeah, I'm staying in chamber choir, but I'm not going to do sound system because I don't have the time with dance and everything, but I definitely want to stay in choir because it keeps my voice maintained and I don't want to stop. I want to keep growing."

5. "Yeah, I think its good to have something artistically in you school- and a lot play sports and stuff, but I know a lot of people who play sports that could do this too and that is such a good balance. I think you need something like that, and when people do these kind of things in high school, I think later in life they have a greater appreciation and understanding of art and then their kids will."

6. "I think most do. I'm sure there are people who don't get anything out of it if they're just not putting anything into it, but I think you almost have to put something into it to sing and you have to love it to want to do it- and I think you get out of it from the classes and performing it."

7. "Stereotype of choir, especially for guys- its like a girly thing to do, it is also intimidation for some, they don't want to have to audition or sing in front of people. I think it's a mental thing."

8. "Definitely Curriculum. It's so important for a student. I'm not going to be a scientist, doctor or lawyer, and it's great that we have classes in the arts because this class is more educational for me than a math class."

9. "Enjoyable, because I've made a lot of new friends and I've learned a lot. It has been really fun, we've gone places that I haven't been and I've experienced a lot of new things."

10. "I really plan to - especially with dance and stuff - I've been in the arts since I was really little and I think it would be stupid of me to just drop it now. I'm not sure how but it (music) will definitely be a part of something I do."

Jeff Corbin    Senior    Age 18

1. "When I was in the 7th grade I was in band and my brother was in sound system- and I saw him in sound system- and I saw them at nationals and I decided that- that's what I want to do - I wanted to be a performer."

2. "Yes, all my brother's friends. They all kind of took me under their belt because they knew me."
3. “How to get along with people and how to put up with different kinds of people. Everybody has bad days and you learn to deal with that. This year I learned a lot more technical stuff about music. I never knew about key signatures until this year and I’m 18 years old!”

4. “I loved it, I loved the singing part, and I knew that if I quit it, I’d miss it a lot.”

5. “I would very much recommend it. I think if I had not been in choir I would have gotten in trouble - it takes up so much time that I don’t have time to screw around, and it’s a positive thing in my life. It helps me get through things.”

6. “Only a select few, because for some people its just a blow off class for them - but people in Debs and Sound System, I think, get something because they really love it. The have it in their hearts.”

7. “Some guys don’t like it because they think its for gay people, but its not true. I don’t know many gay people in this department. Some of them can’t sing. I had a brother in it so I knew what it was like and some had brothers and sisters in band, so they join band.”

8. “Curriculum. If it were extra we wouldn’t have time to perfect everything. It’s just a part of high school and people’s lives- you shouldn’t have to do it after school.”

9. “Enjoyable, because the teachers and the people. There are not many people in choir that I don’t like and you get over it.”

10. “Probably, I will minor in it at I. U. and try and join the Singing Hoosiers.”

Scott Vandenberg Junior Age 17

1. “My sisters were in choir and I just always sang when I was young.”

2. “Yeah, I signed up the first year I was able to and all my friends were doing it, so I was like - yeah- I kind of want to do it.”

3. “I’ve learned how to be responsible and how to use my time wisely. I’ve learned how to better myself in the vocal area.”

4. “Yes.”

5. “Some people say I sing good, but I just enjoy it. It’s just fun singing and dancing.”

6. “Yes I would, because it teaches a lot about responsibility and how to use your time wisely because there’s so many practices- and it’s just fun.”

7. “Most people gain it quite a bit, as long as they’re trying to do their best, cuz when you start out and your doing your best it’s pretty simple actually. But if you don’t try it’s enjoyable but it’s not worth your while.”

8. “Maybe they have mixed feelings about it or they hear from other people that it’s not really happening or it’s not really the thing to do.”

9. “Curriculum. Choir is just like any other class cuz it teaches you how to do stuff and it’s for your better living.”
10. “Very enjoyable. I’ve had a lot of fun, I’ve met a lot of new people and I’ve made a lot of new friends.”

Jackie Purdue  Senior  Age 17

1. “I’ve always liked to sing. Ever since I’ve been little, I was always in the musicals and stuff that my church put on and I’ve just always sang.”

2. “Joined in middle school and I made friends and I did it in high school because I was in it, not because of other people.”

3. “I’m really glad I joined it my freshman year because it gave me a place, like a family, and something to do with myself and lots of friends- kind of an identity thing. I’ve figured out what I really want to do with myself. If I hadn’t been in choir I don’t think I’d have a clue as to what I wanted to study next year.”

4. “Because I love it, there hasn’t been one thing that I didn’t like about it. Plus the people that you meet and all the friends I have made. It’s kind of just my thing.”

5. “I think it’s for some people and it’s not for some people. I’ve had friends who’ve been in it and didn’t enjoy it at all- probably because they put too much time into it, I think. Anyone who enjoys music and enjoys putting time into music, enjoys making music should be in it. But people who aren’t into that, I don’t think should be in it because they may be able to sing- but if they don’t enjoy it and get something out of it- then they’re going to be really bored.”

6. “Most people do. What they gain, I don’t know but I think most people do.”

7. “In schools people are told what they can and cannot do at a young age. Like in elementary school you try out for something and you don’t make it so you feel like I can’t do that. They say they can’t sing but they probably have never tried before. Maybe they tried once, and they were told in a way that they can’t do it, so they give up.”

8. “Curriculum. Less people would join. I think people would see it more as a burden. I think we would have to spend even more time with it and people would think it takes too much time.”

9. “Enjoyable. I’ve made so many best friends. I’ve had the best teacher I think I’ll ever have (Mr. Andersen). I’ve had lots of opportunities. I’ve done well and it’s given me a lot of self confidence and an identity.”

10. “Yeah, I definitely want to do it in college and right now I’m thinking of going into music education.”

Collin Poynter  Junior  Age 17

1. “In middle school because (my parents) wouldn’t let me in band because my brothers were in band and they hated it- and didn’t want to pay for an instrument- and I had to choose either band or choir, so I chose choir.”

2. “No not really, but it seemed that a lot of my friends joined choir instead of band that year.”
3. "More vocal technique. How to sing with a group. I learned more about sight reading."

4. "Yeah, because I have a lot of fun and just about all my friends are in choir now, so I like being with them."

5. "It depends on what kind of person they are. If I think they'll like that kind of thing - I would suggest it to them because I think it's a lot of fun, but if they need it just to fill up another class or if they aren't going to get into it then I wouldn't recommend it."

6. "I think everybody gains something- not necessarily music- but I think only those who really want to get something musical from it -just the people who like go on and do something with music."

7. "Guys will think, "oh what will people think of me if I'm in choir." Girls just maybe don't want to put in the time."

8. "Curriculum, unless the school board tells us how much money we can spend, then maybe it will have to be extracurricular."

9. "Enjoyable. It has it's good and its bad, but overall, I would have to say enjoyable. I like music so much. Also it gives me a way to see my friends who aren't in the honor classes with me or are younger than me."

10. "Yes, I do. I want to study music composition and write music and become famous."

Laura Runkle  Junior  Age 17

1. "I love music and I love singing."

2. "I did but that's not why. I was in band and I hated it so I joined choir."

3. "Sight reading- better understanding of different types of music."

4. "I don't have a reason to drop out. Every year it gets better and Mr. Andersen is on the same growing level as the juniors because his 1st year has been this year."

5. "Yes, if they like music and if they're willing to be patient because it takes a lot of patience. Sometimes you have to be like really into things and work it out."

6. "Everyone, because even if you don't learn anything about the music -your going to learn how to work with people better. It's the one class where you absolutely have to work along with everybody else or you won't be a choir."

7. "A lot really don't know anything about it. I really don't think they have something against it, they just don't know about it- and some think that since they have never been involved before- they think they can't get involved now, that its too late."

8. "Definitely Curriculum. It's just as important as math and science. I think it's important. It has always been a part of the world and culture and everything. I don't see why it should be extra."
9. “Enjoyable, because I love everyone working. I’m confident that I’m getting the best training here. There are teachers in some of my classes where I feel that I’m not getting the best, but I really feel that with Mr. Andersen and Mr. Miller.”

10. “I don’t know if I’ll be able to because I feel I’m more confident in other areas and would have a more stable career- but I definitely want to try to keep working with music, even if its just for fun.”

Katie Kauffman  Senior  Age 18

1. “I love music and I was raised in a musical family.”

2. “No, I moved here from Oregon. It was my family that influenced me.”

3. “A lot of discipline and a lot of responsibility and a lot of musicianship that I probably won’t have learned from my dad.”

4. “Because I like it. It’s a lot of fun and I love singing- friends and getting to go places makes it fun.”

5. “Yes, but don’t over do yourself on it. It can be stressful. Being in Opus and Sound System this year with all the activities can be time consuming.”

6. “What attitude you go in with is what you get out of it. You can learn responsibility, musicianship, and have a lot of fun- but if your pushed into it because you have to have a credit, then I think people don’t gain anything from it.”

7. “I don’t know. Some want to be in band or participate in other things. Maybe they feel that they can’t sing or maybe they feel intimidated. I know a lot who feel intimidated.”

8. “Curriculum. A lot of things that sound system has taught me in general 4 years a high school class could never teach me. I’ve probably gotten more out of sound system than I have ever gotten out of my math classes- and if you plan to go into music then you need it to get into college.”

9. “Very enjoyable- stressful- but I wouldn’t trade it for anything. I’d go back and do it all over again.”

10. “Definitely, I’m thinking about minoring in it- but I’m not sure what I’m doing yet- but who knows if its singing in church choir or singing in the car.”
WORKS CITED


Student Questionnaire for Students at Center Grove HS. Developed by Jill Emmert. 1996