

- **Requirement:** All ensembles performing VBODA grades III-VI music are required to sight read. The sight reading score will be independent of the stage adjudication score.
- **Members:** All string players who participate on stage are required to sight read.
- **Music Requirements:** All groups will sight read **two grade levels below** their entered rating.
- **Judging Criteria:** The orchestra will be judged according to the criteria on the MPA assessment form.
- **Instruction Period:** The director will be given the following time limits to study the score and instruct the orchestra:

An orchestra entering in Grade III will sight read in Grade I – **7 minutes**  
 An orchestra entering in Grade IV will sight read in Grade II – **8 minutes**  
 An orchestra entering in Grade V will sight read in Grade III – **9 minutes**  
 An orchestra entering in Grade VI will sight read in Grade IV – **10 minutes**

- Collect all folders following your performance on stage. Students should not take anything into the sight reading room except their instruments.
- Students should take their seats quickly and quietly. It is the responsibility of the director to make sure that all students are sitting in the correct section.
- As soon as the students are seated, you may quickly recheck their tuning.
- The sight reading folders will be distributed by the judge. Do not open folders until instructed to do so.
- The adjudicator will issue these instructions: *Please open your folders and remove (specific music selection). Is this the correct part for your instrument? Are there any problems?*
- The adjudicator will then give instructions to the director and the students. The director may then use the designated amount of time (see above) to instruct the orchestra as he/she sees fit.

**Instruction Period Guidelines:**

During the instruction period, **THE DIRECTOR MAY:**

- Point out key & time signatures
- Show finger patterns
- Answer students' questions
- Provide any pertinent information that will give students their best chance to sight read the piece successfully

During the instruction period, **THE DIRECTOR MAY NOT:**

- Count, clap, or sing the music
- Do anything other than use descriptive phrases
- Mark the in the score

During the instruction period, **THE STUDENTS MAY:**

- Count, clap, tap, or sing the music
- Play rhythms on a monotone pitch
- Play a scale associated with the sight reading music
- Shadow bow/finger the sight reading piece on their instrument (no sound)
- Ask questions

During the instruction period, **THE STUDENTS MAY NOT:**

- Mark or play music in any way
- Talk to one another

- Once the time of instruction has expired, the adjudicator will instruct you to begin playing the piece.
  - The director **MAY** count off to start the piece.
  - The director **MAY** use any kind of non-verbal conducting or cueing jester.
  - The director **MAY** call out measure numbers/rehearsal letters if necessary.

- After completion of the piece, the director should instruct students to place the music back in the folder and close it. All should then leave the room quietly.

### Sight Reading at MPA<sup>1</sup>

#### **Why Sight Reading is Important**

Sight reading is the process of reading and performing a work of music without having seen it before. It is considered a useful and important skill for musicians. Sight reading depends on familiarity with the musical idiom performed; this permits the reader to recognize and perform whole patterns at once, rather than individual notes, thus achieving greater efficiency. Errors in sight reading tend to occur in places where the music contains unexpected or unusual sequences; these defeat the strategy of “reading by expectation” the sight readers usually employ. Sight reading can be very enjoyable for you and your students and definitely will improve their music reading ability and shorten rehearsal time.

#### **Prior to MPA: Laying a Foundation**

Sight reading should take place in some form throughout the year. Each time a new piece is introduced, read all or part of it as you were in the sight reading room using the *Do's and Don'ts*. Include a sight reading activity as part of the warm-up routine each day. Just a verbal explanation is not good enough; you must go through the process with the students so they will be calm and confident at MPA. Here are some tips to help lay a good foundation:

- Teach scales.
- Use method books which drill rhythms and rests in short exercises.
- Use a system for counting subdivisions, and have the students count all exercises in syllables while fingering the notes on their instruments.
- Use chorales to help teach phrasing.

#### **How to Sight Read**

- **Practice:** Students must practice sight reading.
- **Verbal Systems:** Below are three verbal sight reading systems that work for some teachers. This is the order by which some of these teachers approach teaching sight reading:

##### **1)STARS**

S = Key Signature  
 T = Tempo  
 A = Accidentals  
 R = Rhythms/Repeats  
 S = Style

##### **2)PKRSD**

P = Pulse  
 K = Key Signature  
 R = Rhythms  
 S = Style  
 D = Dynamics

##### **3)TKTTRS**

T = Title  
 K = Key Signature  
 T = Time Signature  
 T = Tempo  
 R = Road Map  
 S = Stylistic Markings

<sup>1</sup> Fitch, Karl and John Vorwald. “The Do’s and Don’ts of Sight-Reading at Festival.” Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association.