Preparing to Teach New Songs to Students

- Ensure the teacher of the song knows the song well prior to teaching – particularly the rhythm and pitch of each word/phrase. Listen to and practice the song lots before teaching!
- Find out the background of the song – this can include the composer, country of origin, intended message, style (eg; rock, Blues, Folk, etc)
- Ensure the song difficulty is not too difficult – but a challenge is good!
- Understand any terminologies which may apply to the song – Canon, round, etc

Teaching a new song to students – a suggested sequence of learning

1. Play the song to students (CD, You Tube, etc).
2. Discuss the background and message of the song.
3. Discuss the genre of the song – ie. Blues, Rock, Jazz, etc, and how this s will influence how the song will be sung.
4. Discuss the background of the song, which will influence how it should be sung – ie: full of energy, casual, eloquently, etc (relates to style and genre).
5. Ask the students what they may know about the song, or possible related experiences of like songs, composers, etc.
6. Show visuals of relevant material - ie. places, people, etc.
7. Decide on a section of the song to begin with – it does not need to be sequential - ie: you may start with the chorus first.
8. Discuss the structure of the song (which parts are verse, chorus, bridge, etc, and the sequence and repetition of these).
9. Start with small chunks – this could be as little as part of a sentence, or even a word.
10. Strive for the highest quality sound with each section taught. Keep re-teaching until you believe the students have achieved the best result capable at each point in the song learning
11. Use each phrase/ word/sentence to explicitly teach musical terms and concepts relevant to understanding the song – ie where rests fall, where dynamics need to be used, etc.
12. Start with a sentence, then a following one, then go back and continue to sing through the section from the start so the sequence becomes ingrained.