REFLECTION UPON MY UNIT PLAN

*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*

By Claude T. Smith

This was the first time in all of my experience with music instruction of conducting, planning for, and rehearsing a piece for a 3-month period of time. I have learned a lot about how to pace rehearsals both from a long-term and a short-term perspective. I discovered that although you can study the score from the first note to the last note a million times before coming to rehearsal, you will still have more to discover and more to interpret and more to reconsider—which makes what I am doing so exciting! Although I must admit that at this point, I am ready to rehearse some other repertoire, it has been a learning process for me—both as a conductor/musician and as a person (i.e. developing patience and creativity!)

I developed an easy way of communicating with the students what our goals are (putting up on the board the day’s schedule and goals as well as what we will work on next time). I also found that by using “rehearsal grading charts” (a template used by my middle school co-op) to grade the progress of each section from rehearsal to rehearsal, I was able to easily remember what we should work on next.

Throughout my unit plan, I found that many things worked, while other things did not. I kept note of the things that worked, and for the things that did not, how I would adapt next time I rehearse that particular spot. This included trying to talk and explain things rather than having the students experience it (ex. Fugue—I had them try and play their parts in a way that they could experience a fugue…they were confused and I resorted to talking.) Breaking measures down as small as possible to focus on the correct articulations was very effective in making progress in that section.

This was also my first experience dealing with taking a piece from a Macro level to a micro level (all the details) back out to the Macro level—the big picture. At times, I struggled with when to go micro and when to go back Macro- but in the end, it worked! Thinking of an hour glass—starting general, getting specific, then back to the overall size—was a helpful analogy.

At the end of the day, I feel confident in my experience with this plan, and that I can take everything I learned working on this piece and apply to future pieces of repertoire—regardless of whether it is in band, orchestra, or choir.