

Teaching Philosophy

One of my mentors during my graduate study was a strong believer in cognitive learning. He divided my questions into small pieces, suggested different perspectives to tackle them, and patiently led me to conclude each small task with tangible results. Through working with this process, I felt that my opinions were accepted and that I was included in the institution. This process eventually affected my piano practicing, writing, and teaching. On top of being a “positive, creative, organized and encouraging” teacher, to quote some of my teaching evaluations, I have developed my educational philosophy that is partly derived from those experiences.¹

I believe that learning happens at various levels. It happens; when students understand and memorize information, when they organize and apply the information, and when they formulate original work. My teaching grows student autonomy and to do so, I repeat the sequence of following: delivering structured knowledge, repeating assessment of their application, facilitating opportunities and providing resource to encourage curiosity. Although teaching and learning can happen anywhere, I will describe three standard settings.

Group piano class for music majors is structured toward their proficiency test and to aid them to excel as musicians. I organize my class to be one-third lecture and balance the rest for performance and discussion, peer-teaching, ensemble, and practice. For instance, when teaching an open score, I start with reminders of the principles of reading and playing it, then pair them to play either hand. I often let them choose a programmed sound in the digital piano, making the class fun. Achieving a small portion of music gives students confidence; playing it with their partner helps them count and listen to the music better and eventually makes learning the rest of the music more efficient. Additionally, to ensure that students practice efficiently, I constantly assess their playing through quizzes and assignments to provide reminders and tips for efficient practice. As a result, they eventually become independent in their learning.

For non-music majors, the goal is to have them equipped with reading skills and keyboard styles so they can play anything they want after leaving my class. I give them quizzes on reading and basic theory almost every week and provide more online resource that they can explore later. From my experience of coaching not classically-trained musicians, I use different languages in class to help the non-music majors quickly comprehend the technique and music. Doing easy ensemble pieces in groups of three or four always makes the class enjoyable.

The applied lessons foster a safe environment for my students to bring any problems in music, a chance for experiments, and that is yet musically driven since I demonstrate, vocalize, and bring related musical examples. In addition, I continuously research repertoire and attend pedagogy conferences and local recitals in order to provide deeper knowledge of piano literature and to facilitate more performance

¹ University of Cincinnati Course Evaluation, collected at a music education major undergrad group piano class, 2019.

opportunities outside the lesson. I believe these inspire their artistry, encourage their growth as a musician, and make the best out of their potential.

My goal of teaching is that my students are equipped with the tool they need by the time they leave my studio. The best thing that can happen to me as a teacher is that a student grows out of my studio, benefiting from my nourishment. I also hope that some of the teachings I have given help them become competent musicians or confident individuals later in their lives.