

Philosophy of Teaching

Music education is not a “one size fits all” process, but rather a personal journey. Each person is unique and therefore has distinct strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. It is my responsibility to encourage, critique, and guide each student to reach their fullest potential. While growth toward that goal is not entirely contingent upon the instructor, students’ inspiration, motivation, dedication, and success is largely dependent upon the mindset and atmosphere that the teacher encourages regarding learning.

My philosophy of teaching is comprised of three main elements – inspiration, engagement, and innovation. The role of a music teacher is to inspire love for music and love for learning. At the very beginning of study, students are often motivated and excited to learn. However, if not properly encouraged from the outset of musical instruction, they may fall into apathy when challenges arise. For this reason, Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset and Intrinsic Motivation vs. Extrinsic Motivation are very important. Fixed Mindset and Extrinsic Motivation can be detrimental to a student’s success and dedication, not only in music, but in every part of their life.

Fixed Mindset is the belief that talent and ability are fixed and cannot be developed past a certain point. In contrast, Growth Mindset promotes the conviction that ability is not set, and that with hard work and determination, any goal can be achieved (i.e. ability is limitless). Allowing students to hinder themselves because of an improper belief leads them to frustration and a feeling of incompetency because they have concluded that they are unable to progress. Instead, when encouraging students to adopt a Growth Mindset, they receive challenges as opportunities to grow, rather than unattainable goals. Viewing music education and life challenges in this way is much healthier and productive for individuals, because without it, they will never have the will-power to reach their highest aptitude.

Extrinsic Motivation in music is the use of external rewards – i.e. stickers, candy, ribbons, etc. – to motivate students to complete objectives or goals. Intrinsic Motivation teaches students to find joy and fulfillment in the process of learning itself – to find motivation in the progress that is made instead of in physical rewards for completed tasks. While prizes and rewards *can* be helpful if used *very* sparingly and with good judgment, motivation from hard work and achievement should be highly encouraged in every student. This better prepares students to find fulfillment in their work rather than what they may or may not receive because of such effort.

My job as a teacher is to educate and engage the student. Each student is unique and will require individualized instruction, tailored to suit their needs. Rather than teaching “at” the student, I engage them through analytical questions. Intentional questioning and role-reversal (i.e. the student becomes the “teacher” and I become the “student”) contributes a whole new dimension to the lesson. This trains the students to regard music, practice, interpretation, and learning in a whole new way, to use their cognitive abilities to critique their own performance rather than have it dictated to them, opening the door for greater independent thinking, study, and growth in their future musical endeavors. As a music educator, I desire to develop well-rounded students, giving them tools and techniques to tackle challenges as they arise. These tools include detailed practice instructions that provide confidence in self-evaluation and

progress. Engaging students by providing opportunities for performances and collaborations with fellow musicians is vitally important as well to in order prepare them to share the beautiful with the world.

As a music instructor, I strengthen each student's creative and innovative tendencies. Coming from a background of musical training where creativity wasn't often promoted, I have come to realize the necessity of developing independence and individuality through creative exercises from the very beginning of study. This includes such activities as improvisation, collaboration, active and intentional listening, analysis, and interpretation of problems and possible solutions. I desire that my students be unique in their creativity and ideas. Without creativity, progress and innovation within the music industry would reach a halt, creating a generation of passive musicians.

In conclusion, I wish to guide my students to become successful, fulfilled people, not only in music - its discipline applies to various aspect of life. That is the beauty of music. Shaping students into becoming more productive and creative individuals is a gift not only to myself, but to society.