

Philosophy of Teaching

I believe that music and art foster the creativity and imagination of a mind. The arts are a unifying force, acting as a humanizing element in an ever-changing world of science, culture, technology, and politics. Research shows that students who study music perform better academically. But perhaps more importantly, music provides a medium for self-expression and spiritual growth which may help students better navigate their world. My goal as a teacher is to broaden students' imaginations, thus furthering their own concepts of music and musical expression. It is my responsibility to guide students, help them carve out their own path and enjoy the process of finding their individual voice while upholding high expectations for academics and ethical conduct.

The foundation of my curriculum begins with teaching the proper mechanics of the instrument followed by fundamental music theory. As students grow musically, so should their understanding of expressive qualities and the dimensions of sound. When a musical sound is produced, there is complete presence of loudness or softness, tone color, rhythm, direction, pitch, shape, and texture available to the student's creative pallet. Developing style, a varied repertoire, and learning the skills involved in presentation and performance are also key parts of the curriculum.

My effectiveness as a teacher stems, in part, from my ability to be flexible. As I assess my students, I take into account their strengths, weaknesses and preferences, and differentiate my instruction to meet their individual needs. I also strive to encourage students at every turn, helping them find a direction when they're struggling and teaching them to not get in their own way. Learning an instrument can be very daunting in the beginning. An effective teaching strategy I use is to begin small or chunk the music into "digestible bites." If I'm teaching a student a tricky piece, then we simply work on the first measure or line. If a student is struggling at tackling a new skill that is difficult for them, I remind them that the lovely chord they instinctively strum was once hard to play, and with practice, they will master this skill too. The same idea applies to learning the craft of composing. It is often helpful to begin small, for example with a motif or a short phrase of music, and proceed from there. These strategies encourage students to practice and compose more strategically, effectively and mindfully.

Some of the greatest rewards throughout my years of teaching have been when a student has that "ah-ha" moment in a lesson. The pieces begin to click and the picture becomes clearer to them. Guiding students through the learning process, helping them move beyond simply understanding and applying the curriculum to thinking more deeply, expressing themselves and finding their unique voice, is one of the great joys of teaching. I believe that what we do and learn inside the world of music can affect what goes on in the world outside in a positive way. Helping students further their musical skills, concepts and expression allows them to more fully engage in their surroundings, thereby guiding them along a path to a more fulfilling future. If I can help students in this respect, then I have accomplished my personal goal as a teacher.