

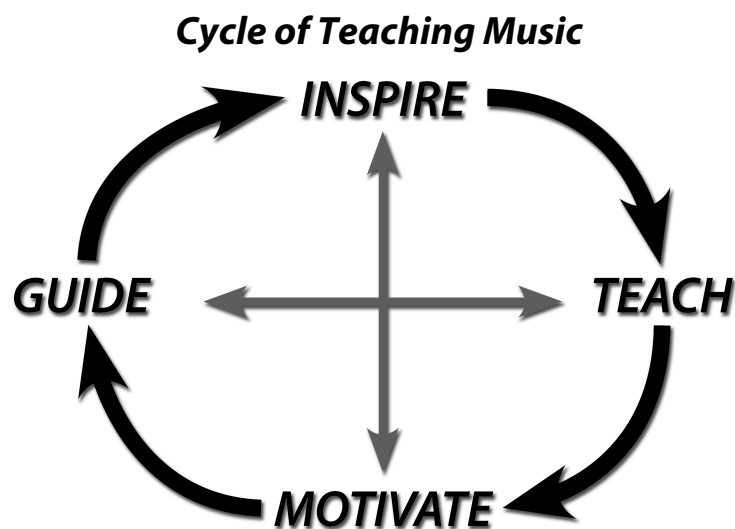
Teaching Students to Teach Themselves: Guiding students to positive self-correction

Steve Smith

What if your students had the same or higher standards for themselves as you do?

Getting students to think on a higher musical level and contribute more to their ensemble is the mark of good leadership and great teaching. Getting students to invest in their own music education and raise their personal standards can make teaching music more fun and rewarding for everyone involved.

Ultimate goal of a teacher: Students to become progressively less and less dependent on us. We can help them develop the skills they are going to need as mature adults by allowing them to make choices and experience the results of those choices. How?



INSPIRE

(*in•spire* – to be the cause or source of)

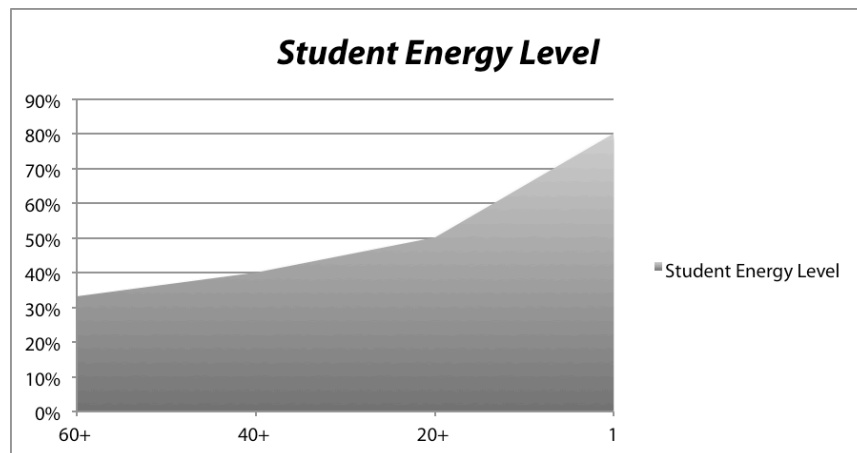
What is in the heart? Must know “why”

- Inspiration vs. Motivation
 - Inspiration – Energy from the beginning, or providing new/fresh ideas, goals, or concepts
 - Motivation – Maintaining energy and focus on current tasks, goals, or projects
 - **Balance** – Knowing when to do each is important.
 - Motivation without inspiration is forced or contrived
 - Inspiration without motivation has no longevity
- Why are the students doing what they are doing?
 - For the teacher? ...for their parents? ...for themselves?
 - The love of making music?
 - Love being good?
 - Social aspects?
- Providing Inspiration (or giving them a reason...)
 - What inspired/inspires you?
 - Individual and group inspiration

- Inspirational Ideas
 - Recordings & Videos
 - Live performances (Teacher or guest)
 - Older student performances – A glimpse into their future
 - Attending concerts
 - Let them inspire each other - Understand your students
- Inspire them with what the future could be.
 - Open doors and possibilities for them
 - Help them imagine their future
 - Let their parents know what their future could be
- What is in your heart? Why are you doing this?
 - Stay on the path
 - Stay young
 - Stay eager to help and teach
 - Inspire yourself (remember – inspiration is a **renewal**. What have you done that is new?)

The Atmosphere – Safe, but pushing their standards

- Many different forms of this, but you must have the students’ interest in mind
- Must be energized and passionate, but genuine
- Be consistent, but not rigid
- Rules & Consequences vs. Guidelines & Expectations
- In a group, students will give back to you about 1/3 to 1/2 the energy and focus you give to them. Individually they give you more.



TEACH

(**teach** – to impart knowledge or skill to)

What is in the mind? Must know what they are thinking

- Teaching vs. Guiding
 - Teaching – Introducing a new concept, goal, or standard to achieve an understanding
 - Guiding – Helping the student to display or perform a previously taught concept on a regular basis without the need of the teacher.
 - **Balance** – Again, knowing when to do each is important.
 - Teaching without follow through and guidance will rarely result in mastery

- Guidance without thorough and expert teaching could lead to misinformation, frustration, and poor understanding.
- When you have them, don't hold back.
 - Must know what you are doing...
 - Feed their desire and confidence with **knowledge, sound pedagogy, and helpful feedback.**
 - Work towards more collegial relationship (when appropriate).
- Concentrated Solutions
 - Simple and effective solutions that make **HUGE** impacts
 - These help avoid unnecessary frustrations (**The Frustration Bank Account**)
 - Examples:
 - Instrument care, reed placement, instrument quality, etc. (Don't assume...)
 - Marking music (The pencil problem...)
 - Rhythm counting (The metronome problem...)
 - Practice techniques (Again, quality over quantity...)
- Typical school day - put yourself in their shoes.
 - Are they thinking about the right thing(s)?
 - Have you given them the right focus?
 - Help them clear away all extra "junk".
- Listening skills for a **DVR world** (Rewind & Repeat)
 - Students are on information overload
 - How the mind works (filling in the gaps)
 - Details vs. Concepts (knowing the difference)
 - Listening Skills Games

Constant Deep-Questioning – It's not all about you.

- Music requires more parts of the brain than most (if not all) activities – make students use their heads.
 - Students are "given" so much these days (Teaching in a **Google world**)
 - Teach them, check for understanding, then allow/make them recall the correct "answers" (could be verbally or through performance).
 - Don't settle for simple, shallow, or partial answers. Go for depth and complete understanding.
- Don't underestimate what your students can handle, process, and accomplish.
- Are you teaching music or are you teaching "little kids"?
- Don't "give" them the answers, ask for/insist on their response.
- What can you get them excited about?
 - Easy to get them excited about simple songs, playing lots of music, etc.
 - Can you make scales exciting?
 - Can you make fundamentals exciting?
 - Do students get excited about higher-level items?
 - Quality vs. Quantity
- Systematically raise the level of the musical discussion in your classroom.

Clear Standards – Students are a reflection of their teacher/mentors

- We are all a reflection of the people who have influenced our lives (personally and musically).
- "Do as I do, not as I say." *
- Guide them to what they like and what they won't tolerate
 - Use recordings (good and bad)
 - Professional recordings

- Personal performances
- Student performances & recordings (as encouragement only)
- Set musical standards for the class and the individual
 - Modeling & teacher performance
 - Practice and display high personal performance standards
- Consistently *model the details* of what and how you want them to perform for you.
 - Posture & hand position
 - Tone quality
 - Embouchure & air
 - Technique (Using all of the above)
 - Practice routine & techniques
- Provide written standards for clear expectations and goals
 - Assignment Sheets
 - Practice Examples
 - Expectations
 - Testing/Accountability
- Do not relax the standards to “let a kid pass”.
 - Makes them think they can always get by
 - Part of the deep satisfaction of making music is working toward achievement
 - Letting them off the hook deprives them of this joy of accomplishment
 - ***Be prepared to continually help them in different ways.***

“Learning to be a good decision-maker is a skill that is learned, and students will make mistakes along the way. You will be tempted to intervene to prevent mistakes or rescue your students from consequences, because you hate to see them fail. Challenge yourself to adopt a longer perspective and ask yourself what will be more painful — allowing them to make mistakes and grow musically under your guidance or postponing the learning opportunity until later in life when the stakes could be much higher? “

- Adapted from motivational text

MOTIVATE

(***mo•ti•vate*** – to provide with an incentive)

Help them remember the “why” and the “what” when they are away from you.

- How is their passion when they are with you? Away from you?
 - Maintaining passion through highs and lows
 - Dealing with frustration
 - Frustration means – You ***know*** there is a problem and you ***care*** enough to fix it.
 - Help student understand that ***frustration is a natural part of anything worthwhile.***
- Remember, they will spend much more time away from you than with you.

Practice...

- Why is there a negative connotation to this word?
 - Human nature?
 - Set-up or introduction?
 - Distractions?
- If you guide them to the right reasons for practice and improvement, it will be more long-lasting.
 - What are ***your*** reasons to practice? (Actually, do you practice?)

- Multiple motivations for practicing
- Required / not required?
 - Some students need that requirement
 - Type of requirement can change with goals & for each student
 - Do not need to always require practice (know your students)
 - Make sure the decision is based on what motivates the student
- Unique & Personalized Motivation
 - Each child will be different.
 - Take their musical temperature (where is their heart & involvement?)
 - Don't miss out on the kid that music is "their thing", regardless of ability.
 - **Required Text – Fun Music!!!!**

GUIDE

(*guide* – to supervise the training or education of)

What do they do when they go home?

- Students want to be successful
 - Until they **prove** otherwise, you must assume they want to be good.
 - Do they have everything they need to be successful?
- Best intentions unfulfilled
- Do you have a system to help students remember details when they go home to practice?
 - At times, poor practice efficiency is simply due to a lack of reminders or information from the classroom to home.
 - Multiple ways to help students remember
 - Weekly assignments sheets
 - Online reminders
 - Let them use their cell phones & technology
 - Video reminders
 - Find out what works for the student
- ***Does the student know what makes up a good practice session?***

Musical Evaluation

- Do students know how to listen to and evaluate performances?
- Practice Error Detection
 - Live in-class evaluations – ***What's Wrong with Mr. Smith?***
 - Error Detection Quizzes – ***Auralia & Musition*** – Music Theory & Ear Training
- Watch/grade a practice session

Constant Self-Evaluation (Teacher and Student)

- Positive & Constructive Self-Evaluation
 - **Honesty** – Student is honest with their assessment (both good and bad)
 - **Knowledge** – Student has the knowledge and understanding to make a valid and specific assessment of a musical performance.
 - **Correction** – Student has the decision making ability to problem solve and correct
 - **Persistence** – Student can push through frustration and seek the answers
 - **More Logical than Emotional** – Especially with regard to problems and corrections
- Negative & Destructive Self-Evaluation
 - Student or teacher sets unrealistic expectations

- Inflated view of their performance (sometimes provided by the teacher.)
- Deflated view of their performance (sometimes caused by poor self-image.)
- Non-specific or too general in feedback
- *More emotional than logical*
- **What's Wrong with Mr. Smith?**

Recordings & Self-Evaluations

- My brother...
- Human nature – it is easier to evaluate others than yourself.
- **Split Personalities:** When practicing, a player must be *the performer, the student, and the teacher* – *this is a lot for just about anyone.*
- Recordings allow students to divide practice into layers:
 - **Record** - Players are just the performer
 - **Listen and Comment** – Players become the teacher (truly teach themselves)
 - **Corrections** – Players are just the student/musician
- Help them understand the standards.
- Recording equipment matters
 - The better the equipment, the more honest the evaluation
 - Poor equipment could lead to excuses from the student
 - The experience is enhanced and more enjoyable with better recording quality
- Extra mile: Make them “Stars” in this **YouTube world**.
- Peer evaluations for recordings
 - Feedback from peers (if done correctly) can be a tremendous motivation
 - Allows students to hear where other students are in relation to them
 - Gives them a chance to do critical listening
- Student Follow-up / Correction after evaluation

Teacher introduces and teaches, students reteach

- Introduce, teach, teach again, reteach, catch up the student that was absent, reteach again... ugh...
- Empower students to help in the process for three reasons:
 1. Gets the students involved on a personal level
 2. Let's you know what they truly understand
 3. Helps keep you avoid frustration and stagnation
- Student helpers
- *Silent Rehearsals*
 - *Full Group / Individual*
 - No talking, simply gestures
 - Performance of daily fundamentals or material already taught
 - Let the students hear and make corrections that are discussed regularly
 - Good check to see if the students truly understand the concepts you have been teaching.

The Three P's of Teaching Music

Patience – Persistence – Passion!