

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC INSTRUCTION

Based on the work of American educator, psychologist and philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) and noted Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827).

PRINCIPLE I

Underlying all instruction, in music as well as in other subjects, is the principle that learning is often most effective when *experience precedes theory*, or in Pestalozzian terms, "the thing before the sign...."

PRINCIPLE II

Obviously, not all students have had the same experiences, nor have they all been equally successful in understanding their experiences. Therefore, the teacher must organize instruction in such a way as to proceed *from the known to the unknown...*

PRINCIPLE III

The learning process proceeds most effectively when it is organized in such a way that the specific is related to the general and the general to the specific- *in other words from the whole to the parts and back again....*

PRINCIPLE IV

Throughout the educational process, the teacher must realize that the important activity in the classroom is not teaching but learning, and that *learning depends upon the desire to learn...*

PRINCIPLE V

If learning depends on wanting to learn, then *teaching is the art of making students want to learn. In beginning instrumental music class then teaching is not conducting, not lecturing, not judging. Teaching is motivating, explaining, demonstrating, encouraging, suggesting, organizing and evaluating.*

Summary: If we follow these principles, we should do a lot more demonstrating and teaching by sound, not sight-without notation especially in the beginning years (Principle I). We should plan instruction so that

students can find success in their playing before continuing sequentially to more difficult skills (Principle II). We must remember that all students learn at different rates and in different ways. We should try to individualize instruction when possible and provide varying approaches to learning. Principle III is a reminder to teach with the "big picture" in mind. Apply concepts to the music being rehearsed. When reading a piece for first time in a rehearsal start with full read through, gradually become more specific and work back to a complete performance. For younger players learning half notes but with the best sound possible, good air, good attack, good time, subdivision, etc. Because real learning takes place only when the learner has a desire to learn (Principle IV), plan instruction that will make students interested and active learners. Play good music, positive reinforcement, maintain an appropriate pace, and demonstrate your own enjoyment and pleasure in teaching. Principle V is a succinct and useful definition of teaching: "***...teaching is the art of making students want to learn.***"

Principles I-III will help teachers plan effective instruction and Principles IV and V will guide the effective delivery of that instruction.