

FOUR LEARNING STAGES

PREPARE: What are the new concepts and skills found in the piece as compared to what they have previously experienced.

- 1) Activities and games that prepare students to learn are most effective done 1 or 2 weeks before playing the piece at the piano.
- 2) The majority of the preparation experiences will fall under the Hear and Do from the Hear-Do-See-Label philosophy.
- 3) Although some prep exercises can be at the piano, the majority will be things done away from the piano or “Off the Bench”.
- 4) Something as simple as students listening to the music while playing a floor game, keeping the pulse with rhythm instruments or discussing the style and instrumentation of the piece will help prepare your class for learning.

PRESENT: Building on previous skills and concepts helps students succeed and increases their confidence while learning.

- 1) The Teacher Piano is an effective way to present and review a new song. Gathering your students around to see what it looks like is often the fastest way to explain a new piece. And it requires less verbal explanation.
- 2) Without students playing, ask them to watch the music while listening to either you playing or a recording of the piece. Discuss what is familiar and what is new.
- 3) Team Play is simply a fun way to practice together in class. Students have the opportunity to play hands separate in a musically enjoyable setting.
- 4) Echo Play takes a little practice to lead in a class, but is a wonderful way to teach note reading, rhythm and develop listening skills
- 5) Relay Play is another game like activity used at the piano to teach a skill or concept.

PLAY: Creating collaborative musical experiences that enhance learning and motivate students.

- 1) Use a combination of the following ways to play and learn together.
- 2) *Piano Only* is often helpful in the beginning stages when hearing the orchestration may initially be confusing to the student.
- 3) Play along with the recorded Orchestration or *Rhythm Track*.
- 4) Take out the piano part and play the *Orchestration* as a *Solo Accompaniment*.
- 5) *Ensemble Play* or *The Piano Band* can be effective even early in the learning cycle.

REVISIT: Explore numerous creative experiences as you expand on a piece of music or chord chart that is familiar.

- 1) Revisit something they can already play and add to it. Begin with the written page and give students ideas of things they can do to change the melody, rhythm, harmony and style.
- 2) This is not a turn the page philosophy. It is quite the opposite. You will find yourself revisiting songs several times and adding a new skill or concept each time.
- 3) Get mileage out of the music. Don't be in a hurry to check it off, move on and never return. From beginners to advanced players, people enjoy playing music they can already play. Help your students take ownership of their learning.
- 4) Once a student can play the basic chord chart, expand by: 1) moving the chords around the keyboard by changing octaves, 2) mix in rocking and broken patterns while vamping the RH, 3) students take turns improvising a tune over the chart, 4) and experiment with LH rhythm patterns and styles. This encourages creativity and expression.
- 5) As you progress through the materials you will notice how each exercise and piece of music builds on the students' current knowledge. Repeatedly returning to basic ideas as new concepts are added helps to solidify the students understanding. This is also referred to as discovery learning. This spiraling back technique both solidifies learning and builds confidence.