

Guidelines for Teaching Adult Piano Students

Using the initial outcomes (chapter four) and final outcomes (chapter six) two sets of outcomes were found for students and teachers from all data collected. As teaching is reliant on having students, outcomes for adult student needs and expectations will be presented first and form the final guidelines for teachers.

Student Summary

The students enjoyed being in the study as an opportunity to being involved in and contribute to academic research. Adult students can be of any age from leaving high school to the elderly. In this study ages ranged between 22 and late 60's. Each student had a different personal and musical background which formed their musical goals and styles. However, many of them shared the following qualities and perceptions that can be indicative of a larger majority:

- All students were recorded and completed most of the questionnaires.
- All students were working at some level, with busy lifestyles and family commitments.
- All students had a passion for music and a desire for skill improvement.
- Student weekly improvement records were less successful, most likely due to lifestyle.
- The majority of students were returnees and therefore at higher levels of study.
- Several students were introduced to teachers via their children.
- Students have varying personal backgrounds, personalities and playing capabilities.
- Revision of skills and techniques was a priority.
- Students were highly self-motivated and independent but still required motivational strategies.
- Students liked to set their own external goals (exams, performance, special events, special pieces and special events).
- Goals were often high and futuristic. Students planned well ahead.
- Students like to be involved in selecting repertoire and often select it themselves.
- Students found achieving goals more difficult overall due to lifestyle factors, families and other external commitments.
- Student practice increased overall for the second video.
- Students have different primary learning styles: Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic
- They build trust and rapport with teachers, seeking advice
- Students can take advantage of teachers as counsellors which require professional and personal boundaries.
- Students had several physical impairments.
- Some students required posture adjustment

- Students perceived they only improved a little overall, but mostly in fingering (which teachers provided)

More Specifically, students reported that:

- Flexible, communicative and personable teachers were of upmost importance.
- Teachers primarily used writing instructions and fingering, and discussion as primary teaching tools.
- Mindful practice schedules and strategic methods of practice were required even at high levels.
- Memorisation was a goal but rarely achieved.
- They enjoy playing with their teacher.
- Students perceived they can transfer some skills to different repertoire.
- They were highly complementary and appreciative of their teachers input and feedback.
- Limited demonstration of practice techniques and physical movements in the lesson was limited.
- Demonstration, flexibility and big picture scenarios were often secondary.
- Teachers provided performance opportunities alongside technical and personal style.
- They enjoyed and prefer private studio teachers and wish to continue with them.
- Some students desired group/ensemble lessons.

This concludes perceptions and findings for the students and provide the basis for the following teacher guidelines.

Guidelines for Teachers with Adult Students

Two teachers were qualified in performance, rather than pedagogy which impacted the ways that students were taught and ultimately performed. Together with the student perceptions and requirements outlined above, the study recommends adults students are best approached through the following guidelines:

Teaching Style – Personal Skills

- Be flexible. A flexible facilitator role is particularly welcome and appropriate for adults at any level.
- Transfer from a dictatorial role to a facilitator as the student matures.
- Acquire a variety of approaches, skills and strategies to cover all aspects of teaching and learning.
- Being personable and communicative is effective.

- Be wary of having an agenda or limitations
- Patience, empathy, encouragement, humour, listening.

Professional Skills

- Questioning techniques and discussion work well but ought to be balanced with demonstration of techniques, practice and repertoire.
- Be aware of what you say and do, they may be different.
- Use a contract to set personal and professional boundaries.
- Ensure your own needs are met within the contract.
- Use professional development to upskill.
- Promote discussion groups within your own community and online.
- Exchange and explore (new) information.
- Be as skilled as possible, utilise the adult learning theories to take responsibility for your own learning. Explore Online Apps, lectures and discussion forums.
- Use reflective practices (journals, videos, audio recordings, discussion, notes) to plan and review your teaching and your students.

Teaching Strategies, Approaches and Skills

- Know your students primary learning style and use teaching strategies and approaches accordingly.
- Including a variety of approaches to cover different learning styles
- Facilitate self- directed activities for motivation and learning
- Encourage ensemble work as a motivator and learning tool.
- Use audio/visual equipment as a motivator, teaching / review tool, and improvement record (posture, performance practice). Ipad and phones are particularly useful.
- Arrange performances in increasing safety zones to lessen anxiety.
- Find or arrange small projects to motivate students.
- Play with your student.
- Overcome reluctance to practice difficulties or techniques with a variety of effective, mindful and economic practice techniques.
- Ensure the student can perform the required outcome during the lesson (then the weekly assignment is to continue doing it rather than alone)
- Use more physical demonstration for practice routines and physical awareness.

- Build up patterns of repertoire with the same techniques so students can become independent.
- Ensure practice sections are not too large, too fast and include joins to the next bar or section.
- Teach students how to practice back in context.
- Visit the student's home to review posture, seating arrangements and a practice session if necessary.
- Give clear precise instructions.
- Assign less pieces to those with high anxiety or busy lifestyles concentrating on improvement rather than achievement.
- Encourage and teach students to be more independent especially with fingering.
- Review goals, lifestyle and practice ability with students on a term basis at least.
- Include the bigger picture so students understand the value of current techniques/ practice etc.

Teaching Materials for Adults

Repertoire for adults can be used for a variety of reasons, events and occasions encapsulating different musical genres and styles of playing. Skills can be transferred between genres for the most part and include different skills for different styles therefore expanding the students' knowledge and playing ability. Providing a variety of repertoire can be motivating for the student and can be rearranged for different abilities. Most teachers did not use tutor books and considering the students' goals, they were not really necessary. Only CS6 mentioned her teacher may have been using a tutor book. However, they can be useful at times. Students interests, hobbies, work, family, background and personality provide a wealth of information and clues as to what they may like. The internet provides a plethora of repertoire. For lower levels, simple guitar busking books provide well known popular tunes with chord indications over the melody which can be used to teach a variety of accompaniments patterns and harmonic sequences. It is important that teachers recognise when students need to move forwards in their learning or consolidate. The latter provides ample opportunity to provide a variety of possibly simpler repertoire for the same skill or teaching point and in turn can avoid boredom. Review of old pieces but in a different arrangement is always useful. The study provided a snapshot of repertoire that teachers and students chose during this short period.

- Examination repertoire and technical work
- Classical repertoire
- Popular and folk pieces for special events: weddings, duets
- Pieces for seasons: Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving.
- Pieces that relate to their work: Hymns, songs, war time songs
- Pieces for family occasions or particular people.

- Easy pieces or arrangements to build performance experience
- Ensemble duets (trios and accompaniments are also valuable).

A full list of repertoire used in the study in Appendix J.



Fig 7.2 Final Conceptual Framework: Proposed Piano Teaching Context in Canada

To summarise, this framework offers Canadian studio piano teachers:

- A comprehensive training system, including adult pedagogy.
- Minimum recommended teaching level is Certificate.
- Certificates include adult pedagogy, business and educational units.
- Minimum qualifications linked to public examination nomination.
- All teachers under this system will be qualified at some level and included on a national register.
- All qualifications to be nationally portable.
- All qualifications include recognition of prior learning and experience.
- Qualifications are linked to registration categories in professional associations.
- Professional associations are linked to the wider accreditation, education and training community.
- Regulation of the industry is provided.