

Teaching Philosophy - Jacob Wang

I want my students to foster a love for music while becoming more confident in themselves through performing. I'm teaching music through piano so I emphasize the tools they need to engage with music; music theory, historical context, and practicing skills, strategies, and techniques.

I prioritize a student-centered approach, tailoring my teaching methods to the unique needs, goals, and learning styles of each student. I always try to incorporate music theory into my lessons in order to help a student see with a wider lens the bigger picture of the form and character of the music. Much of this teaching is through question and answer teaching of pattern recognition when introducing a piece. Some students need a more technical and kinetic approach; feeling the gestures, rhythm, and motion of the notes through mimicking and feeling it on their forearms and hands can help them internalize it and reproduce those motions. I believe in cultivating a positive and encouraging learning environment that fosters self-expression, self-discipline, and a strong work ethic.

My teaching will always include: demonstration, discussion, and discovery. Demonstration while pointing out specific items for the student to see and hear, is the most concise way of teaching. For example, matching the taper of a phrase can be achieved if the student has that aural goal in mind. Other times, discussion will yield more thought provoking and self directed learning. Music is a subjective art that relies on the performer to have opinions, personality, and taste. Discussing different fingering ideas for an advanced student will give them a guide to think through future fingerings. For younger learners, I believe that discovery and guiding students to concepts is important for retention and continued interest.

Respect and empathy are paramount in building a trusting relationship with the student. A piano lesson must be a safe space for the student to make mistakes and learn from them in a positive and encouraging manner. For example, I adjust the lighting of the space and the language I use with my sight impaired student so that he is comfortable and does not think of his disability as an obstacle to his learning. I always try to guide lessons in a positive and constructive manner. When students play poorly, I try to provide them a safe space and give encouragement and motivation so that they know that I believe in them and their future success. I always speak to the parents after lessons about successes in the lesson, new concepts, and opportunities to improve so that they can support their child at home.

As a teacher, I am continuously evaluating my own teaching and looking for new ideas and approaches to enhance a student's learning through workshops, conferences, and exploring new methodologies. I am continuously working through different beginner method books so that I am familiar with and able to use specific methods that suit a student's growth trajectory. In conclusion, my piano teaching philosophy aims to inspire a lasting passion for music in my students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to make music and be lifelong learners.