

Brandon Bascom  
Teaching Philosophy

One of my primary goals is to help facilitate learning by providing a safe environment where everyone can feel comfortable and where optimal learning can take place. As Seymour Bernstein said, I would like to “influence qualities of humanity” in my students through the development of musical skills. Following Leon Fleisher’s statement that his ultimate goal is to put himself out of a job with each student, I strive to prepare students to be self-sufficient and able to make wise musical decisions on their own after teaching them correct principles.

This is especially important in teaching individual lessons. To achieve these goals, it is imperative to teach students how to practice effectively as proper persistent practice is the foundation of progress. Strong practice habits, including good time management, self-observation (recording) and setting achievable goals are important in students building such a foundation. It is also of great importance to teach proper technique. This has elements of individuality, while also being bound by the general laws of playing the piano. Helping students use this technique to solve technical problems ensures that they will be able to transfer the knowledge and find proper ways to play difficult passages.

Versatility is essential in teaching due to different situations I encounter—teaching college students in group courses and private lessons and teaching children to adults (of all levels and abilities) in group and private lessons. Having students with different majors, different backgrounds and learning styles requires me to teach principles and skills in multiple ways to be effective. Modeling is one method that is successful if properly executed and is not the only method used. Having open

discussions is another method that helps me understand the needs of students. In group situations, discussion allows others to collaborate and brainstorm on challenges. Group assignments can be another useful and enjoyable method for some students to learn. Clear lesson plans help maintain focus and set goals for me personally as a teacher. I use technology to help teach group classes as well as teaching theory and history in private lessons and master classes.

In group piano courses, weekly or bi-weekly quizzes help ensure that students practice and progress in their musical development. Allowing students to choose the repertoire that they work on helps motivate them no matter what situation they are in. Monthly master classes also help students motivate each other and become familiar with repertoire. Recitals, state testing (MTNA), as well as other festivals and competitions (if desired) also serve as a method of assessment and motivation. These events require my students to have knowledge in theory and musicology and expose them to the entire piano repertory from the Baroque to the Contemporary. Having a private studio not only helps me increase my teaching experience, but also serves as a way to build programs and a way to prepare students to enter college.

I am also able to incorporate principles I have learned from great teachers that I have found to be successful. I bring as much as I can from my experience in teaching, performing both as a soloist and collaboratively, from course work and my years of lessons to help others learn. I strive to continue the lifelong pursuit of research, learning and teaching by attendance and participation in conferences and workshops as well as involvement with professional organizations.