

What Really Goes On In Ms. Cheryl's Mind As She Teaches My Child?

There is a very important connection which I must establish with your child in order to help them succeed. The first line of communication is to get acquainted with their basic personality and communication style.

Are they extroverted and enjoy telling me about their interests and what happened at school that day? Are they more reserved and need to warm up slowly and feel I am genuinely interested in them and not just making polite conversation?

Do they work well under pressure or produce more with less pressure? Are they taking lessons because they want to or because their parents want this as part of their educational experience?

I spend part of my morning working on the lesson plan for your child's afternoon class. The selection of the new piece of music for the week is based upon three essential elements. Your child has a physical ability which allows them to play the song, an intellectual ability which allows them to understand the material and an emotional capacity which is perhaps one of the most important aspects of the lessons.

Finding the right balance in these three elements is what creates a successful experience for your child. If they are extremely bright and emotionally ready for more challenge but have very small hands or poor muscle control, the music must be selected which will keep them motivated while we work on their physical development. If their hands are too small but their heart is ready for a larger piece of music, I rewrite the music to fit their physical ability.

Perhaps they are intellectually and physically ready for more challenge but they are not emotionally ready. This is part of growing up and many times a student's emotional capacity will not balance well with their intellectual or physical ability. I will choose several pieces of easier music for your child to work on each week. This reinforces their reading skills and allows them to grow a little more emotionally until they request more challenge when I ask if they would like 2 or 3 easier pieces or 1 more challenging piece for the week.

I like to use the words, "plugging into the student." In your child's first few minutes on the piano bench I plug in to them emotionally which allows me to intuit what they can handle that week. If they have had a bad day or week and are feeling overwhelmed I may make immediate adjustments in the lesson plan that was created that morning.

If they have not had time to complete the assignment we review the material and use the lesson time to work on much needed drilling of the fundamentals of note recognition, rhythms, interval reading and chord theory.

I will also stay in communication with you because creating a successful experience requires the parents, student and teacher. This really is the three legged stool which is essential for the best balance. There will come a time in your child's music education when they will naturally resist practicing. Most children do not come equipped with the ability to self discipline 100% of the time in every facet of their lives. That is true of adults too!

When this happens I will lend my support as we come up with a workable solution for your family's schedule and priorities. I will offer advice and share some perspectives which I think may be helpful as you strive to support your child. When it is a self discipline issue, children will adjust their attitude and begin producing again if their teacher and parents work together to create a practice time and schedule which is required and

prioritized. You may find the simple solution of not allowing any screen time (TV, video or computer) until the piano assignment is complete is very effective. All parents who have used this have seen their child move from resistance to productivity and even acceptance with no more resistance! I will make sure your child knows their parents and teacher are in agreement about the importance of this. I will also lend a sympathetic ear to your own challenge as parents trying to stay consistent with the program and creating an environment that guarantees success. I have heard enough adults tell me they were sorry they quit lessons and wished their parents had made them continue that I know how important it is for parents and teacher to provide the discipline when the child is not self disciplined

I understand the pressure many families are under with both parents working, trying to get meals on the table, homework and other extracurricular activities balanced. *We work together to see genuine growth and productivity realizing that there will be some weeks when we simply had to skip a few practices in order to keep everything else in balance! .*

Every lesson I plan for your child is unique. Do they need to work more on rhythm? Are they ready to begin composing a piece of music? How is their sight reading ability developing? What are their favorite pieces of music and why do they like those particular pieces so much? Are they ready to move to the next level and which piece of music is perfect for their transition?

These are some of the things that are going on in Ms. Cheryl's mind as I teach your child. These are things you may not have realized as you submit your monthly tuition. But they are part of the value you receive when your child studies with Ms. Cheryl.

There is one final thing that I believe is extremely important. I genuinely enjoy and like your child! I have never met a child I did not like in 25 years of teaching.

I will never forget a visit from a piano parent in Texas many years ago. He was a Middle school Principal and his son was a very bright student. But the boy had some social challenges he had not yet mastered and many of his teachers and fellow classmates were not very kind to him. This Father stopped by my home several years after his son was no longer taking lessons.

He said, "I just came by because I wanted you to know how much your kindness meant to our son and to us when he studied with you. You were the only teacher that actually liked him and it helped him through some very difficult years."

So now you know what is going on *in my mind* as I teach your child and there is nothing but kindness and patience *in my heart*.