

Arts Assessment For Learning

MUSIC — 2ND GRADE

HOW TO & TIPS: KEYBOARDS

The Unit and lessons I will implement this strategy in are:

Second grade students will use the *Two Stars and a Wish* approach to giving and receiving feedback starting in the beginning of the school year. Most students have already had music class the year before. They have already been introduced to the piano keyboard, reading simple rhythms, deciphering which hand to use based on the clef that is indicated in the music and following finger numbers which are assigned to specific notes.

(I am choosing to introduce this technique to the first grade and kindergarten students, on a more grade appropriate level, as part of their curriculum work as a means of early intervention. I have noticed these gaps in student learning for some time and am hoping that this will serve as a to eliminate such problems at an earlier stage in their piano education.)

I have noticed that the students are more focused and perform more accurately during the mini lesson (the engaging activities which are more teacher centered and presented to the whole class) than when they go to the piano keyboards with their partner. My goal is to work with the students to elicit specific things they have to do at the piano to perform a piece correctly. After engaging the students in brainstorming characteristics of a good pianist and ways they can improve their piano playing, they will be reintroduced to the checklist they used last year with their partner in order to keep, both the pianist and the partner engaged, focused and constantly thinking about their performance on the keyboards.

Step 1:

After using songs, dances, chants, poems, flash cards and discussions to reviews piano concepts taught the year before, we discussed several things about being a good pianist. Some discussions included the breakdown of the following overarching question, "What do good pianists do?"

Some guided discussion topics were:

1. How should a pianist behave at the piano?
2. What does a focused pianist look like while practicing?
3. What should we ask ourselves before playing or practicing the piece?
4. What should a good partner (conductor) do to help the pianist?

Once a student answers with a correct idea, (such as "a good pianist has their hands curved, over the piano keys they are about to play) I invite a student (or pair of students)

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up to front (to the demonstration keyboard) to act out the correct behavior/ concept that the original child answered. While they are acting out the correct action of a "good pianist" I write their answer on chart paper, in a "word bubble" and put their name in the "bubble," acknowledging them for their thoughtful answer.

Following the "performance" of the correct action, I invited a student (or pair of students) to come up and demonstrate the silly yet incorrect way to perform that original idea. This will invite entertainment into the situation as well as showing students what they would need to correct if they see their partner doing something similar. And to conclude and acknowledge the original correct answer, I would, yet again, invite up a different student, (or pair of students) to correctly perform the action which helps describe "what do good pianists do?" All the while, reiterating what the students are doing that makes this correct. I also let the students know that when they eventually go to the piano, I will constantly be looking for these actions, and will take pictures of them to post under the "word bubble."
(SEE RESOURCES)

This will continue for several answers that the student give-- creating, not only a bulletin board of wonderful and thoughtful answers of student generated comments (they they can refer to), but it will later, turn into the checklist that the students will view to be able to help them create a list of compliments one could give to their partner along with a list of goals for improvement.

Step 2:

For a few classes, (a new piano piece each class) I will use the student generated list of what a good pianist would do as the focus of my mini lesson. Throughout the lesson I will use quotes from the students' list of things good pianists do and make it very clear that I am giving compliments for each performance. I encourage the students to think of two compliments for each of the performances that we see and hear. This will then become a list of "stars" for the students to use later on during their practicing time with their partners. (SEE ATTACHMENT 2) When this concept is clearly established, I will introduce the idea of giving goals for improvement. I will reference the incorrect performing they did in a silly manner in the beginning of the school year to help model what I am introducing. The idea of giving a goal to their partner to work on will be modeled clearly. The students should state the desired action as a wish. This will maintain dignity to the performers playing. It also must follow the two stars. The process is called two stars and a wish and should be kept in that order. Similar to the stars, these wishes will be charted and placed on a sheet for students to reference during their practice time with their partners. (SEE ATTACHMENT 3) For example, I wish you would keep your hands round or I wish you would play the eighth notes faster/ closer together, because they both fit into one beat.

Step 3:

Another strategy to use during the modeling of giving stars and wishes is to view exemplar videos. Students will see and hear correct playing for each of the pieces they will learn. They will always discuss what they noticed the performer was doing. While charting students responses to "What We Notice," students get the chance to verbalized correct

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performance techniques and musicality while trying to emulate proper playing. This also enhances the list of stars and wishes for them to use with each other.

Step 4:

To continue modeling the process of giving stars and wishes, I enlarged the lists for the students to use during their practice time at the pianos with their partner. After each performance, the partner who was not playing, (the conductor) was to share two stars and one wish (Similarly to how it was modeled for them) The performer was then given the chance to perform again in hopes that they will improve. Sometimes the performer needs more than one chance. At times, they need additional assistance such as strategies to help them improve. After a designated time had passed, students will return to the meeting area and share stars and wishes they received. At the teacher's discretion, select some students to play for the class. Choose students who play at different levels. Have the class assist with some additional stars and give strategies for improving their wish.

Step 5:

In subsequent classes, have the students, not only share their stars and wishes, but have them notate them in their booklets. This will help them keep track of their progress and help you, as the teacher, know when to add new concepts or work with students in a small group.