

Challenges and Solutions with Transfer Students

Remarks from great pedagogues:

Frances Clark

“I feel that I can count on a fair degree of success with students I start from their very first lesson, but I need help with students who transfer to me from other teachers. Many of them are poor readers, careless musicians, and have little or no technique; but most importantly they are playing music way over their heads, and don’t know it.”

(Questions and answers by Frances Clark, p.201)

Ruth Slenczynka

“The habit of poor reading with too quick, faulty memorizing causes frustration that curtails musical exploration, growth, and enjoyable performance.”

(Music at Your Fingertips by Ruth Slenczynska, p.14)

Marienne Uszler

“Solving specific problems or eliminating certain deficiencies may not present as much challenge as being able to teach the transfer student at a number of levels simultaneously.”

(The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher, p.137)

Marienne Uszler

“The interview should include activities that enable you to assess the student’s reading and rhythmic ability, general knowledge about music, practice habits, ear, attitudes, learning propensities, and readiness to follow instruction.”

(The Well Tempered Keyboard Teacher, Marienne Uszler, p.129)

Martha Baker-Jordan

“Special assessment procedures and perhaps different initial teaching techniques will be called for because this student usually comes with “excess baggage” that is often a challenge to even the best and most experienced teacher.

(Practical Piano Pedagogy by Martha Baker-Jordan, p.125)

Square-One Assessment Form

Student Name: _____

Date of Birth _____

School Grade _____

Years of Piano Lessons _____

| | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| Musical Literacy | | | |
| | 3 | Exceeds expectations | |
| | 2 | Proficient | |
| | 1 | Not proficient | |
| Technique | | | |
| | 4 | Healthy technique in your style | |
| | 3 | Healthy technique not in your style | |
| | 2 | Unhealthy technique in your style | |
| | 1 | Unhealthy technique not in your style | |
| Musicianship | | | |
| | 4 | Above average musicianship | |
| | 3 | Basic musicianship | |
| | 2 | Underdeveloped musicianship | |
| | 1 | Developed musicianship in a different style | |
| Practice Habits | | | |
| | 3 | Aligned with your studio's policies | |
| | 2 | Exists but differs from your studio policies | |
| | 1 | Practice routine is lacking | |
| Total: | | | |

Points to Consider when Evaluating

Musical Literacy

- Notes
- Rhythm
- Fingering
- Articulation (non-legato, legato, staccato)
- Terminology
- Theory/Harmony
- Aural Training
- Form
- Voicing

Technique:

- Sitting position
- Posture
- Hand Position
- Alignment
- Sound
- Articulation
- Velocity
- Scales
- Etudes

Musicianship

- Phrasing
- Attention to harmony
- Terminology
- Style and historical understanding
- Articulation
- Sound
- Attention to the score
- Timing
- Balance

Practice Habits

- How many times a week the student practices?
- How long are the practice sessions?
- How does the student divide his practice sessions?
- What is the student's practice environment?
- How does the student approach a new piece?
- How does the student practice a difficult spot or a passage?
- Does the student use the metronome? When and how?
- Does the student use recording device for their practice sessions?
- How involved are the parents in the practice routine?

Useful Links and Literature:

- Playing Beyond the Notes: A Pianist's Guide to Musical Interpretation by Deborah Sinn: <https://www.amazon.com/Playing-Beyond-Notes-Pianists-Interpretation/dp/0199859507>
- Music At Your Fingertips by Ruth Slenczynska
- Questions and Answers by Frances Clark
- Practical Piano Pedagogy by Martha Baker-Jordan
- The Well-Tempered Keyboard Teacher by Marianne Uszler, Stewart Gordon and Scott McBride Smith
- Using Social Media in Private Lessons: Why the Future of Learning Piano Needs to Include Social Media by Margarita Denenburg:
<http://keyboardpedagogy.org/images/PPF/Piano%20Pedagogy%20Forum,%20Volume%202017,%20No.%202%20--%20Sept.%202016.pdf>

Piano Magazines:

- For Children: <http://pianoexplorer.net/>
- Older Students and Teachers:
International Piano Magazine <http://www.rhinegold.co.uk/rhinegold-publishing/magazines/international-piano/>
Clavier Companion <https://www.claviercompanion.com/>

Practicing - Recording Programs:

- <https://collabramusic.com/>
- <http://www.practicia.com/>