

Organizing Lessons

Sherry Sinift

Use practice books to organize assignments.

Include detailed instructions about “how to” practice.

Make the goal or desired outcome on each assignment clear to students and parents.

Assignments should be given in the following areas:

Solos + duets from UWSP curriculum

Scales

Special Exercises

Etudes

Group pieces

Review pieces

Solos- choose repertoire that falls in a methodical sequence, that challenges but is achievable, do a thorough technical analysis of each piece before introducing it to the student

Scales- keys and bowings based on repertoire and etudes student is currently studying

Special exercises- for purpose of introducing new finger patterns, bow techniques, new positions, address issues of relaxation and/or correct position

Etudes- important because they build technique in a methodical way, reinforce reading skills and provide opportunity for the teacher to introduce many concepts of music fundamentals (key signatures, time signatures, intervals etc.)

Group pieces- reinforcement in preparation for group performances

Review pieces- once a solo has been memorized and is being played fluently it can be moved into the category of review and the student may begin working on a new piece. Review pieces provide an extremely rich opportunity for refining and polishing the students technique and exploring issues of expressiveness and musicality.

Duets- provide important experience in ensemble playing and reinforcement of reading skills

Budget lesson time so that all assignments are covered in a 2-3 week cycle

example:

Week I	tuning/unpacking	5"
	Scale	3"
	Review pieces	7"
	Solo	10"
	Group Piece(s)	5"
Week II	tuning/unpacking	5"
	Etude	5"
	Solo	15"
	Group Piece(s)	5"
Week III	tuning/unpacking	5"
	Scale	5"
	Etude	5"
	Solo	10"
	Duets	5"

Structure goals for each student so that you know what you want to achieve

this week -

this month-

this semester-

this year-

at the end of the student's time with you

Like building a house of bricks: as you put each brick in place you must have a plan, a picture in mind for how the finished house will look, otherwise your brick laying may be too random and may not produce a structurally sound building in the end.

Issues to be addressed as you work on repertoire and exercises:

*position*correct notes*correct rhythms*accurate pulse*correct bowings

*intonation *tone production*correct bow arm motions*music reading

*music fundamentals *fluency *expressiveness*bow division*style

*practice techniques *performance preparation

Choose your issues judiciously,

keep your focus specific without losing sight of the big picture

Keep your standards high without being perfectionistic,

remember that once the student can play a solo fluently, from memory, it is important to move on to the next piece and continue working on the same issues in the context of a new piece.