

Capstone 204-Mrs. Eley (1:10 to 2:10 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays)

For my first observation, I sat in on Mrs. Eley's Capstone Piano class. This class is made up of two meeting times. Tuesdays at 1:10 pm are technique classes, and Thursdays at the same time are repertoire classes. For my two observations, I chose the Tuesday class for two weeks.

Mrs. Eley was very student centered in her teaching. Every activity was planned, and within each activity she asked her students many questions individually and as a class. Her activities were consistent between the two weeks. She kept certain elements the same, such as how they performed the pieces as a class, but she also introduced different problem solving techniques each week. Her activities included playing through open score, harmonizations, and chord accompaniments all as a class. Often she would go around the room on each activity and give a student one line to play using one hand as they went through the entire piece. The purpose of this was to increase comfort and confidence when playing in front of others. There were very few moments when anyone was playing with their headphones plugged in.

Mrs. Eley created a very "open discussion" atmosphere in which students could easily share their practice techniques or how to solve certain technique problems. She called on both students that had hands raised and those who seemed to be playing and trying to figure things out on their own during discussion. Her goals for class and individuals were very clear, and she made sure to review at the end of each activity what she expected for the next class. At the end of the second class, she even started to go through time management techniques for the next few weeks of practicing before spring break.

Piano I-Mrs. Livingston (2:50 to 3:50 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays)

For my second observed class, I chose to observe Mrs. Livingston's Piano I class that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:50 to 3:50 pm. I attended Tuesday's meeting time for

two weeks. This class is a very individual-centered class due to the variety of levels of pianists and musicianship.

For both classes, Mrs. Livingston went about the order of activities in a very similar way. She began with scales and warm-up activities, moved on to a piece that was assigned to everyone, then moved on to individual repertoire. For both class periods, all students were on headphones the entire time and she listened in individually. This might help in a beginner group class due to performance anxiety on a new instrument. However, there was an opportunity in the second observation period to go up and play on the upright piano in the classroom. None of the students did so for this class, but Mrs. Livingston obviously offers this often. Even though none of the students performed this time, they seemed very happy to play for her one-on-one through headphones. Mrs. Livingston has set up a very trusting atmosphere, and makes the students feel as though they have her complete attention all of the time.

When the students began with scales, she walked around individually to assist and then assign for old and new scales. The group piece in the first class was written by one of the students in the class, and each student was given a line to play. In the second observation of this class, "Scale Waltz" was the assigned group piece. This time Mrs. Livingston listened individually through the headphone set. This piece was also a part of the transposition activity. For solo repertoire, she also used the headphone set to listen and teach individually.

I was very surprised at the differences between these two classes. Both teachers were very effective, but also had extremely different levels of piano students. Mrs. Eley was teaching students in their last branch of piano class, and Mrs. Livingston was teaching those in the first

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string of piano classes. I saw the strengths in both teaching styles and thought that each style and structure of class had advantages and tools that I could use in my own group piano class.