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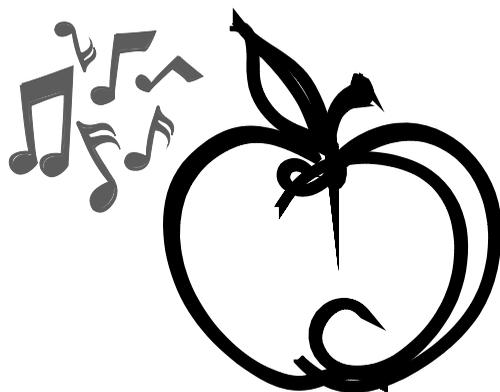
PTA MUSIC TEACHERS' HANDBOOK



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**P
A** SCHOOL OF MUSIC

TEACHERS'



HANDBOOK

Employee Handbook

**PTA School of Music
and Learning Centre**

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“ Imagine Christmas! If we did not have colourful Christmas wrap for our gifts. We would not see a glorious expression of joy on the faces of the children. Our gift (music) is fantastic. We must wrap it with a certain amount of animation to offer our students! The wrapping (animation) will excite the interest and motivation for customers to come back year after year. “ - National Children’s Committee

Punctuality

- Teachers are expected to arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of their first lesson. This is to allow time to pick-up attendance cards, check at the front desk for any changes to the schedule and to pick up any student invoices, prepare your teaching area and notify administration of any questions or concerns you may have.
- The first student should never be kept waiting, so you should always know when your first lesson of the day is. Always check the schedule at the end of your night for the start time of your next work day. If changes occur after that, administration will inform you of the change.
- If a student is late for their lesson you are not expected to teach the full ½ hour. Take note of when you start teaching and teach them whatever time is left in their original ½ hour. Do not inconvenience your next student because your previous one was late.
- If, due to unforeseeable circumstances, you are late to arrive for your lessons, you must teach the full ½ hour lesson and inform the next student that you are running a few minutes late.
- Be careful not to clock watch! We understand and appreciate that you want to give each student their full time, but watching the clock looks bad to parents. It gives the impression that you can't wait for the lesson to be over. Check the time occasionally and inconspicuously.

Appearance

- Maintain a neat and clean appearance. Your clothing can be casual, but always in good taste.
- Greet students with a friendly smile, and welcome them into their lesson.
- How you present yourself impacts how others see you. Look interested and happy to be teaching and maintain good posture. This means sitting up straight and sitting close to the student. Slouching or looking uninterested in the lesson is unacceptable.
- Remember, parents and prospective customers observe lessons through the window, and it is your responsibility to represent the school well.

Studios

PLEASE DO NOT USE THE PIANO OR THE PIANO STOOL AS A SHELF:

- Do not write on them.
- Do not prop things against them.
- Do not put things on them – even a Kleenex box will scratch the highly polished surface.
- Do not abuse them in any way.

They are expensive pieces of equipment which are always for sale. This means if they get damaged, it reflects in the price they can be sold for.

Each teacher is to leave their studio the way they find it – hopefully this will always be clean and tidy and a pleasure to work in. All teachers must tidy their studio when they finish for the evenings. This includes wiping down the piano with Windex and a cloth (which helps prevent the spread of germs), tidying any loose papers, and throwing away empty water bottles. Drawing instructors must wipe the table and put all equipment away **neatly** ensuring the room is tidy upon their departure.

PLEASE CLEAN YOUR PIANO AND ROOM AT THE END OF THE EVENING. ALWAYS LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN WHEN YOU LEAVE. IF YOU HAVE MOVED CHAIRS, STANDS ETC., PLEASE THEM PUT BACK THE WAY YOU FOUND THEM.

Agendas

The whole point of agendas is for students AND PARENTS to know what happened during the lesson and what needs to be prepared for the following week. You don't need to write a novel, but you do need to be precise and explain assignments. Should you happen to be absent one week, the supply teacher will have a clear outline of what they should be working on in class. Please also remember that we live in an age where paper is precious. The page should be full of your written instructions for the week.

Attendance and Bookkeeping

- **Attendance cards** are to be kept neat and accurate. Failure to do so could result in mistakes and confusion on your paycheck.
- Please ensure you are familiar with the required paperwork when you are supplying for another teacher.
- **Employee time cards** are to be filled out and handed in along with your time cards at the end of each month. Make sure that the time card correctly reflects the hours you have worked and corresponds to the attendance cards. Pay cheques will be issued by the 3rd day of each month. Please remember that your pay cheques and rates of pay are private, and should not be discussed with other teachers.
- Although we understand you have other commitments, our commitment is to our students. Please ensure that you are not absent from your teaching on a regular basis and only when completely necessary. Students and parents need consistency, and a teacher who is continually absent does not provide this. All teachers must complete an “**absence request**” form and all absences must be approved by Mrs B. or Donna. Poor attendance of teachers could be cause for your replacement. In addition, never, never, tell student/parents that you are going to be absent because they won't show up for their lesson and this is not in the best interest of the school.
- If you have a no-show you are paid for your time. All teachers are required to mentor other lessons. If there are no “odd jobs” to be done during this time, please sit-in on another teacher's lesson. If you have questions about the lesson please wait until the end of the evening and ask the teacher in private, never in front of students or parents.
- Attendance cards and your employee time card are the only things to be kept in your folder. Please do not leave any other personal teaching items inside your folder.
- All forms (e.g. **book orders**) should be filled out completely and legibly to avoid any confusion. This means including the child's first and last name and the lesson date on the form. These forms are to be handed in at the end of your night, and not left in your folder.

Student Reports

- In order to facilitate communication between students, teachers and parents, we have implemented student reports on a regular basis within the agendas. Please ensure that you complete these with your students.
- We would also encourage teachers to leave their lessons one or two minutes early with the student to update the parent on their child's progress
- Remember! Only positive comments!

Commitment to Students and Parents

- Our goal is to create a happy and productive learning environment. All students should have a smile on their face after a lesson and should leave the school already looking forward to next week. If this is not the case, there may be a problem which you should feel free to address with the school's administrators.
- Music should be an enjoyable experience and your attitudes and presentation will help to create this.
- It is important to remember that all students learn differently and have different needs and passions. Sometimes a learning strategy that works amazingly with one student will be unsuccessful with another.
- Implementing a variety of activities into your lesson will not only keep the lessons more interesting and interactive, but will help you find what the student enjoys most and how they learn best.

Here are few examples:

- Create games that include whatever you are teaching at the time.
- Use the myriad of rhythm instruments, including the bell kit to teach rhythm and tempo.
- Once you find one or two things that seem to really work and that your student enjoys, use them as a part of your weekly lesson.

Teaching Strategies and Guidelines

- It is important as you develop your teaching skills and increase the amount of teaching experience that you have, that you develop a “guideline” of sorts to help direct what you look for in the various areas of the student’s program. What this means is that you should have a variety of things that you can “check off “ that the student has accomplished, and that you have a few different techniques or strategies for learning a songs, technique, sight reading and ear training.

The following is an example of what to look for and strategies to use for songs:

Skills Check List:	Learning Techniques:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Counting while playing ○ Counting at consistent tempo - Articulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lifts after slurs ○ Consistency of slurs/phrases ○ Staccato - Fingering - Tempo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At tempo – What is a good tempo for this student? ○ Consistent tempo throughout - Dynamics - Who is the Composer? - What is the Genre? - What form is this piece? - How can I tie theory into the study of this piece - How can I tie technique into the study of this piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play song backwards - Pick 1 or 2 bars, repeat x 5 - Start section slow, each time repeat faster - Start playing a note or two before the end of a bar to eliminate pauses - Start anywhere in the song - Play H.S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Looking at book only ○ Looking at hands only ○ Eyes closed ○ THEN H.T - Play memorized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With dynamics ○ Rests accounted for ○ Notes correct - Counting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Count and clap song ○ Play on one note and count ○ Count while playing the song

Teaching Strategies and Guidelines Con't

Another strategy that is very useful when trying to keep track of your students accomplishments, goals and next steps is a chart outlining your plans for them. The following is an example of this kind of tool:

Student	Grade / Level	Goals / Next Steps	Exams
Student 1	Grade 2	Grade 1 Exam = 82 <i>Burlington Festival?</i>	Gr. 2 Exam = May 2008
Student 2	ABC 3	Move into grade 1 = Dec. 2007 Start Elementary Theory Book 2 <i>Burlington Festival?</i>	
Student 3	Grade 5	<i>Burlington Festival?</i> <i>Peel Festival?</i>	Gr. 5 Exam = May or Aug. 2008 Gr. 1 Theory Exam = Jan. 2008

General Concepts to Be Considered when teaching:

- Beginner books: Make sure they suit the capabilities and personality of the student.
- Set goals: “ Before Christmas we will finish....”
- Teaching adults: How does your teaching change?
- Ear training and sight reading : Make it a part of the lesson, it's not just for exams.
- Transfer students: what were the expectations of them from their previous teacher, and how do those compare to yours?

Principles and Aim of Teaching

- Ask yourself the question: “ Just where am I satisfied to stop in the teaching or learning of a particular piece”
- To teach the student to listen appreciatively and to perform artistically, with feeling and emotion rather than mechanically.
- To develop in the student the ability to think for him/ herself and to derive the answer from logical thought rather than the teacher providing the answers.

Play-Time or Practice Routine

- Practicing at home is an essential part of the learning process for the student, and plays a critical role in how the student progresses. Here are some important things to remember when it comes to practicing:
- Students should be taught that practicing is not a tedious chore. A student should enjoy sitting down to play their pieces and to work on their overall technique. If you have a student who seems to be struggling with practicing, try setting up a routine with them. Go over their weekly schedule and plan a time each day that they can practice, and what they should accomplish in that time. Laying it all out for them sometimes makes it easier for them to keep up and check mark what they've done as they go.
- For young students, instead of referring to it as practice time, it might be helpful to refer to it as "play-time". Let your young students know that each day they should play on their instrument and play all the fun songs or activities that you wrote about in their agenda. Talk to them about putting on a little concert once or twice a week for their family and about all the fun things they will learn next week if they remember to do all of their "play-time" this week.
- Sometimes you will find yourself teaching a student who does not come to lessons because they want to, but more so because their parents have chosen to enroll them in lessons. This is always a tricky situation, but there are some things you can do to make the lesson more enjoyable for both you and the student. Try teaching songs that aren't in the book, songs that the student wants to learn. Also, you can have the student make up their own song each week, and have them perform it for you in their next lesson.

Importance of Theory

- The study of theory is not only important to students preparing to take exams, but also to beginner students, and it is a key element to learning to theoretical aspects of music. The better a student understands the theoretical side of music, the easier the student will find their practical study of music.

- Theory should be introduced from the very first lesson, whether it is a part of their book or not. Some introductory books have theory work associated with them, while others do not. To begin with, you as the teacher may have to assign basic theory assignments like, naming notes on a staff, drawing a keyboard or tabs and labelling them, or tracing the hand and numbering the fingers.
- After the very basics are learned throughout the lessons there are a variety of books that cater to different levels of knowledge and that offer activities in which you as the teacher can assign each week in lessons.

The following are some of the suggested texts:

“Elementary Music Theory” by Mark Sarnecki

- There are 3 books in this series, and by completing these books you will have prepared the student to start their preliminary rudiments. In some cases it isn't necessary for the student to start from the very first book, so make sure that you use your discretion and analyse both the students capabilities and the book to see if that particular book will be appropriate.

Elementary Music Rudiments” by Mark Sarnecki

- These books are to be completed by the student in order to prepare for their theory exams. There are 3 levels in this series, **Preliminary, Grade 1 and Grade 2** and unlike the previous books all three levels should be completed consecutively to ensure the student is properly prepared and ready to write their theory exams.

Barbara Wharram and Grace Vandendool also produce great theory books. It is your choice what you use for your students so please let us know if you have a preference and you would like us to stock them.

Importance of Technique

- Technique is an important component to the music lesson, and should be taught from the very first lesson. To begin with, technique includes hand and body position when playing, fingering and hand movement and how to hold or play the instrument properly.
- After some time, beginner technique is mastered and it is time for the student to learn the technique associated with each grade level. Although, you can start some things early to prepare them for entry into the grade system. Scales for instance should be taught as soon as the student is comfortable with the notes and hand positions necessary, and obviously when you as the teacher feel they are ready.
- As the student moves through varying grades, it is imperative that they are completing the necessary technical aspects of the grade as outlined in the syllabus. Even if the student is not completing an exam, it is your job to ensure the student knows and is capable of doing all the technique before moving on to the next grade.
- In each grade level, the technical requirements modify and increase. It is important that you make sure the student is following the guidelines and knows their technique at the correct level. Even if the student you are teaching is not doing a Conservatory method, the syllabus still provides a very well organized outline in which you can use to teach technique to your student.
- As your student progresses into higher grades, there is a lot more technique to know and learn, and cannot always be done in one lesson. It's a good idea to split things up, and have a focus each week. For example you can assign one type of technique (ex. triads only) and have them work on only one thing for that week, or you can choose a few keys (ex. D+ and b -) and the student completes all the technique necessary. Both of these methods, or other methods you choose are excellent ways to teach the student all necessary technique without overwhelming them.

Importance of Festivals and Examinations

- Students must be adequately prepared in order to be signed up for an examination. When signing up your students for exams, take into consideration how much time

you have until the exam, and how much the student has to accomplish in that time. You don't want to be in a position where you are struggling to teach them everything in the last month or two. The student should be basically prepared about a month before their exam, and that last month should be used to tidy up any little things in the pieces or technique and practice sight reading and ear training tests.

- Preparing the student for an exam does not mean only having all the songs completed. It means all their appropriate pieces must be memorized and at tempo, all key signatures and technique must be memorized and that sight reading and ear training is up to standard for the specific grade level. For this reason, don't leave portions of the exam to the very last minute. Scales, sight reading, ear training, etc. should be done within lessons throughout the grade study, not just in order to prepare for an exam.
- Examinations are an important part of the learning experience as they give the student the opportunity to play in front of someone in which they have never met before. Although this can be nerve racking, completing exams will help your student to gain self- confidence and be more comfortable playing in front of an audience. This is also true of festivals, as the student plays in front of a small group of people, and at the same time, gets to listen to others play as well.
- Examinations and festivals are also great opportunities for your student to receive the benefit of criticism from an unbiased adjudicator or examiner. This criticism is essential for the student to hear, and enables them to take the suggestions and learn from them. Festivals also provide an opportunity for the student to hear other interpretations of the same piece, which broadens their musical experience.
- Please be aware that ALL teachers should use their own teacher number when submitting student's for examinations. Do not use another teacher's number! You can contact the RCM at 905-501-9553 or via the internet at www.rcmexaminations.org.