

Narrative Assignment

Story

One of my significant music moments occurred when I was 8 years old. I had just started picking out repertoire for Grade 3 RCM piano. My teacher encouraged me to buy a Top 10 Pop Songs for Piano book. She told me that I should start learning music for myself, not just for an exam. I was very touched by her words of encouragement, and I started to learn *My Heart Will Go On*. To this day, I remember the feelings I had being in her studio learning the melody phrase by phrase.

I started to sight read just the right hand melody, and within 2 bars I could not help but think, "I am playing real music"! Just before the lesson ended, we switched seats, so I can hear what the finished project should sound like. As soon as she started playing, I started beaming with glee. I was so excited to begin learning how to play a piece I recognize from the radio and can sing the melody. While I had learned several Clementi sonatas and simple tunes by Bach, Mozart and Haydn, this piece was the first I recognized as real music. It was real because it was relevant to be. It was real because my parents knew the melody and they hummed to it while I practiced. It was real because I enjoyed learning to play it before it was anywhere near perfected.

In the following weeks, my piano teacher saw the excitement I had and encouraged me to learn the piece thoroughly. She told me to pay attention to the small details in the music. It was the first time I thought for myself what crescendos and decrescendos meant. It was my first time I told her how loud or soft certain notes should be. Within a month, I was able to play the whole piece. She gave me suggestions of how to improve, but it that moment all I could feel was, "I did it!" I was fueled to continue playing piano because this piece gave me a sense of accomplishment as well as a connection to the music I played. Looking back on my childhood, I am grateful for this teacher and this learning experience. I do not think that I would be where I am today if it was not for this teacher.

Analysis

This particular moment is what I think of as the beginning of my love for making music. Looking back, this passion began as a mix of various factors. I was inclined to learn a certain piece of music, but I was also encouraged by a supportive teacher along the way. A teacher can teach many things, but a teacher cannot teach a student to connect with the music they play. Teachers can model what that connection is like, and they can encourage students to find that connection for themselves. Ultimately, students need to find that hook themselves in order to truly experience music making. Once students find that connection, teachers can help guide them to success.

Implications for Teaching

It is only after having read some publications on student motivation, that I have linked theory to experience. Teachers need to allow for students to have a

sense of autonomy, competence, relatedness and relevance to the material they are learning . These conditions are necessary in order to establish an environment for growth that is driven by intrinsic motivation. An aspect of autonomy is providing choice (Ferlazzo, 2015, p.5). One practical way to provide students with choice is to implement an individual learning project into the curriculum. I heard of this project from a workshop clinician at OMEA several years ago.

In my own teaching, I would implement an individual learning project that will last for one semester. This unit will be implemented concurrently with class material. Students will choose one goal they wish to accomplish by the end of the semester. This goal could be to learn a new technical skill on their instrument or to learn a new piece of repertoire. After I approve of their goal, I would give them guidelines or suggestions of check in points. Students will determine for themselves that short-term goals they would like to meet and when. A project like this is mainly designed and implemented by the student. They are now the ones responsible for reaching the goals they have chosen. My role is to work with them to offer support when they need, and to encourage them along the way. The final aspect of this unit is the final assessment. Students will have the opportunity to create a success criteria chart for themselves. In doing so, students will begin to develop the skills needed to direct their own learning. They will develop skills pertaining to how to choose tangible and relevant goals, how to reach success, and most importantly how to celebrate their success. When students are provided with the opportunity to choose their own learning opportunities, it is more likely that they will relate to what they are learning. As they continue to meet their short-term goals, their sense of competence will increase. All these factors will contribute to a more enriched learning opportunity.

Reference

Ferlazzo, L. (2015). *Building A Community of Self-Motivated Learners: Strategies to Help Students Thrive in School and Beyond*. New York, NY: Routledge.