

Personal Learning Project

Goal no. 1	Action Plan	
What will you accomplish? (Goal statement)	My goal is to be able to play the clarinet with a level of confidence that I will be able to demonstrate playing the clarinet for my students, and help them with learning to play it.	
What does it look like when you've accomplished your goal? i.e., How will you know you have achieved your goal? What are the indicators of success or progress? (Assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The end result will be that I am able to play through <i>Clarinet Method Studies for the Beginning Student Book 1</i> by Jack Snavely • I will achieve this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Playing the C, G, F, D, A, and Eb scales ○ Being able to play all of the exercises and pieces with minor mistakes and good tone 	Timeline: (By when?) Will be completed by the end of the fall term. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As there are 14 Lesson sections in this method book, I would like to complete 1 per week
Rationale: Why is it important?	I believe this is important because as a music educator it is very likely that I will run a band program or extracurricular band at some point throughout my career, and as such I need to be prepared to teach all of the instruments to my students and help them along the way. Since I have very limited knowledge with playing the clarinet, it is important for me to develop this skill so that I can help my students and really understand what the process of learning to play the clarinet is like.	
Pre-assessment: What assets and/or liabilities currently exist? How can you take advantage of your assets and minimize your liabilities? Who or what can help?	Assets 1. I have experience playing the saxophone, which will help me with general reed instrument techniques 2. I have tried to play the clarinet once or twice so I know how to make a sound	Liabilities 1. Very different embouchure and fingerings from the saxophone 2. I don't have a teacher to regularly check in with in regards to correct technique and progress, but I do have a friend who is a clarinet major that I will be able to ask for advice and recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will also search for videos and pictures of experienced clarinet players on the internet to use as models for technique and posture
Action plan: How will you accomplish your goal? What will you do? By when?	Actions/steps to be taken (What will you do?): 1. Practice every day 2. Practice in front of a mirror 3. Watch video of experienced clarinet players 4. Record video and audio clips of myself performing each scale and the final exercise from each lesson as I complete them	Timeline: (By when?) 1. Practice 15-20 minutes per day 2. Watch 1 video per week of a professional clarinet player on YouTube for proper posture and technique cues 3. Record an audio or video clip each week as I finish a lesson

Ongoing Documentation and Reflection

(please refer to video recordings on attached USB key)

Reflection 1

What I Learned: Lesson 1

The clarinet is very different from a saxophone! I expected to not have very much trouble transitioning from the saxophone to the clarinet, but it was much more difficult than I expected. The embouchure is different, the mouthpiece sits in the mouth very differently, and the amount of air needed is much less on the clarinet. It is also a very different experience to have to be conscious of covering all of the holes, rather than just pressing a key and not having to worry about air containment.

Reflections on Learning:

I thought that I would be able to learn clarinet very quickly since I assumed it would be quite similar to the saxophone which I am quite familiar with already, but based on how this started I don't think this will be the case. There are many differences between the two instruments, so I think there will be a very different learning curve. That being said, I think there will be some similarities with regards to articulation, instrument care, and playing an instrument that uses a reed. Something that was frustrating about learning the clarinet and playing through this first lesson is that I am able to read the music very easily, yet am not able to play it well. I was able to successfully learn the exercises in this lesson and learn how to play the beginning notes, yet it was frustrating to take so long to play simple lines of music. This motivated my learning however, as I wanted to work and get ahead to more "real" music.

Reflection 2

What I Learned: Lesson 2

Reflections on Learning:

The lower register of the clarinet can be very challenging! I had a lot of trouble getting the low A and G to speak right away and focused on that a lot before completing this lesson. There were many times where I had to play the same line multiple times over, or even a few notes over and over, adjusting my embouchure each time to experiment with getting the notes to sound. From this I learned that it is important to get away from the notes written on the page and that it is okay to noodle around a bit to help with learning, because while to an outside it may have seemed like I was off task, this is really where I did a lot of my learning.

Reflection 3

What I Learned: Lesson 3

Reflections on Learning:

At this point in time I have decided to revise my learning goals. I will be dropping the learning of scales from my learning goals, as when looking ahead in the method book I realized that these lessons do not cover the notes I would need to be able to play the C, F, D, and Eb scales, which were the majority of the scales that I was planning on using as learning goals. Because of this, I will be sticking to learning to play all exercises in the lessons as my learning goal going forward. I have also come to the realization that I will likely not be able to complete all 14 lessons that I originally wanted to complete from this method book. Due to time constraints and the higher amount of work than I anticipated having while on placement, I will not have time to learn all 14 of the lessons. I have revised my learning goal to be to learn up to lesson 10 in the method book, as I do believe that I will be able to complete this. Not being able to complete all 14 lessons is mostly due to the fact that I didn't factor in any extra things happening in my life when I originally set out my learning goals, and that my learning of the clarinet went slower than anticipated due to my perceived similarity between the clarinet and saxophone that has been previously mentioned and will be discussed in the final reflections.

Reflection 4

What I Learned: Lesson 4

Reflections on Learning:

I think that learning this lesson is where I really started to become aware of my posture and how much my head position can really affect my tone and air flow. This started when I came to the realization that while I was sitting on a chair reading the method book from my laptop on the table in front of me, I had my face pointed down and my eyes almost looking up at the music. As soon as I realized this I knew it could not be right, so I brought my face up, tried to play again, and was surprised at the difference it made in how much more comfortable I was while I was playing. I was able to push more air through the clarinet, and there was less stress in my head and neck that I had never even realized was there to start with. From this I have learned how important it is to have someone who can see your posture and can help correct it, or to practicing using a mirror so that you can see your own posture. If I had done this from the start I likely would have began with a better posture and could have made everything up until this point much easier.

Reflection 5

What I Learned: Lesson 5

Reflections on Learning:

For this week I chose to record two exercise from Lesson 5, neither of which being the last line in the lesson, as I found these to be the most difficult for me to learn due to accidentals and tricky fingerings. I found the note C# to be challenging, as you have to shift your fingers slightly in order to hit a smaller side key. This was difficult for me as I had trouble locating and

determining precisely where this key was when I went to press it without looking at it. I took my own advice from my reflections on Lesson 5 and practiced in front of a mirror, which helped me locate the key more often and more accurately. This experience showed me that while it is important to reflect on learning, it is equally as important to take what you learned from your reflections and use this knowledge in practice. This helps solidify the learning that was done through reflecting, validate the usefulness of reflecting, thereby encouraging more reflecting and learning through reflection.

Reflection 6

What I Learned: Lesson 6 and 7

Reflections on Learning:

For this lesson, I learned the importance of having a mentor or friend who you can go to for advice when learning something new. I have been struggling with consistently having sore front teeth after I have been practicing the clarinet. I assumed this might happen for the first few times I practiced the clarinet, but did not think it would go on this long. I talked to my friend who plays the clarinet, as was my plan if I had any issues that arose while learning the clarinet, who told me that sore teeth was a fairly normal thing but that I should make sure to watch my posture and loosen up my mouth and neck so that I don't bite the mouthpiece so hard, resulting in sore teeth. I found it very helpful to talk to someone who could help me with the issues I was having, even if only to validate that this is a normal thing that happens and I'm not doing something completely wrong. Getting this advice and putting it in to practice definitely helped my learning as it gave me something more to think on when I was practicing other than just the notes and rhythms, and ended up greatly helping my sore teeth issue.

Reflection 7

What I Learned: Lesson 8 and 9

Reflections on Learning:

One aspect of learning I really reflected on while working through these lessons was how many little things there are to learn and remember when learning how to play a new instrument. For example, earlier I discovered how some small changes in my posture made a lot of difference in my sound, however as soon as I had to learn more tricky accidentals and fingerings, which has been happening in the last few lessons, my posture reverted to what it originally was. Because I had just started working on my posture and it wasn't natural at this point, as soon as there were other challenging things to think about my mind didn't focus on my posture anymore, but the more immediate challenge of notes and fingerings. I think this says a lot about learning in general and how it is easier for me to learn when I only have to focus on one new thing at a time. A good metaphor for this would be building blocks, where

you need to have each block secure and established before you can add another block on top of it.

I also learned that sometimes there is more than one source of correct information! For example, I was having difficulties with the fingering for Eb, the one listed in the exercise being the same as for D, but with a side key. My issues were coming from remembering to press my second finger and the side key down when going from E natural to Eb, and to not lift up my second finger when going from D to Eb. After struggling through Lesson 8 using this fingering, it occurred to me to search online for an alternate fingering. I found one in a fingering chart that gives the option of playing Eb with both first fingers, which to me made so much more sense and was much easier for me to use in the exercises. From this I learned that when you are learning something, it is okay to challenge or question things and search for more information outside of what is being presented to you. This could lead to information being presented in a way that makes more sense to you, thus creating deeper understandings.

Reflection 8

What I Learned: Lesson 10

Reflections on Learning:

As this is my last reflection and the last lesson I will be completing on the clarinet at this point in time, I think I can say with confidence that I have increased my level of competence on the clarinet. I now feel confident that I will be able to demonstrate how to play the clarinet and what it sounds like for my beginner students and troubleshoot any minor issues with regards to instrument repair, embouchure, and technique. I still would like to continue learning the clarinet, however, as learning is an ongoing process that doesn't just stop at any point in time. I love the idea of lifelong learning, as I believe that everyone is a lifelong learner and continues to learn new things throughout one's life. I would like to incorporate learning more about the clarinet into my lifelong learning process, as I have enjoyed learning how to play this instrument so far and am always eager to learn more that will help me as an educator.

Final Reflections and Connections

From this Personal Learning Project I greatly improved my clarinet skills, and also learned more about how I learn and reflected on some ideas I have about learning that directly relate to my beliefs about teaching and that I would like to incorporate in my teaching methods. First of all, I think that my original goals were much too ambitious, especially since I didn't consider how busy I would be while on practicum placement and how little time I would have to practice during this time. I also didn't realize from the beginning that the lessons in this exercise book don't teach you notes high enough to play almost all of the scales I originally listed as wanting to learn as indicators of success, so I had to remove the goal of learning various scales. I also had to revise how far I would make it through the method book, as I did not have as much time to practice as I thought I would due to other, more immediate concerns

in my life, and the fact that I thought I would be able to breeze through learning the clarinet much quicker than I was actually able to. This is mostly due to the fact that I thought the clarinet and saxophone were more similar to play than they are, as I had to use very different techniques in some aspects for playing the clarinet than I have to when playing the saxophone. This was one of the main contributors to me having to rework and drop some of my learning goals for learning the clarinet.

There are two main takeaways that I found from having to set and rework my learning goals. The first is how beneficial it is to set goals when tackling something new and learning a new instrument relatively on my own. When I first thought about this project and how I wanted to learn the clarinet I didn't really know where to start. Setting the learning goals gave me small benchmarks to work towards and an end goal, which helped direct my playing and motivate me to continue in my learning. I think that when I become an educator I would like to have my students set learning goals for themselves, especially in the music classroom when it comes to practicing, as this can help give students an end goal, like it did for me, and hopefully help motivate them to learn and thus meet these goals. Lacaille, Koestner, and Gaudreau discuss the importance and benefit of having students set mastery goals in her study of achievement goals for performing artists, saying that these "play a crucial role for performers during deliberate practice and rehearsals" (253). The study that these researchers carried out tested out the effects of setting different types of goals had on students, finding that mastery goals were beneficial to and enhanced student learning. Because of this, I would like to include the creation of such goals in my classroom, and try to avoid more performance-based or performance-avoidance goals, which were proven in this study to be detrimental to student motivation and learning. I would also like to stress to my students that these goals can change or shift at any time related to the course of the learning, as this takes the pressure off to meet goals that just aren't relevant or working anymore. Knowing that it was perfectly fine for me to rework my learning goals for this project helped me learn at a pace that worked for me, and not feel stuck trying to do something that I just wasn't able to do.

The second takeaway is related to the looser relation between clarinet and saxophone than what I perceived there to be. In the music classroom, even though clarinets and saxophones are both reed instruments they can't always be grouped together with regards to posture and technique in the same way that some of the brass instruments can, for example. Now that I have first hand experience with some of these differences, I will strive to remember these when I am working with students who play these instruments at any skill level, and to try and provide individualized instruction for clarinets and saxophones as much as possible to provide my students with the most relevant and useful information I can.

Another significant lesson I learned through this project was how helpful knowing an "expert" or someone who has more experience than me is. Having a friend was very beneficial in that I was able to ask for quick pieces of help and advice from someone who actually knew what they were talking about, and someone who I could have a conversation with about this advice rather than just reading information from a webpage or book about clarinet technique. Although I didn't end up needing to ask my friend who plays clarinet very well for much help or advice, when I did talk to her about some of my issues she was able to provide me with

assistance very quickly and clearly because she had had these issues before and knew the fix. It was also helpful just knowing that I had someone I could go to if I needed to, which gave me some small peace of mind in my learning.

There are many ways that I could implement this idea into my music classroom. I really like the idea of having senior music students talk to or work with more beginner or novice level students, as the senior students were likely in the beginner's shoes not too long ago, and therefore would be able to relate and have a better understanding of the issues a beginner instrumentalist on any given instrument would be. I would also like to make use of professional mentors or guest speakers. As someone who doesn't have very much experience with brass instruments, I know that I will likely never be able to answer all of the questions my future brass students will have about playing their instruments (although I will do my best to get all of the answers I can). I think that having professional musicians from the community come in to visit my music classes would be such a wonderful and rich experience for my students, as they would be able to talk to or work with someone who is an expert in that instrument, which could also provide my students with a role model and an inspiration to pursue their instrument beyond the music classroom. In the future I will strive to meet and develop good relationships with local musicians who are experts in areas that I am not as strong in so that they can help my students in areas I might not be able to very well, and further their learning.

From some of the experience I had at "noodling" on the instrument and not playing exactly what was written on the page, I came to realize that allowing students time to do some exploration and experimentation on their instruments can be a valuable learning tool. I think there are some things about music that are difficult to be said in words, especially when it comes to topics such as expressivity, but also even when describing how the embouchure changes between the different registers on the clarinet. I think that students need to be given some time to discover these types of things for themselves and that it will provide them with a deeper understanding of the idea as opposed to listening to me lecture about it for 10 minutes and not being able to experience it for themselves. Because of this, I would definitely like to give students some time to do some experimenting and get away from the notes written on the page because music and technique are so much more than that. I think the challenge with this would be to point students in the right direction without giving them too much information, and ensuring that the time given is spent relatively on-task and not goofing around. Hopefully this is an idea that I will be able to use on my next placement and continue to develop in the future for use in my classroom.

References

Lacaille, Natalie, et al. "On the value of intrinsic rather than traditional achievement goals for performing artists: a short-term prospective study." *International Journal of Music Education*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2007, pp. 245-257.