

But Practice Is Soooo Boring!!!!

By: Suzie Hammond Are your students loathe to practice as much as they should? OK, you can stop laughing and pick yourself up off the floor now. I know it wasn't the brightest question.

But I asked it to make a point, of course. Haven't you been guilty of that misbehavior? I personally am a lifetime repeat offender. As adults we all know intellectually that if you don't practice something, you don't get better. We tell our students and ourselves this until the bile rises in our throat threatening an embarrassing episode. So why do we keep putting it off?

In the darkest recesses of your psyche a nagging whisper gives you the answer. It's not fun. And in this day and age nobody wants to do anything that's not FUN!

Now while I am not an advocate of the 'everything should be entertaining' school of thought, it is also true that practicing vies for your student's miniscule attention span. Practicing is going head to head against the latest video game.

To compete with that there needs to be some pretty excellent mind candy. The very best flavor on the market seems to be success. Generally if you are good at something you like doing it over and over.

In order for you or your student to feel like he's being successful he has to pass a number of observable milestones. According to studies this is one of the attractions to the ubiquitous computer games. Let's face it, it doesn't take long to see some progress on the computer. Most of us know that allure of almost getting to the next level of the game.

To capitalize on that same feeling our students need to have small enough goals to feel great pretty often. Not only that but they need to be able to look back and really experience how far they have come in the short practice times of a few weeks.

And you know what? There are ways to plug into this type of feel good. And a great bonus is that the student will do most of the work to set it up and get himself there.

Here is the trick. No, I am not going to quote any of the success gurus you regularly see on TV. Well OK, I really am, but you know they do have some good things to say and this is one they all seem to agree on.

Goal setting. And I mean setting it down on paper every week in the same little log book. Make up several menus to give your students a few ideas. Initially they will choose the things they want to accomplish. As they become more proficient many goals will become self evident, and they can come up with them alone. Your input will be necessary as they don't know what they don't know, but be aware of the fact that a major part of the process is that the student must participate in setting the goals, otherwise it is just more homework.

The goals need to be in several categories. Daily, weekly, monthly, for the term, for the year, for several years. Once a system is put in place and there is some small amount of class time devoted to it every week then the thrill of achievement will be built in. The pleasure loving student will begin to find practice can be fun because they can check off items and see success written into the book a mere few weeks after starting. The amount that can be accomplished with this miniscule discipline is amazing. The book fills up and your young musicians are impressed with their industrial strength production levels.

The trick is to put the system in place and then work with it for several months. A session at the end of the month where students get to share what they have accomplished does wonders for everyone's feel good quotient and spurs more goals and more success.

Try it. You and your students will all be much better off for the experience.

About the Author

Suzie Hammond is a teacher turned writer and factotum for: <http://www.musicalcompositions.net/page4.html> There you may purchase & download sheet music for concert bands, choirs, chamber ensembles & jazz groups. See it, hear it, download it, rehearse it. FREE Newsletter and FREE Special

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