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Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy revolves around an emphasis on fundamentals. When a student is beginning the instrument, learning the foundational concepts behind sound production, breath support, fingerings and music theory is the primary focus. Once they have gained an acceptable understanding of this, scales and arpeggios are assigned. I always relay why I am focusing on any given technique or tool to put it into context of the greater musical goal. Once actual music has been introduced, I use that as a way to enforce or further develop techniques. Trying to play music without having had the proper instruction in its basics is an exercise in frustration. However, the more advanced a student becomes the more music can be used to hone fundamentals as well as expand their skill set.

When I work with students privately, I give them assignments as any other teacher would assign them homework. Sound, projection, reading, technique, flexibility, repertoire, and range can all be developed if the student earnestly wants to take the time to develop them. I design a practice regimen for each individual student depending on their strengths, weaknesses, and goals. I try to be specific so the student is able to focus on a short-term goal and then realize tangible results rather than lofty, vague goals that result in frustration and confusion. Putting the cart before horse is a sure fire way to stunt a students progress.

I think the most important thing when dealing with non-college age students is to have multiple ways to explain any given technique or idea. Every student is different in how they conceptualize and understand ideas and so it my job as their teacher to present information to them in ways they can grasp, not necessarily how I understand it or how I was taught. This may mean a metaphoric explanation or a very literal and may include everything in between. I firmly believe it is our responsibility as music teachers to have many tools at our disposal. If we do not know the answer, the worst thing we can do is try to use our unwitting student as a guinea pig.

Above all, music should be fun. I strive to find ways to make the trumpet fun which can be a daunting task when assigning them scales and tonguing exercises for days. I like to remind them that the more you practice, the better you get, and this allows you to play more challenging music. If you want to continue to get better and have more fun, the more practice is required and this allows you to play harder music still. The sooner they realize this cycle and how it directly affects their ability to enjoy being a musician, the quicker they advance on their instrument.