



Writing Effective Teaching Strategies

Excerpt from Strategies-Chapter 3, p. 45-49, Shaping Sound Musicians

It is not enough to write interesting teaching strategies. Because students' learning preferences vary greatly, one strategy does not fit all. Consequently, it is important to vary your teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners and to develop independence and good musicianship in each student.

Because of the prevalence of research on learning styles over the last two decades, most teachers are aware that they harbor preferences for learning, and that these preferences translate into specific teaching styles. For example, a visual learner is likely to be the kind of teacher who frequently writes on the blackboard or uses detailed handouts in order to visualize what they are teaching.

There are three reasons for identifying your learning preference. If you know how you learn best, you can create that environment as often as possible and have more successful learning experiences. Further, you can work to strengthen the modalities in which you are weaker or less attentive to have success with teachers who teach to different strengths. Finally, as already implied, you will preference a learning mode as you design teaching strategies, which will benefit students with similar learning preferences while handicapping those with different ones. Consequently, you should vary teaching strategies in order for all students to be successful. (If you are unsure of which modality you teach in, videotape and analyze a rehearsal.)

Researchers have identified numerous variables that affect learning: temperature, light, time of day, color of room, need for structure, etc. Because the field of learning styles is so diverse, we will examine three different learning modalities: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic.

Teaching Strategies for Different Learning Modalities

Visual Learners

Visual learners learn best when they can see or visualize information. Writing goals on the blackboard, passing out handouts with bowings written out, and having students write in their music provide visual cues for those who learn best when they see the information.

Auditory Learners

Auditory learners learn best when they hear information. Playing an interval will be more meaningful to an auditory learner than writing it on the staff. Likewise, reading through handouts or directions will ensure that students hear the information for which you hold them accountable.

Kinesthetic Learners

For many ensemble directors, kinesthetic activities conjure visions of classroom management nightmares. Including kinesthetic strategies in your class need not feel so dangerous. Consider the following verbs: clapping, bowing, shaping, stepping, describing. The last verb, describing, tends to be thought of as verbal, but can be kinesthetic if you ask students to physically demonstrate the shape of a phrase or a major scale.

For further information, visit Chapter 3 from *Shaping Sound Musicians*.