

## **A Progression of Skills for Student Teachers**

Many new student teachers are relatively young or are performance majors who do not take methods classes. The curriculum of your university should work in tandem with your String Project curriculum, and the experience of working in a String Project should serve as supplement – not a substitute – to an adequate methods series.

Here is a suggested outline of skills needed by student teachers, including the points at which student teachers should be incorporating these skills into their teaching repertoire. (Compiled by twenty-three student teachers at the University of South Carolina String Project during the 2000-2001 academic year)

### **First Year (assistant)**

#### Musical/Pedagogical Skills

- Tune a group quickly
- Hone ear training, diagnostic skills
- Give mini-lessons
- Know the basics of all the instruments

#### Organizational Skills

- Assist with room set-up .
- Keep records for the class teacher (attendance/practice).
- Professional attire.

#### Interpersonal and Communication Skills

- Patience
- Be flexible
- Take initiative
- Be dependable
- Interact with peers as colleagues with proper language and demeanor
- Interact with authority figures
- Interact with students in an age-appropriate way
- Non-verbal communication
- Learn how to encourage children appropriately
- Recognize that every child wants to learn and be praised

### **Second Year (studio teaching) and Third Year (small group classes)**

#### Musical/Pedagogical Skills

- Learn varied teaching strategies
- Set achievable long-term and short-term goals for student achievement
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in student playing
- Incorporate areas of strength into the lesson
- Learn appropriate repertoire

- Follow a curriculum
- Set goals on the edge of the student's abilities – not too high but not easily accessible
- Adopt teaching techniques that recognize varying levels of aptitude among different students
- During classes, explain in a succinct and precise manner so that varying levels of students all understand your instruction
- Pace lessons and classes appropriately. The balancing act is moving quickly enough to keep students with high musical aptitude engaged while not losing the ones who may be struggling
- During classes, it should be evident that advanced student teachers are thoroughly prepared for lessons and can confidently manage the classroom

#### Organizational Skills (for both lessons and classes)

- Develop and maintain lesson logs
- Demonstrate effective time management skills
- Prioritizing lesson plans
- Prepare for recitals and concerts
- Use of effective public speaking skills for communication with large classrooms and audiences
- Coordinate the recital: setup, warm-up room, supervision
- Create a program
- Anticipate potential problems (stage fright, accompanists)

#### Interpersonal Communication Skills

- Communicate effectively with parents
- Make decisions with confidence
- Ask for help when needed
- Take care of personal health
- Have a real bond with students
- Be open to suggestions and ideas to help your teaching

### **Fourth Year (large beginning class, second-year orchestra)**

#### Musical/Pedagogical Skills

- Know all the instruments – fingerings, clef, and so forth
- Have effective conducting skills
- Read a score
- Choose music that engages the children
- Make minor instrument repairs
- Make distinctions between the violas and the violins
- Remember—your students are only eight or nine or ten years old. Student teachers are very involved in their own performance skills and have to remember to make the adjustment to younger music learners

### Organizational Skills

- Foresee problems and plan remedies
- Keep records for large groups
- Manage rehearsals
- Coordinate sectionals
- Design programs for holiday and spring concerts and recitals

### Interpersonal Communication Skills

- Ability to work with lots of eyes watching you during rehearsals
- Learn and memorize 65-70 names
- Interact with assistants. The less experienced teachers need specific instructions until they become more familiar with the program—don't assume they will know what to do intuitively
- Interact with parents. Young teachers can find it challenging to let parents know about minor behavior issues
- Pick battles carefully—be sure you understand the consequences of having a confrontation with a colleague
- Ask for help and encouragement when feeling discouraged