

LEARNING CURVE

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As our students are busy with exams, contests and festivals, we see their learning curve soar as they rise to the challenges presented. They give their best effort to achieve these goals. If we expect our students to bring a desire to learn and diligent effort to their musical endeavours, should we expect less of ourselves? As teachers we must continue to learn and continue to grow.

While learning may include the pursuit of a higher degree, this certainly is not our only option. Our learning curve can be developed in many ways. Here are 10 ways to boost your learning curve in 2010.

1. Teach a piece you have not taught before! – You will approach it with freshness, and you may discover a new pedagogical gem.
 2. Play through new music! – This may include playing through lesser performed works of standard composers, or playing works by recent or newly discovered and published composers.
 3. Learn and master a new piece! – What is that piece you have always wanted to play? Now is the time to dig in and start practicing. Working through the difficulties of a challenging piece gives fresh insight into your students' struggles, and you may discover a new approach to a practicing dilemma.
 4. Listen! – There are a variety of opportunities to listen to music including, recordings, concerts, radio, You Tube or iTunes. Online opportunities can help you find recordings of lesser known works. This is one learning activity that you can do while driving. Have you heard all of the Chopin Mazurkas? The Debussy Preludes? Try listening to several different recordings of the same piece. You will be amazed at what you learn!
 5. Read books! – There are many wonderful books about composers, musical style, keyboard literature, piano pedagogy, psychology of learning, and a wealth of other topics that will boost our learning curve. Make a list of books you want to read, then select one or two of them and start reading.
 6. Turn on the computer! – There are many e-journals available. "Googling" a topic will produce a wealth of information. There are websites, and chat rooms that are specifically purposed to help music teachers.
 7. Attend a convention! – I am always inspired anew by the sessions, and the interchange of ideas with other music teachers.
 8. Attend other pedagogy seminars, conferences and master classes! – There are a myriad of opportunities both close and far. The costs of transporting and staying at a conference are decreased by finding other music teachers attending, and sharing the cost of gas and motel.
 9. Keep in contact with local groups of music teachers! – The MMTA local groups often provide continuing education opportunities in their meetings. The contact of professional with professional always sharpens our skills.
 10. Go back to school! – This will guarantee challenge, learning and growth. You can opt for a degree program or audit the classes! Some pedagogy seminars offer the option of credit.
- The opportunities are there. Seize them! How is your LEARNING CURVE?