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Towards a Successful Instrumental Music Program: “Three Basic Needs” and Parental Motivation

by Diane Briscoe

Introduction

Parents can play an important role in the success of their child’s music education. Not only do they typically make the initial decision to enroll their young child, but they can also offer on-going support and encouragement, which is a decisive factor in a child’s progress and satisfaction with music lessons (Comeau, Huta, & Liu, 2015; Costa-Giomi, 2004; Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1995; Uptis, Abrami, Brook, & King, 2017). In addition, parents frequently choose the teacher and programme, purchase the instrument and materials, accompany the child to lessons, practice with the child at home, participate in recitals and other events, and can ultimately decide to discontinue lessons (Corrigall & Schellenberg, 2015; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Lehmann, Sloboda & Woody, 2007; McPherson & Davidson, 2006). Because parental involvement can be pivotal to the child’s success in music education, it could be illuminating to address the motivational needs of parents as their child progresses.

Parental motivation as related to their children’s music education will be viewed through the lens of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s “Three Basic Needs” as part of their “Self-Determination” theory (1996, 2000). The three needs of competence (to excel in something), autonomy (to make decisions that affect one’s own life), and relatedness (to feel part of a group) is innate, and has evolved in humans to help them survive and flourish. Striving for and attaining these three goals is necessary for the well-being of the individual and ultimately of the group of which the person is a member. Thwarting these objectives leads to less satisfactory outcomes in a person’s life. Although these three needs are interrelated and universal, being unconfined to one cultural group according to researchers, the relative importance of each of the three components can fluctuate between individuals, over time, in different communities, and in varying circumstances (2000). To underscore shared experiences of parents with children in music education, this article will draw upon research conducted in Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. Being aware of these parental needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness could help inform music teachers and administrators of possible policies and procedures in programming, pedagogy, curriculum, and student recruitment.

Parental Competence

According to the three basic needs theory, humans need to consider themselves competent in something to fulfill a fundamental need (Evans, McPherson, & Davidson, 2013). If applied to maintaining parents’ motivation to assist their young child in music lessons, parents need to believe that they are competent assistants in supporting their child’s efforts. Research in the United Kingdom (UK) has found that teachers can help parents feel competent by informing them that, even though they may not have a musical background, just playing music at home, adopting a positive attitude and showing interest, providing a quality instrument for the child to play on, organizing and supervising practice sessions, and bringing the child to concerts and lessons can make a significant impact on the child’s success at learning a musical instrument (Davidson, et al., 1995, 1996). To acquire more confidence and hands-on knowledge to be able to help with practicing, the parent could also attend the young child’s lessons, as in the Suzuki method

(developed by Japanese educator Shinichi Suzuki, 1898–1998), and learn the basics of the instrument and the pieces the young child is learning (Peak, 1996). Similarly, mothers in a South Korean preschool programme not only wanted to have a better musical education themselves to be able to better guide their child, but considered themselves “good mothers” for doing so (Youm, 2013). In China, as well, many parents of children involved in music lessons place importance on being skillful “home teachers.” Significant coaching and interaction in the early stages of their child’s learning gradually shifts to psychological and intellectual support roles as the child matures (Fung, 2017).

Because early success can be significant to acquiring confidence in a new skill (Schunk, 2008), the teacher could stress the importance of regular daily and focused practice as soon as lessons commence. Parents could be shown how and what to practice at home with very specific directions, and how to set up the instrument and playing area. To help make the parent feel useful, the teacher could ensure that the repertoire the child is learning is at the appropriate level to encourage mastery in a reasonable amount of time, and provide charts and incentives to make the parent’s practicing sessions with their child as productive as possible. The teacher could provide or use recordings to help the parent become familiar with repertoire, or online clips or reference materials to suggest ways of practicing, and encourage parents to record lessons on their portable devices (Briscoe, 2016).

The teacher could make a point of praising parents for their skillful assistance, and could organize regular concerts which would showcase not only the child’s progress, but provide an opportunity for the parent’s expertise as a practice coach to shine through as well. Not all students play their best at one formal end-of-year concert or school assembly with a large audience; various types of performances could be provided throughout the year to give parents and their charges a chance to feel proud of their accomplishments. Students could perform background music for school events, at informal gatherings at parents’ homes, in ensembles, at shopping centers, for classmates, at Senior citizen homes, in exams and festivals, as buskers, and online for relatives. Helping parents become adept music coaches for their children—by telling them that their efforts are crucial to their child’s success, and by having their child play well and with confidence—will encourage parents to stay with the programme and continue supporting their child.

Parental Autonomy

The second basic human need is to feel in control of one’s decisions. Parents show autonomy in the numerous decisions they need to make to enroll their child in music classes. Once lessons begin, the teacher could keep in mind that giving the parent (and child) a reasonable say in the choice of curriculum or pieces can help maintain autonomy, and therefore motivation. The teacher could avoid unilaterally assigning pieces without consulting with parent and child, enrolling the child in examinations or competitions, and over-emphasizing technique with no apparent purpose—an approach commonly found in studio teaching according to Renwick & McPherson (2002). The parent is listening to the child’s pieces at home, too; how much more enjoyable if the parent also appreciates the repertoire.

In addition, music educators could be aware that parents might have quite specific reasons—perhaps non-musical—to keep their child enrolled in music lessons. In China, for example, many parents have their children in instrumental music lessons to aim for self-perfection and

improvement through the arts in accordance with the teachings of Confucianism (Fung, 2017). In Hong Kong, offering one's children piano or violin lessons is commonly seen as a better chance of being accepted into elite schools later on (Tai, Phillipson, & Phillipson, 2017). In the United States (U.S.) a study by Dai and Schader seemed to demonstrate that parents viewed music lessons as a means to develop intelligence, academic performance, persistence, and discipline in their children (2001). Schwab and Dustin suggested that parents might simply be motivated to engage in an activity with their child "because of their desire to fulfil their relational role of parent, or to meet perceived social expectations of what it looks like to be a 'good' parent" (2015, 198). Finally, parents' goals for their children in a South Korean preschool music programme included associating learning with play and fun, enhancing the child's life and development, and acquiring learning skills (Youm, 2013). To understand and to keep sight of these important parental criteria for music lessons and to help maintain the parent's sense of autonomy, the teacher could try to seek out regular parental input. This could include having "meaningful conversations" as well as parent interviews to ensure that both the teacher's and parents' objectives for the child are being met. Pedagogue Merlin Thompson believes that teachers should not be "afraid that parental input might derail their vision of music instruction; rather, they recognize that good communication is a two-way street and that understanding what parents need and want is vital" (2017, 81).

Parental Relatedness

According to Deci and Ryan, the third basic psychological human need is to feel part of a group or relationship. Ensuring that parents feel welcomed and supported as part of a musical "family" can be a way to keep them involved and eager to participate. Compared to a group or team setting, it can be much more challenging to foster a sense of community among parents whose children are learning an instrument. Many children and parents, in Canada and the U.S., for example, do not attend instrumental lessons as part of a group, and school music classes taken by the children do not seem to constitute a "bonding" activity for parents nor foster a sense of family or school connectedness (Droe, 2015, 67). However, knowing that relatedness is a basic human need, creating opportunities where a parent identifies as a member of their child's music group could have welcome secondary effects such as renewed enthusiasm, confidence and support from other parents.

Similar to some sports activities, music lessons can continue for years, giving parents frequent occasions to have face-to-face and sustained interactions with other parents, which can lead to establishing friendship networks or "social capital" (Fritch, 1999). This can become a valuable asset in a music programme for word-of-mouth referrals, networking, volunteer recruitment, and general enthusiasm and parental priority for music events. Group socializing with parents was an integral part of violin music classes in Japan with music educator Shinichi Suzuki (1898–1998). Rather than one-on-one teacher and student half-hour private lessons, relaxed afternoons were spent conducting masterclass-type lessons with parents, siblings, and other students in attendance, with breaks for tea and cookies (Peak, 1996). Likewise, music teachers could facilitate interaction between studio parents who see each other week after week. This could be done by setting up the waiting room as an inviting social space with snacks and beverages, systematically planning receptions for friends and family after the child's musical events, organizing "wine-and-cheese" information sessions on practicing tips, or setting up an adult performance group.

In addition to fostering enthusiasm towards the music programme through friendships with other parents, teachers could endeavor to make music events worthwhile leisure activities, not only for the parent and music student, but for their family, as well. This strategy is worth contemplating because, in contrast to the previous middle class generation in Australia, Denmark, France, the UK, and the U.S., for example, many parents now seek out and engage in a substantial amount of supervised and planned activities with their children (Craig & Mullan, 2011; Ilari, 2017; Wheeler, 2014). Furthermore, when time is limited, research has shown that parents in the U.S. and in Holland prioritize family time by deciding to reduce one-on-one activities (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Roeters & Treas, 2011). Even though parents have been more active in the labour market in the past decades, it appears that mothers, especially, instigate and accompany their children to more activities than previously. However, both mothers and fathers express the value and importance of family participation (Shaw & Dawson, 2001), and in order to give their children better outcomes, fathers are becoming increasingly more involved (Buswell, Zabriskie, Lundberg, & Hawkins, 2012). Research from Australia and Canada has shown that many middle class parents will now actively choose to pursue “purposeful leisure,” which is planned with a goal to teach and reinforce family values such as morals, social skills, and healthy lifestyles (Harrington, 2012; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). In fact, parents can have a sense of urgency at times: they actively seek out activities to do with their children and establish a bond with them before they enter adolescence and “drift away” or get involved in the “wrong crowd” (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). At the same time, parents, especially those who work out of the home, could feel like failures, and experience stress and guilt if they have difficulty spending “quality time” with their children (Kremer-Sadlik & Paugh, 2007).

Music teachers could take note of the current heightened parental involvement in their child’s leisure and the apparent priority given to family activities by regularly and purposely organizing events to include other family members. This could be as simple as inviting them to participate or volunteer in concerts whenever feasible, and systematically planning and allocating resources for a reception for all the family and guests. Having a social time for family members where they are able to talk, participate, and interact with each other is valued, as research from the Netherlands has demonstrated (Roeters & Treas, 2011). In Canada parents with special needs children are especially interested in activities open to family members, because programmes geared towards their child alone are harder to find (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Finally, social activities for family bonding and enjoyment seem to have particular significance to working class families. Whereas middle class families appear to gravitate to recreation that is geared to values and skill-building for their child’s individual success, working class parents seem to focus more on family bonding, enjoyment, and keeping their children away from the undesirable influences (Harrington, 2012).

Conclusion

When a young child enrolls in lessons, there are two people involved—the child and parent. Because of the significant impact of parental involvement on a young child’s success in music lessons, satisfying parental needs can be a key to maintaining enrollment, attracting new clients, and fostering an enthusiastic and positive attitude towards lessons. Deci and Ryan’s “Three Basic Needs” theory can shed some light on parental motivational drivers that could direct aspects of networking and recruitment, musical programming, and pedagogical strategy to foster the most favourable results in the classroom and studio. Simply being aware that parents have an innate need to feel competent, that in a reasonable way they need to feel in control of decisions concerning

their child or themselves, and that they want to feel part of a group can enlighten music educators as to the best strategy to adopt to keep parents involved. Creating a music programme that is geared to parental and family needs, and by holding “family-friendly” regular musical events combined with social activities could be a powerful tool to recruiting and maintaining a vibrant and healthy music programme.

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Originally from northern Ontario, Canada, Diane Briscoe moved to Europe for five years and studied piano with Mr. Jean Della Valle (diplômé du Conservatoire national supérieur de Paris) and was a pianist-accompanist for the ballet program at the Conservatoire Régional de Lorient, France. Back in Canada, Diane completed a Master of Music (musicology) degree from the University of Ottawa, and an Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Music (ARCT) in piano pedagogy. Diane is a founding member of the Suzuki Piano Association of Ottawa/Gatineau. Her articles on piano pedagogy have been published in the American Music Educator, American Suzuki Journal, Canadian Music Educator, Clavier Companion, and the Music Educators Journal.

A Child-Led Approach to Music Education: Reaching the Child with Autism

by Hannah Creviston, Arizona State University

I was twenty-one years old when I first realized the full power and potential of music. As a graduate assistant in early childhood music at the University of South Carolina, I taught music twice a week at the on-campus child development center. A five-year-old boy named Alex* was often in the three-year-old classroom with his mother. Alex had a vocabulary of about 15 to 20 words. Sometimes he would sit with us during music without actively participating. Other times, he would listen to his own music on headphones, read a book in the loft or pick at the rug, seemingly oblivious to what was happening around him. I didn't understand why he behaved so differently than the other children and I didn't know how to relate to him, so I basically just let him be. One day, as I walked down the hallway to his classroom, I met Alex and his mother coming toward me. As soon as he saw me, Alex began singing the "Hello song" that we sang to begin music class.

That moment changed my teaching. Suddenly, I realized that, although he wasn't participating in the way I thought he should, Alex was listening to and internalizing everything that was happening during music class. After that experience, I began working one-on-one with Alex, taking special education classes so I could better understand his diagnosis of autism and began teaching music and piano to other students on the autism spectrum.

At the time, I was fortunate enough to be studying with two wonderful mentors: Dr. Scott Price, whose pioneering work in the field of teaching piano to children with special needs inspired and continues to inspire me and many others, and Dr. Wendy Valerio, one of the leaders in the field of music learning theory. They both gave me opportunities to pursue my interest in this field and continue to help and support me in my growth. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank them.

Autism

Autism is a spectrum disorder, which means that children with this diagnosis are just as unique as typically-developing children. Over the last thirty years, there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence rate and diagnosis of autism. The most current numbers from the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention identified one out of every fifty-nine children as being on the autism spectrum, as compared to one in ten thousand from 1980.¹ As these numbers increase, more piano teachers are opening their doors to children with autism, but have little training. My hope is to provide some tips and encouragement to help you and your students be successful.

Why Music?

As music educators, we are often asked to defend our field as it relates to other subjects, and while that has its place, I like to argue for music itself. Why is music important? Why should children

* Name has been changed.

¹ Jon Baio, Lisa Wiggins, Deborah Christensen, et al, *Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children Aged 8 Years—Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 Sites, United States, 2014*, MMWR Surveill Summ 2018; 67 (No. SS-6): 1–23. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6706a1>

with autism or other special needs be engaged in music classes or piano lessons? How does it benefit these children?

1. Music is a socially-valid behavior. It is important for children with special needs to participate in activities in which their typically-developing peers also engage. Most children are in music classes at school and may even take extra-curricular private lessons.
2. Music develops and sustains imagination and creativity. Children with autism, in particular, take words very literally. Music allows them a chance to improvise and create sounds based on their own interpretation of a subject or emotion.
3. Music engages multiple areas of the brain. Research indicates that music listening and performance/engagement stimulates both hemispheres of the brain.
4. Music allows students to interact non-verbally with others. Many children with special needs have speech delays, a limited vocabulary, or have difficulty with conversational skills. These deficits can inhibit their ability to be socially engaged. Music gives these children a chance to relate to their peers, parents and teachers without the pressure of language.
5. Music is fun. Most children with special needs are being taken from one therapy appointment to another and being told “No” or “You’re not good enough” on a regular basis. They have challenges in their everyday lives that I will never fully understand. They deserve, like all of us, to have enjoyment in their lives, to feel accepted, and to be successful.

Music Learning Theory

If you are reading this article, you presumably already understand the value of music. We are the teachers, the so-called experts, but how and why do we make our teaching child-led? My teaching philosophy can be summed up in a single quote by Dr. O. Ivar Lovaas, the founder of Applied Behavior Analysis therapy: “If a child cannot learn in the way we teach, we must teach in a way the child can learn.”² It is our responsibility to find a way to reach all of our students, and it is my belief that through the use of music learning theory principles, we can better teach and engage our students with special needs.

Music learning theory (MLT) is an explanation of how humans learn music and is based on years of research by Dr. Edwin E. Gordon. While there are many fascinating and applicable parts of MLT, I would like to focus on what I consider to be the most basic principles of this theory:

1. Every child has the innate potential to learn music.
2. We learn music in the same way we learn language.
3. Silence, listening, movement, imitation, and improvisation are all important parts of the music learning process.³

While these tenets are certainly applicable to typically-developing children, I have found them to be particularly effective when working with children on the autism spectrum.

² David Celiberti and Bridget Taylor, *A Tribute to Dr. Ivar Lovaas*. Science in Autism Treatment, 2010, 7(4), 8–11. [Science in Autism Treatment](#)

³ Edwin E. Gordon, *A Music Learning Theory for Newborn and Young Children*, Chicago: GIA, 1997, 5.

Every child has the innate potential to learn music.

The first principle states that every child has the potential to learn music, regardless of labels. This is very important to understand when working with children with autism. They have musical potential: it might not be the same potential as a typically-developing child, but it could meet or even exceed that level. We must not place limits on our students.

We learn music in the same way we learn language.

Although it is easy to rely on a method book to guide our teaching, beginning piano lessons with written notation actually conflicts with how children learn. We would not give a newborn baby a book and expect him to start reading or even to respond to a question with any identifiable words or sounds.

When a child is born, he has no verbal language skills. He gains his vocabulary from listening and absorbing what those around him are saying. Although he cannot yet respond, adults speak to a baby from the time he is born, sometimes in more than one language. As the baby gets older, he begins to coo and make sounds, then he tries to imitate words that he has heard. He might say “baba,” and the people in his life infer the meaning of “bottle.” As his vocabulary develops, the child begins imitating more accurately and creating his own sentences. The last step in the language acquisition process is reading and writing.

Let’s apply this to music. From the time they are born, children should be exposed to music of many genres, meters, and modalities. This creates their musical vocabulary. As they listen to music, they will begin to imitate, then create their own musical sounds and songs. All of this establishes a musical foundation on which note-reading can be successfully taught. When we start to teach notation, we must always provide a context for new concepts through listening, singing, and movement activities.

It is also important to realize that not all children, especially children with special needs, will learn to decode music notation at the same rate. Some might always play by ear and that is okay.

Silence, listening, movement, imitation, and improvisation are all important parts of the music learning process.

Children learn best through active participation. Fred Rogers, more commonly known as Mr. Rogers, once said, “Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”⁴

Silence

Music teachers rarely teach how to approach silence, but it is an important step, not only in processing, but in appreciating and learning how to make appropriate sounds. In working with children with autism, I have learned that I am a very fast talker and I don’t naturally give a lot of time for students to process or to answer. That is something that I am continually striving to improve. If we fill in the silences ourselves, we do not give our students a chance to show us what they know.

⁴ Heidi Moore, *Why Play is the Work of Childhood*, Fred Rogers Center, 2014.
<http://www.fredrogerscenter.org/2014/09/why-play-is-the-work-of-childhood/>

Through silence, students learn to audiate or hear the sound in their head. If I sing “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” but omit the last pitch, most people will internally hear and sing the correct pitch—the resting tone or tonic. If I do the same omission for a baby who has never heard the song before, she wouldn’t necessarily sing the same pitch because she hasn’t heard the song before and hasn’t had the adequate exposure to music to understand resting tones and relationships of notes.

As a side note, it is very important to include silence in all of our teaching. Students must have a sound concept in their head before going to the piano.

Listening

As I mentioned earlier, listening is the foundation for building a child’s musical vocabulary. It is also the most important step in a student’s continued development. Listening provides a context to the student. For example, we often tell students playing a Mozart sonata that the melody should be a beautiful, singing line, but if the student has only listened to pop music or rap, his concept of a singing line will not be stylistically appropriate.

Students should listen to a wide variety of genres, meters, and modalities. Many method books come with recordings now, but most pieces in a beginning-level method book are in 4/4 meter and are in C or G major. With repeated exposure to 4/4 meter and little else, it is no wonder that students struggle when we introduce 3/4 or 6/8 time. Listening gives the student a wide musical vocabulary and palette.

Movement

Movement is a natural and essential part of music. If a student cannot feel rhythm in his body or cannot move in a way that demonstrates a specific meter, he will not be able to demonstrate rhythmic accuracy on the piano. Through movement, we not only learn to be aware of our bodies and breathing, we are able to more efficiently learn meter and rhythm.

Teachers often have students clap rhythms, but clapping in time can be difficult for young children and children with special needs. Swaying, patting, vocalizing, or walking to meters or rhythms can be more successful.

Imitation

There is a common saying amongst music learning theorists: “We know what something is by knowing what it isn’t.” Again, I want piano lessons to be a place where children are successful, so I fully embrace this saying in my teaching. When I play a pattern or a phrase and ask a student to copy me, if it is not the same, I don’t say, “No, that wasn’t it.” Instead, I ask, “Was that the same as or different than what I played?” Part of teaching is helping students teach themselves and listening is a key ingredient in that.

I have my students imitate rhythmic and tonal patterns. We sing these patterns and also play them at the piano. Rhythmic patterns are usually 4 beats long and can increase in length and complexity as students become more comfortable and are able to imitate accurately. Tonal patterns are sung on nonsense syllables, solfege, and played on the piano. These patterns outline tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords in major and minor.

Improvisation

To a classically-trained pianist, the word “improvisation” can be quite scary, but in language, improvisation could be defined as creating one’s own phrases and sentences. This is how we can evaluate a child’s vocabulary and ability to use correct grammar and syntax. The same is true in music. Improvisation is a wonderful assessment tool.

Particularly with students with special needs, improvisation gives them a free space in which to create. I always provide musical parameters so that my students are successful. Sometimes the guidelines might be as loose as “Play a pattern that sounds like your favorite animal.” Other times, we work on question/answer phrases, intervals, or rhythmic improvisation. Flashcards can provide great improvisation guidelines, as well. Improvisation is a wonderful way to give students a break from more stressful piano activities while still doing something musical.

It’s the Little Things

As I began working with more students with autism, I noticed a change in my teaching, musicianship, and outlook. I began to appreciate every single step along the way. Sometimes we only stepped backwards, in my opinion, but we did it together.

For example, I taught Henry* for almost a year. He was mostly non-verbal, but was always excited to come to piano lessons. Some lessons, he interacted with me very well through a picture schedule I had made. Other times, he would lie down under the piano and scream for 20 minutes, despite my and his mother’s best attempts to calm him.

Henry, as is typical with many children with autism, only liked to use his index fingers to play piano, so the main focus of many lessons was using all of his fingers. Sometimes he remembered what we had talked about at the previous lesson, sometimes he didn’t. He prepared and memorized “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” by rote for the spring recital. When it was Henry’s turn to play, I went up to the piano with him. I helped him find his hand position and then he started playing . . . with just his index fingers. I remember feeling frustrated, but when he reached “Life is but a dream,” he very nicely put his hands in a five-finger pattern position and used ALL FIVE FINGERS. It was one of the proudest moments of my teaching career.

People-First Vocabulary

When I first started working with Alex, I didn’t have any experience working with children with autism. I took some classes on Autism and Teaching People with Special Needs and the most important thing I took away was people-first vocabulary. When someone has a disability or handicap, it is easy for us to refer to him using that label, but this takes away from everything else this person is. By saying “child with autism” rather than “autistic child,” I am recognizing that this is a child first, who happens to have a diagnosis of autism. This might seem like a very simple change, and it is, but it has amazing results. People who have diagnoses begin to feel more accepted and people who don’t start to see all of the wonderful potential in these students.

Child-Led Teaching

Child-led teaching does not mean that we lower our standards or that we lose our status as the teacher. It simply recognizes that, in order to learn and not just imitate, children must be involved in the teaching and learning process. Otherwise, they never move past the imitation stage.

Making slight modifications to your teaching to accommodate the learning styles, disabilities, mental load, etc. of your students is much harder and more tiring than just opening up a method book, but you will grow as a teacher and you will have the joy of seeing your students be successful in their lessons.

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Described as “impressive and expressive” (Fanfare Magazine) and “superb . . . [with] great dexterity, rhythm, and touch” (American Record Guide), Hannah Creviston is Clinical Assistant Professor of Piano Pedagogy, Director of the Music Prep Program, and Coordinator of Class Piano at Arizona State University. She received her B.Mus. in Piano Performance and Music Education with a Piano Pedagogy concentration from the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, studying with Eugenia Tsarov. A researcher and presenter on the effects of music on children with autism, she holds an M.M. in Piano Performance and an M.MuED in Early Childhood/Elementary Music Education from the University of South Carolina, where she studied piano with Dr. Scott Price. Prior to joining the faculty at ASU in Fall 2012, Creviston was on the faculty at the Crane School of Music.

As a soloist, she won the Crane Annual Concerto Competition and was a finalist in the Arthur Fraser Piano Competition. An avid performer of contemporary music, Creviston has premiered many compositions, including works by Whitney Ashe, Cameron Britt, David Heinick, Katherine Hoover, Carter Pann, John Fitz Rogers, Timothy Sullivan, Brian Vlasak, Gregory Wanamaker and Mark Lanz Weiser. Most notably, in 2007, she premiered Stacy Garrop’s Pieces of Sanity at Carnegie Hall with saxophonist Christopher Creviston.

As an accompanist, she has performed in festivals and competitions throughout the United States and abroad, including the World Saxophone Congress, International Viola Congress, Music Teachers National Association Solo Competition, North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) Biennial Conferences, NASA Solo Competition, Navy Band Saxophone Symposium, Great Plains

Saxophone Workshop, Potsdam Single Reed Summit, Penn State Single Reed Summit, Crane Saxophone Chamber Music Festival, Cortona Saxophone Sessions and the Southeastern Piano Festival. She has collaborated with various artists, including Elizabeth Buck, Christopher Creviston, Geoffrey Deibel, Anthony Kniffen, Joe Lulloff, Jeffrey Loeffert, Timothy McAllister, David Pittman-Jennings, David Stambler, Peter Steiner, Deanna Swoboda, James Umble, Robert Young and members of the United States Military Bands.

Frequent workshop topics include Music Learning Theory, teaching music to children with special needs, and the importance of movement in teaching rhythm. She has presented at numerous conferences, including the World Piano Conference (Novi Sad, Serbia), Music Teachers National Association Conferences, Texas Music Teachers Association Conference, and the Arizona State Music Teachers Association Conferences, to name a few. Her articles and compositions appear in Clavier Companion, Music Play II, ECMMA's Perspectives, and others.

She performs regularly in a duo with her husband, saxophonist Christopher Creviston. Together, they have recorded Snell Sessions and Columbia Sessions, both on the Albany Records label, and Sunday Afternoon and Breaking, available through CD Baby. Their upcoming CD Phoenix Rising will be released on the Blue Griffin label. Their recordings have been described as "engrossing" (Fanfare Magazine), "highly imaginative and expressive" (composer Denis Bédard), "a good blend of the standard and the new" (American Record Guide), and "sensitive, transparent, powerful music making that causes one to hold their breath often" (Donald Sinta).