



Finding the Perfect Pace:

Tips for Teaching with
Beginning Piano Methods

The Frances Clark Center for
Keyboard Pedagogy
Webinar, April 4, 2018

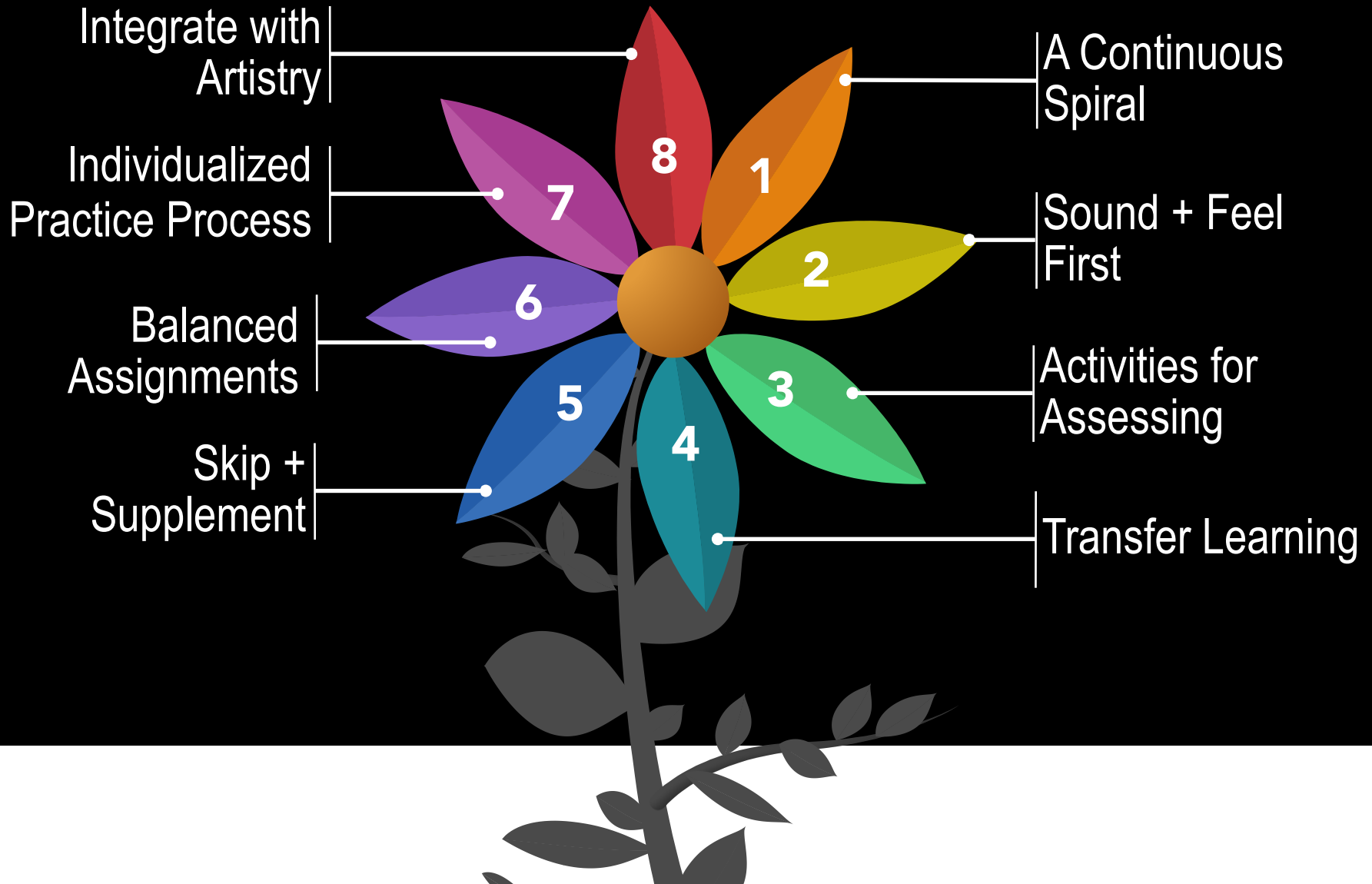
Sara M. Ernst, PhD, NCTM

I want to play piano.

I can practice!

I enjoy learning and
playing.

8 Tips for Using Method Books



Pedagogical Principles

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Self-efficacy

A rich environment

Preparation-Presentation-Association (Chronister)

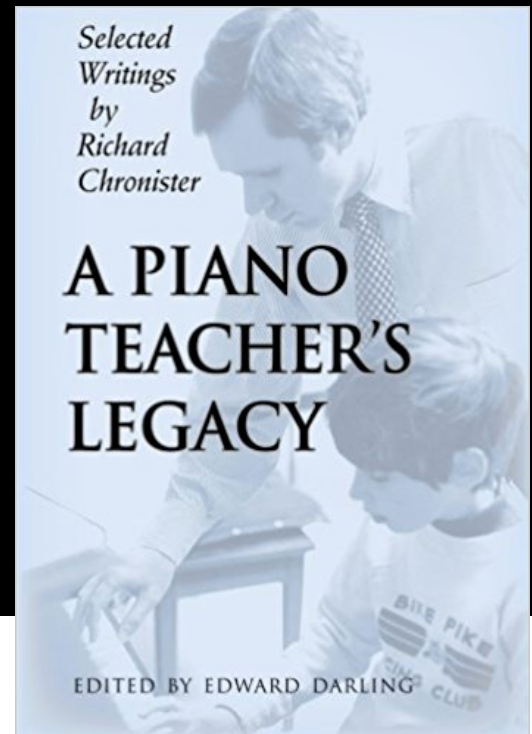
The Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky)

Assessment

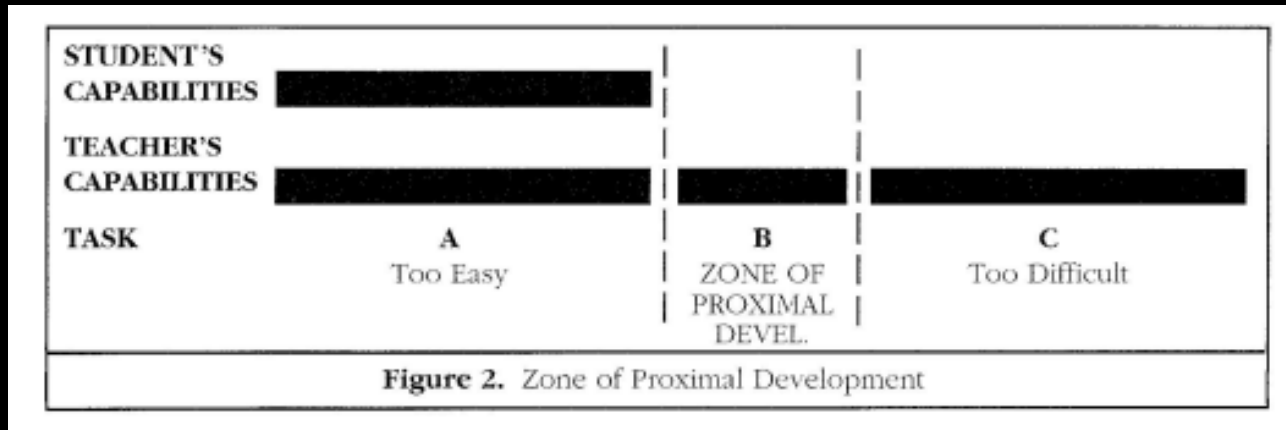
Chronister

“Let’s set a ground rule: ***a student cannot practice what he does not know.*** A young student does not practice in order to learn. He practices to solidify and to give himself facility with what he already knows.”

Richard Chronister, *A Piano Teacher’s Legacy*,
ed. by Edward Darling (Kingston, NJ: The Frances
Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy, 2005):
Ch. 2, “Stages of Learning,” p. 26.



Kennell on Vygotsky



“The Zone of Proximal Development was conceived by Vygotsky as the area just beyond the student's existing capabilities. It is a region that becomes accessible to the student only through the assistance of a more competent teacher.”

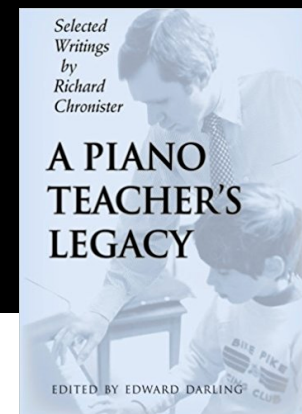
Richard Kennell, “Toward a Theory of Applied Music Instruction,” *The Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (Summer, 1992): 7-8. Reprinted in and retrieved from *Visions of Research in Music Education* 16, no. 3 (Autumn, 2010), <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v16n1/volume3>.

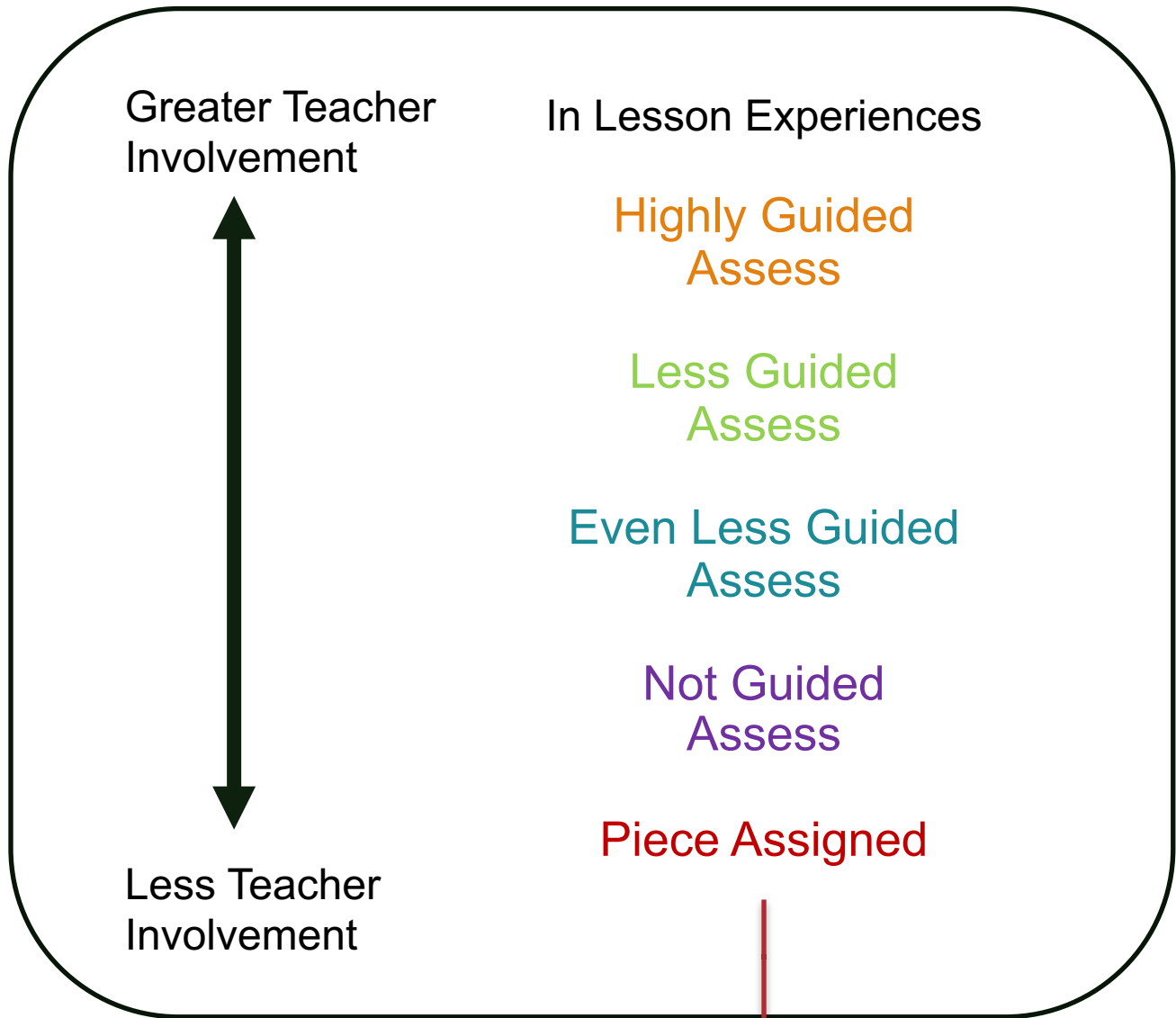
Chronister on Preparation

“The first stage in nature’s teaching is to place the new learning reasonably and naturally into the student’s environment . . . without any need for remembering, without any fear for forgetting.”

“We continue guiding each step, allowing the student to do everything along with us. We take no chances on incorrect experiences. . . . If the student has had the correct experience once, he has begun to *learn*. As a result of several lessons, he will *know*. . . . He will know because he absorbed the learning naturally.”

Chronister, Ch. 2, “Stages of Learning,” p. 33, p. 39.

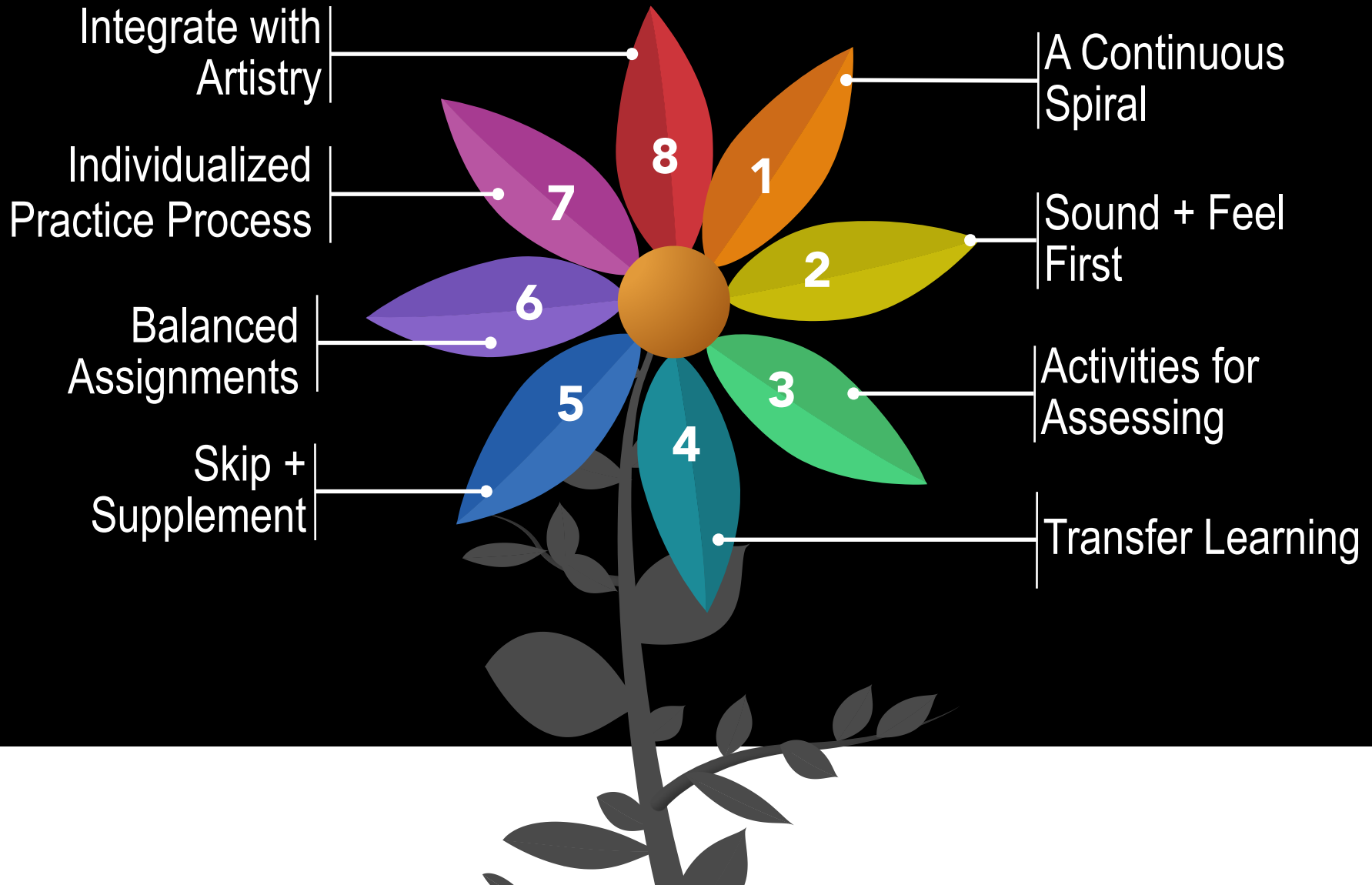




Teacher is not needed

Diagram modeled from Kennell, Figure 4, p. 10.

8 Tips for Using Method Books



1. A Continuous Spiral

Master list of a method

Presentation based upon mastery

A continuous cycle of known to next unknown

Mini-drills every week

Fun games and activities



Time to Begin

Rhythm	Reading	Technique	Theory	Musicianship	Other
Quarter note Half note Dotted half note Barlines Time signature (3, 4, 5, 6/4) Whole note	Higher and lower Group of black keys Repeated notes 8va Intervals, partial staff between the hands: 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths 2nds in the hand Staff landmark: bass, treble, grand	Fingers 2, 3 Slur, fingers 2, 3 Finger 4	Finger numbers Alphabet Keys CDE, FGAB	p and f	R + L hands

Music Tree 1

Rhythm	Reading	Technique	Theory	Musicianship	Other
Ties Upbeats Rests (quarter, half, whole)	Repeat signs 2nds from landmark 5ths from landmark (in hand) 3rds from landmark (in hand) 4ths from landmark (in hand) Sharps, Flats In a measure Naturals	Fingers 1 and 5 5ths, block, shifting Intervals in the hand (2nd, 5th, 3rd, 4th) Staccato 5fp in parts (up/down) 5fp with sharp/flats Accompanied melodies (fifths, and I and V)	Form, A and B	mp and mf Staccato	

Music Tree 2A

Rhythm	Reading	Technique	Theory	Musicianship	Other
Eighth Notes /4 Dotted Quarter /4 Eighth rest /4	1 st and 2 nd endings High G and Low F Ledger lines	Shifting 5ths 5fp in parts Rotation 5fp triads 5fp, 2nds and triads Open 5 th with 5fp	Half/Whole Steps Major/Minor 5fp Triad tones I and V	Pedal Single Accents pp and ff rit., fermata, a tempo	Transpose 5fp Harmonize I and V

Music Tree 2B

Rhythm	Reading	Technique	Theory	Musicianship	Other
Triplet eighths Compound meters with dotted quarters and eighths (3, 6, 9, 12/8) Add quarter+eighth	6ths DC al fine Key signatures	6ths 5th to 6th (expand hand) Shifting 5fp Hanon No. 1 Crossing over 2 Finger independence Crossing over 32 Thumb under Triads blocked	Key CM, Tetrascals and key signatures: GM, FM, DM B-flat	Cresc. and decrec.	Harmonize with open 5th and 6 th

2. Sound + Feel First

Music and performance

No need to read

Symbols attach to a known sound

Activities:

Imitation and Improvisation
Rote warm-ups and repertoire

Ease and confidence





Technique: Playing a 6th

3. Activities for Assessing

New contexts without teacher's assistance

Activities:
Self-study pieces
Sight reading
Dictation

If not, return to guided preparation



Dictation as mini drill

4. Transfer Learning

Guide through questions in next pieces

Alternative repertoire

Going beyond the method:

All keys for technique

Harmonization

Transposition

Composition projects



5. Skip + Supplement

Four Categories of Pieces

Essential

Optional

Challenge

Alternative Needed



Unit	Essential pieces	Optional pieces	Challenge pieces
1	Music Box & Over and Over, OR Woodpecker Bear Dance or Sailing	P. 4-5	Over & Over
2	Chin Up Robot Caution or Campfires Autumn or Somersaults	Daydreams	Autumn & Campfires
3	Cowboys Encore	Swinging Model T Those on p. 15	Whippoorwill
4	Spanish Guitars Cookie Jar or other single hand pieces	Rubber Boots	Wooden Shoes
5	Shop Work Select two pieces with 3 rd interval (fingers 1-3 and 2-4 combinations)		In the Moonlight Harvest Waltz

6. Balanced Assignments

Warm-ups

New music

Review music

Performance pieces

Writing and activities

Practice check-off



7. Individualized Practice Process

Two types of learners:

1. Trial-and-error
2. Step-by-step

Various personalities

Various strengths



My Practice Steps MT1

1. Read the title, words, and markings.

How will this sound?

p mp mf f

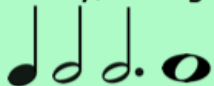
2. Study the note patterns and intervals.

Find the finger for each note.



3. Find half notes, dotted half notes, whole notes.

Sing the melody, feeling the pulses.



4. Find the keys.



5. Play 3 times.
Count out loud the first time.

My Practice Steps MT1

1. Read the title, words, and markings.

How will this sound?

p mp mf f

2. Study the notes.

Find note patterns and intervals (like 3rds, 4ths, 5ths).

Find half notes, dotted half notes, whole notes.



3. Tap on the cover with correct fingers and rhythm.



4. Find the keys and feel any moves.



5. Play 3 times.

My Practice Steps MT1

1. Read the title, words, and markings.

How will this sound?

p mp mf f

2. Complete your pencil work.

Label intervals (3rds, 4ths, 5ths).

Mark the form (with A and B).



3. Point and count the melody.



4. Find the starting position 3 times, lap to keys.



5. Play 3 times. Sing as you play.

8. Integrate with Artistry

Always artistic sound

Frequent demonstration

Present musicality from lesson one

Goals for review and performance pieces



8 Tips for Using Method Books

