Applications of selected cooperative learning techniques to group piano instruction.

Abstract

The educational concept of cooperative learning is not a new one. The instructional model has existed for centuries and has been thoroughly researched and developed as reflected in the professional literature. Yet this vast body of research has been mostly limited to the "academic disciplines," while the implications of these methodologies have been largely ignored in the area of music education and, more specifically, piano teaching. The author contends that cooperative learning strategies may be effectively employed in group piano instruction as utilized in university group piano programs for music majors, and may potentially produce more solid learning and a more thorough understanding of basic keyboard musicianship concepts and principles.

An examination of the history and development of group piano teaching is presented followed by a review of the literature surrounding cooperative learning theory, theorists and techniques. A variety of applications of cooperative learning theory to group piano teaching are detailed, as they relate to the instruction of keyboard skills for university music major courses. A tournament activity based on Robert Slavin's Student Teams-Achievement Divisions and Teams-Games-Tournaments is presented to encourage student practice of technique. Sight Reading Drill Pairs with Eye Check, based on Spencer Kagan's Pairs Check, is used to improve student sight reading skills and to examine eye activity. Based on Spencer Kagan's Think-Pair-Share, Harmonization Think-Pair-Share, is designed to improve student understanding and application of principles involved in harmonizing melodies. Styles Improvisation Investigation is adapted from Shlomo and Yael Sharan's Group Investigation and used to teach various styles of piano playing and improvisation. Designed on David and Roger Johnson's concept known as Cooperative Base Groups, Practice Partnerships are used to motivate student practice and preparation.

URI

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