

How Do We Learn?

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

Education is full of little axioms we all hear in our college education classes, but soon forget in the midst of the everyday tasks at hand. Then they crop up several years later and make more sense now that there are life experiences to wrap around the wisdom. So much of what we teach is the obvious, but there is often a disconnect between the information exchange and the behavioral outcome.

Here's one of the scholarly all-time favorite's:

I hear, I forget.

I see, I remember.

I do, I understand.

I HEAR, I FORGET. It's so true. Research says we remember about ten percent of what we hear. In terms of teaching, we can quickly see the application of this to any (and every) facet of the classroom and/ or rehearsal hall. How many times have we spent countless hours going over the same material, lecturing until we were blue in the face, only to have a student continue to make the same mistake time and time again? According to the above thoughts, we would be required to repeat our instructions TEN TIMES to ensure our students understood our instructions. This may not be the best use of our teaching time.

Is there a better way?

I SEE, I REMEMBER. Are we offering a visual interpretation of the information? Whether it is with charts, drawings, PowerPoint, or merely making eye contact, we know the retention of the exchange jumps threefold from merely "listening." Artistic ensemble playing can be embellished instantly by inviting the players to constantly make eye contact with the conductor, and – of course – that also requires the conductor to reciprocate by sharing his/her eyes with the musicians. When this takes place, the music becomes alive.

And even better...

I DO, I UNDERSTAND. Perhaps this is why participation in music has so many positive benefits throughout the academic culture. Once the student PARTICIPATES in the learning process and goes beyond being a passive listener, but rather an active learner, the retention rate jumps to well over eighty percent. We all know the value of EXPERIENCE, THE DOING, THE INVESTMENT OF SELF.

There are certainly no shortcuts to LEARNING; however we can certainly expedite the process by involving our students in THE DOING from the onset of any desired achievement. Masterful teaching is an INTERACT, a mutual journey of discovery

WITH the students.

Our students are asking of us:

1. Do you bring me something of value? Is this worth my investment of time and energy?
2. Can I trust you? Will you stick with

me until we reach our agreed-upon goals?

3. Do you respect and care for me as a person? Am I valid for being who I am?

When these inquiries receive an affirmative response, then we have opened the gateway to the unlimited potential of the creative mind. We can TELL them, we can SHOW them, but it is only through THE DOING can our students realize their infinite artistic possibilities; this is HOW THEY LEARN. It is a privilege to be a steward to all those young artists who join us each day in our rehearsal halls and music classrooms.

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

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Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser is a well-known name in the music education world as a teacher, clinician, author, composer, consultant, adjudicator, and above all, a trusted friend to anyone interested in working with young people in developing a desire for excellence. His own career involves ten years of successful college band directing at Northern Michigan University, the University of Missouri, and New Mexico State University. Following three years in the music industry, he created Attitude Concepts for Today, an organization that manages workshops, seminars, and convention speaking engagements focusing on the pathway-to-excellence. Tim presently holds the Earl Dunn Distinguished Lecturer position at Ball State University. Tim is the Executive Director of Education for Conn-Selmer, Inc., and he serves as the national spokesperson for MENC's "Make a Difference with Music" program. His books The Art of Successful Teaching, The Joy of Inspired Teaching, Music Advocacy and Student Leadership, and Everyday Wisdom for Inspired Teaching are best sellers. He is co-author of Hal Leonard's popular band method Essential Elements - 2000.