

Tools of the Trade for Teachers!

by Naomi Rowley,

Tool 1: Phrase suggestion or comments in a positive manner. For example, tell a student to keep his/her eyes on the music, rather than to suggest the pupil not watch his/her hands. In this case the good habit, if followed, replaces the poor one.

Tool 2: Reverse teacher/student roles occasionally. This technique can be very effective in reviewing concepts previously presented in lessons; it will soon demonstrate if the student has mastery of the material.

Tool 3: Use sticker for young students. Music stores handle a variety of colorful seals which can reward accomplishments as well as remind the pupil of good practice habits. Seasonal ones for Christmas and various holidays are also available.

Tool 4: Use post-it notes. Because they are moveable, post-its are very effective in “framing” specific areas for practice, especially areas needing tape-loop attention. If only a portion of a piece is to be practiced, they can readily “frame” this material as well. They can also be used for listing practice goals.

Tool 5: Include movement for young restless students. When a young pupil becomes restless, quickly insert an off-the-bench activity! For example, use this time to explore organ pipes or chambers! Better yet, regularly incorporate an off-the-bench activity before restlessness sets in! One idea is to use flash cards, either bought or made by the teacher, to review a previously learned concept or to present a new one. Place the flash cards in colorful, seasonal envelopes and distribute around the room prior to the lesson. When off-the-bench time occurs, learning will still continue but the change of pace will stimulate and motivate the student.

Dr. Naomi Rowley, a graduate of Valparaiso University, received her advanced degrees from Stanford University. She is an experienced organ teacher having taught in community music schools for nineteen years. From 1992–2000 Dr. Rowley was the organ instructor at the Drake University Community School of Music in Des Moines, Iowa; during these years the organ enrollment grew from three students to eighteen. Most recently she moved to north-eastern Wisconsin where she is Principal Organist at the First Methodist Church in Appleton; in addition, she is continuing her career as an organ teacher and workshop clinician.