

Functional Piano for Teaching: Imagining a Future Informed by Pre- and In-Service Music Educators' Perspectives

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Survey Development

Reviewed piano class outcomes from a NASM-accredited school of music in each of NAfME's six divisions; identified 32 skills and organized them in five categories:

Technique (e.g., scales, arepeggios)

Accompanying and Functional Piano Skills (e.g., accompany folk tunes, transpose melodies, perform chord progressions)

Repertoire (e.g., solo piano repertoire from various periods, repertoire by ear)

Creativity (e.g., perform a piece I composed, improvise a melody over a chord progression)

Sight-Reading (e.g., 4-part chorale, lead sheet, ensemble score)

Pre-Service Survey

Survey distributed to higher education colleagues (n=1,468); requested they distribute the survey to preservice music education students (nonprobability, convenience sample strategy; Creswell, 2014).

523 responses; 337 were usable.

Participants responded to "I learned" and "I anticipate" statements for 32 skills using a five-point Likert-type scale.

In-Service Survey

Modified survey items to "I learned" and "I use"

Distributed to 5000 in-service teachers via NAfME Research Assistance service; we received 295 usable responses (5.9%).

Participant Demographics: Gender & Licensure

Gender	Pre-Service	In-Service
Male	35.3%	33.9%
Female	64.7%	66.1%

Licensure	Pre-Service	In-Service
General	20.2%	16.9%
Instrumental	49.0%	24.1%
Vocal	16.3%	32.9%
Single Licensure	12.8%	23.7%
Other	1.8%	2.4%

Participant Demographics: Experience & Year in School

Experience (years)	% In-Service Respondents
<5	16.8%
5-9	19.8%
10-14	16.4%
15-19	11.2%
20-24	14.9%
25-29	9.7%
30+	11.2%

Year in School/Program	Pre-Service Respondents
1	18.4%
2	20.5%
3	25.8%
4	22.3%
5	8.3%
6	4.7%

Participant Demographics: Primary Instrument Group

Instrument Group	% Pre-Service	% In-Service
Brass	16.9%	16.8%
Keyboard	5.6%	23.7%
Percussion	6.8%	4.4%
String	9.5%	8.9%
Voice	34.4%	30.2%
Woodwind	24.0%	15.8%
Multiple	2.4%	0.0%

Results: Technique

Variable	Learned	Anticipate	Difference	Learned	Use	Difference
Major scales	3.65	3.64	-0.01	3.43	3.08	-0.35
Minor scales	3.50	3.59	0.09	3.28	2.81	-0.47
Chromatic scales	2.71	3.28	0.57	3.08	2.56	-0.52
Major arpeggios	3.39	3.58	0.19	3.24	3.01	-0.23
Minor arpeggios	3.24	3.53	0.29	3.01	2.74	-0.27
Dominant 7 th arpeggios	2.44	3.12	0.69	2.61	2.30	-0.31
Diminished 7 th arpeggios	2.20	2.95	0.75	2.41	2.10	-0.31

Results: Accompanying and Functional Skills

Variable	Learned	Anticipate	Difference	Learned	Use	Difference
Acc folk song	3.14	3.46	0.32	2.99	3.05	0.06
Acc solo rep	2.58	3.33	0.75	2.54	2.77	0.23
Harmonize folk song	3.17	3.33	0.16	2.87	2.92	0.05
Transpose melody	3.20	3.53	0.33	2.83	3.03	0.20
Transpose acc	2.72	3.33	0.61	2.55	2.62	0.07
Perform simple prog	3.61	3.61	0.00	3.41	3.30	-0.11
Perform complex prog	2.55	3.21	0.66	2.48	2.42	-0.06
Perform jazz prog	2.10	3.10	1.00	2.04	2.34	0.30

Results: Performing Repertoire

Variable	Learned	Anticipate	Difference	Learned	Use	Difference
Baroque rep	2.43	2.95	0.52	2.67	2.30	-0.37
Classical rep	2.71	3.04	0.33	2.87	2.44	-0.43
Romantic rep	2.55	3.03	0.48	2.64	2.37	-0.27
20 th -century rep	2.27	2.96	0.69	2.44	2.38	-0.06
Repertoire by ear	2.07	3.14	1.07	2.00	2.65	0.65

Results: Creativity

Variable	Learned	Anticipate	Difference	Learned	Use	Difference
Perform song I composed	1.94	2.69	0.75	2.05	2.24	0.19
Improvise —simple prog	2.55	3.10	0.55	2.47	2.65	0.18
Improvise —complex prog	2.04	2.86	0.82	2.01	2.17	0.16
Improvise —jazz prog	1.92	2.82	0.90	1.88	2.23	0.35

Results: Sight Reading

Variable	Learned	Anticipate	Difference	Learned	Use	Difference
Chorale	2.80	3.44	0.64	2.74	2.61	-0.13
Choral acc	2.53	3.41	0.88	2.47	2.74	0.27
Solo rep acc	2.45	3.26	0.81	2.38	2.73	0.35
Solo piano rep	2.68	2.83	0.15	2.60	2.27	-0.33
Full score	1.95	3.11	1.16	1.97	2.18	0.21
Chamber score	2.06	3.06	1.00	1.92	2.03	0.11
4-part vocal	2.65	3.39	0.74	2.51	2.62	0.11
Lead sheet	2.32	3.02	0.70	2.11	2.52	0.41

Survey Results Summary

Pre-Service Respondents Reported:

Greater agreement with "I anticipate" more than "I learned" for all skills except *playing major scales* and *playing simple chord progressions*.

Largest differences between "I anticipate" and "I learned" for: *playing jazz progressions*, *performing repertoire learned by ear*, *reading from a full score*, and *reading from a chamber score*.

Smallest differences in variables related to technique (e.g., playing scales, performing simple chord progressions).

Survey Results Summary

In-Service Respondents Reported:

Greater agreement with:

- "I learned" for technique
- "I learned" for performing repertoire
- "I use" for most accompanying and functional piano skills
- "I use" for creativity

In-Service teachers reported using all skills *less* than pre-service teachers anticipated using them.

Principal Component Analysis

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Scales	9.38	30.25	30.25
Repertoire & Sightreading	2.98	9.62	39.87
Advanced Keyboard Skills	2.31	7.45	47.32
Functional Teaching Skills	2.18	7.04	54.36

Component Means

Component	PS Learned	PS Anticipate	IS Learned	IS Use
Scales (7)	21.26	23.65	21.05	18.60
Repertoire & Sightreading (10)	25.62	31.47	25.93	25.22
Advanced Keyboard Skills (9)	19.46	27.24	18.41	20.77
Functional Teaching Skills (6)	18.21	20.13	17.12	17.58

Functional Piano Skills

- Perform chordal accompaniment for folk tunes
- Harmonize a folk song
- Transpose melodies
- Transpose accompaniments
- Perform simple chord progressions

Standards-Based Instruction

Virginia Standards of Learning
 HIAD.9 The student will improvise a melody to a I-IV-V7 chord progression.

NAfME Guitar/Keyboard/Harmonizing Instrument Strand, Anchor #3
 MU:Cr3.2.H8a Share final versions of melodies (created over specified chord progressions or AB/ABA forms) and 2-3 chord accompaniments for given melodies, demonstrating and understanding of how to develop and organize personal musical ideas.

Keyboard as Common Denominator

The keyboard has historically been the common denominator of being a musician.

Consistent with the Guitar/Keyboard/Harmonizing strand, teachers are now using ukelele and guitar the same way teachers used to use piano.

Piano class continues to be ubiquitous; is this model helping students become functional keyboard players?

What can teachers of functional piano do?

Teach techniques as a means rather than an end.

Invite students to regularly:

- perform simple chord progressions in multiple keys
- provide LH accompaniment to melodies in multiple keys
- harmonize melodies

Prioritize creativity skills: improvising over chord progressions and performing repertoire students compose. Consider arranging repertoire, too.

What can we do as music teacher educators?

Functional piano teachers and individuals who design/accredit/teach/oversee those curricula should consider (a) what is going on in classrooms and (b) what skills does a new teacher need to have to teach standards they're supposed to teach.

What is the purpose of functional piano class?

What is the definition of functional piano?

Should there be a separate functional piano track for music education students? Re-raises the question: what is the purpose of this course if we need separate tracks?

What do you think?

Thank you!

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