Gabi Spurlock

Lesson Project 2

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My lesson project was with a former string bass player. To start, I constructed a quick lesson plan to detail the main points to cover for her very first approach to a wind instrument, specifically trombone. I showed her the trombone, gave a quick overview of how the instrument works, tuning, and provided a graphic representation to show the slide positions as I demonstrated them. I also provided detailed instructions of hand position and posture.

The first challenge started when we did began the first breathing exercises. Since she had never experienced the technical kind of breathing required for a wind instrument, we spent a good deal of time on breathing. A four count inhale and exhale were automatically challenging for her lungs. I had planned to just start with the breathing exercises we’re accustomed to in class. however, after the first attempt I knew we needed to take a step back. I altered the lesson plan to simplify the breathing so that she could just feel the air expand her lungs. I was cautious to clarify how full her lungs should feel to properly expel the air when she uses the instrument.

After gaining some footing with breathing, we picked up the mouthpiece to apply the breathing to buzzing. When I told her the sounds were created from the vibrations in the mouthpiece much like the way a bow drawn across a string creates a sound, she understood why a buzz was essential. I knew attaining a strong, steady buzz would be challenging, I did not expect producing a buzz in general would be such a challenge. I had to use several approaches to get the point across. Simply buzzing just her lips without the mouthpiece was difficult for her so I told her to make the buzz from her air, not her lips. This was not as clarifying as I had hoped it would be. I then decided to make it more technical and explained the aperture and embouchure in greater detail. Although this only helped minimally, her understanding of sound production was more clear.

Before handing the trombone over to her, I reviewed the hand positions and then corrected her hands as she took the horn. As expected, the hand position needed a few reminders throughout the next few minutes. Trying to produce a sound was challenging so we spent time applying the breathing exercises to how to play. Originally we were aiming for a low Bb. When she struggled to hit that pitch I was concerned it may have been too low to begin, remembering that in class we started with F. We switched between the two and sustaining whichever pitch she would produce. I reminded her of the embouchure and aperture and that helped a little bit. To solidify the pitches she was producing, I put my tuner on the stand so she could see which pitch she was aiming for. Additionally, we used a drone and the piano to give the starting pitch. Actually producing the sound was challenging for her and because this was genuinely the first wind instrument she had ever played. After the 20 required minutes was up, she still had questions so we continued for just a little while longer careful not to over exert her embouchure as a beginner.