

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Inside the Lesson Room

Chances are you see your teachers and students come in and out of your music lesson studios all day. But, do you know what goes on during those lessons? Discovering what's really taking place can help you improve your music lessons and take them to a new level. It will also provide you with successful teaching ideas and techniques to duplicate with other teachers. You'll also discover teaching practices that you need to fix — quickly. So let's look at how you can do this:



**ASK YOUR TEACHERS.** Touch base with your teachers, and ask them what they're doing in their lessons programs. Make it even easier by giving them a form to fill out. Ask each teacher questions like: "What method books do you use for beginners? Intermediate students? Advanced?" or "What are the first five songs you teach?" Collect this information in a notebook that you can reference later.

Talk to each student after their lesson. Make a roster of students organized by teacher and day of the week. (It makes this process smoother to find the student.) Then, be sure to speak to the students after their lesson. Ask them, "What did you learn today?" and "Show me where you're at in your book?" Make notes on what the student says, and pay attention to what they're excited about

in the lessons. Include the parents in this process. Ask them how they think the lessons are going. This lets the parents know you and the store are interested in their student. It also opens up a connection of who they can talk to at the store. This is also a great time to double-check you have correct student information, such as phone numbers and email addresses.

**COMPARE YOUR NOTES.** Do a comparison of the teacher's feedback and the student/parent feedback. Does it match up? Does the teacher claim they use a book, but the student tells you they never use that book and jam to the same song every week? Does the parent indicate

they don't know what the student is learning material wise?

**DEVELOP A FOLLOW-UP PLAN.**

You should now have a great overview of what goes on in each teacher's lesson room. Do the teachers who have a working music lesson plan have higher retention? Could you duplicate some of their lesson ideas for teachers with less successful plans? For example, use the information you learn by asking, "What are the first five songs you teach?" If you discover that your high-retention guitar teachers are using certain songs that are easy for beginner students and really excites them, then make a list of these songs and share them with all your guitar teachers. This simple change could be huge in retaining beginning students.

Take this concept a step further, and share the list of songs with your drum and keyboard teachers. Now you can easily put beginning students in bands playing for their parents and create excitement early in their music lesson experience. The same goes for books and using technology in the lessons. Take every chance you can to ensure your lesson students are receiving a positive experience. **MI**

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**Speaking with students, parents and teachers on a regular basis can help improve the lesson program experience**