

Good thesis on challenges of staying focused

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Children between the ages of four and nine are usually at one of the most crucial stages of life development. This is the stage where children start to understand some of the worldly concepts in a more complex manner and start to decipher the information that is fed to them in ways that are more refined. It is also at this stage where children start discovering what they are passionate about life and slowly start to become excited with these passions. It is, therefore, very crucial that at this stage, children are nurtured in the right manner, especially when it comes to their passion because it may become extremely useful in their future lives (Campbell, & Scott-Kassner, 1995).

A beautiful five-year-old girl, Emma, comes to her routine Tuesday lesson with a handful of her favorite dolls and toys, anticipating my praise on them. Concerned that a thirty-minute lesson would fly by quickly, I kindly remind her to start the lesson. I have found that if Emma has practiced ten to fifteen minutes per day, she sounds somewhat fluent, whereas if she has practiced only two days a week, she tends to feel discouraged and flustered and starts to lose focus in her lessons.

Sean, a six-year-old energetic boy, likes to play hide-and-seek before entering my house for his lessons. He particularly enjoys the thrill of seeing my surprised face when he yells, "BOO!" behind the doors. During our lesson, Sean is given three chances to play his assigned pieces. However, Sean's attention span is only long as the length of a piece. In between pieces, Sean has a tendency to play for me the pieces more advanced than his current level to get my praise. I just wish I could compliment him, had he

first managed well the skills required for his current pieces.

In every studio, there is always a student who constantly makes the teacher sigh and shake her head; that is the mischievous Julie. Julie is a seven-year-old second grader. Though Julie comes to lessons week after week with her pieces memorized, she does so to stay away from her poor note-reading skills. Refusing to keep her eyes on the piece while she plays, Julie has difficulty keeping her focus on the music. For Julie, as soon as she loses her focus, she completely loses the place in the music. She has no idea where to continue, once she takes a pause in her playing.

Monica, on the other hand, a grade seven student with excellent note-reading skills, has a tendency to space-out in the middle of her lesson. Fortunately, this does not happen very often, but when it does, Monica starts to play music other than her piece without being aware of it. When I ask her to keep going, poor Monica says she doesn't know where she is in the music. For the five years that Monica has studied with me, I have realized that this usually occurs when she receives negative comments about her performance. In addition, she does not know how to control her anger, and this inability leads her to space out during lessons. Nevertheless, with a positive feedback, she reacts happily as a bird and plays well.

And then we have Gwyneth, a very bright nine-year-old. Gwyneth is one of the rare joys who immediately picks up anything her teachers present. However, Gwyneth also has the habit of stopping her playing in the midst of her piece, because her attention suddenly drifts away from the music. Either she thinks she's going to mess up, or her mind signals her to stop playing. Throughout my years of teaching, I have noticed that children at the tender

age between four and nine lose their focus very easily. I see not only that their eyes can only stay on the music for a short period of time, but I have also noticed almost everything around them catches their attention. As piano teachers, we need to be constantly aware of our students' attention span in order to achieve positive results. To start, we need to adjust ourselves to each student's perspective. In the following chapters, we will examine strategies to assist piano students overcome these common problems of lack of focus. We will discuss ways to motivate students to practice and we will address the challenge of sustaining focused attentions in students from kindergarten through elementary school. We will touch on important topics of improving note-reading skills and giving feedback. We will also look at ways to help students overcome the fear of public performance, and finally, we will share the joy and honor of being a piano teacher.

One of the passions shared by many children at this stage is the passion for music. Piano studies are extremely useful in a child's cognitive and musical development. As mentioned earlier, children between the ages of four and nine are usually at one of the most crucial stages of life development. It is therefore important that if children are to be taught piano skills, it be around the age of four so that they can have adequate time to learn all the valuable concepts (Campbell & Scott Kassner, 45). In addition, piano learning at the age of four is advisable because it is at this stage that children start to master and understand such complex skills. At younger ages, they may be completely bewildered by the new information being fed to them and at older ages, it may be too late (Campbell, & Scott-Kassner, 45). However, taking piano lessons, instead of just listening to music, at this age boosts

sensory development and helps with spatial-temporal reasoning. Many students at this age however experience many problems as seen in the above examples from my class. This is especially in relation to staying focused. Most of the lose focus very easily but this is not entirely their fault. The teaching method adopted by a music teacher has serious repercussions for the student and if they are not effective, the student loses focus very easily. It is the responsibility of the piano teacher to devise a method that is suitable for all his or her students as well as coming up with ways to ensure that the students do not lose their focus. With suitable methods of teaching, students will be able to retain focus in the class and problems of staying focused will be eliminated.

As mentioned, the nurturing of children aged four to nine has several benefits to the child. Those who particularly at an early age, accrue several benefits that include nurturing of their imagination, creativity, curiosity and self-esteem. It has been found that the introduction of music to young children through studying the piano has an effect on other learning or general education outcomes. . The knowledge acquired transcends the pure musical facts and spills over to other experiences of learning. Piano studies for children nurture not only their musical growth but also non-musical growth and general development.

In my experience, I have found that students, who study piano throughout their childhood, focus better in their school curriculum. Studies have shown that students, who study music, develop traits of self-discipline and self-regulation -- thinking before doing--which reduces impulsive behavior and encourages children to think things through to avoid random behavior

(Portowitz, Lichtenstein, Egorova and Brand, 5).

Piano studies bring positive influence to children at this age group. Though children attend school to study academic subjects such as math, language arts, and science, those who study music develop the capabilities to enhance these subjects. First, music studies entail recognizing various entities, such as the melodic and rhythmic motive. The skill to identify melodic and rhythmic motives will assist children to recognize patterns in language arts. Secondly, studies have discovered the connection between musical and spatial reasoning abilities (Portowitz, Lichtenstein, Egorova and Brand, 5). Spatial-temporal reasoning is the individual's ability to visualize patterns and manipulate them mentally. It involves maintaining and transforming mental images in the absence of a physical model. This ability is required for higher brain functions in subjects, such as, math and science. Therefore, children who have not had piano lessons may perceive music listening as a linear experience, for they only recognize the melody. On the other hand, children who have studied piano, would be able to enjoy music listening as a multidimensional and spatial experience, for they also recognize harmony, rhythm, and dynamics.

This thesis is aimed at all at both the general public who love music as well as piano teachers, both current as well as those who hope to venture into the discipline in the future. Particular focus is given to piano pedagogy to children who are between the ages of four and nine. The paper particularly seeks to explore on the problems of the difficulties of staying focused among this age group. The thesis is intended to be a manual for these teachers and is aimed at imparting them with sufficient knowledge about working with

children in this age group. The presentation of this knowledge and information will be done through a narration of personal experiences in the teaching of piano and documented literature as well as research reports assembled over the years by various music specialists and experts. It is hoped that this manual will complement the knowledge of piano teaching already held by piano teachers or may be give them an entirely new outlook in regards to piano teaching. Every piano teacher whom deals with children between the ages of four to nine need to study and understand the musical development of their students on how much the students can attain, retain, and finally apply knowledge at their various stages of both intellectual and physical development. The sole objective of a piano lesson is not to simply impart knowledge about the black and white keys and various sounds they produce; rather, the program should be designed in a manner that nurtures both their creativity and growth (Scoot Kassner, 56).

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