

Studio Teacher Meeting Report

Teaching Students with Unique Challenges: Considerations for the Studio Teacher

Presenter: Megann Griffin

October 11, 2017 at Potter Violins

Report by Sophie Chang

Megann Griffin is a violinist, music therapist at Lamax Homes, and private violin teacher at Maryland Talent Education. She has extensive experience with students who have special needs or are atypical learners. At this Studio Teacher Meeting, she shared her expertise on a handful of different conditions. The meeting

Ms. Griffin structured her talk as a dialogue between her and the other teachers. She had a packet for each teacher with an outline of her main points. During the presentation, Ms. Griffin defined and explained some of the most common conditions seen in private teaching such as ADHD and autism. Less common but still important disorders such as oppositional defiant disorder and cerebral palsy were also included. For each disorder, Ms. Griffin described the symptoms and diagnoses.

Ms. Griffin talked at length about different strategies to help students with unique needs. Though every child is different, there are over-arching concepts that teachers should keep in mind for all students. Teachers should always strive to do what is best for the student and not have unreasonable expectations for them. For students with learning disabilities, the process of learning is often more important than the end goal. A private teacher should also strive to have as much background info about each student as possible, so that they can tailor their teaching accordingly. Other advice included creating a routine for each student and making sure that the teaching studio is not visually distracting. All of this advice came from Ms. Griffin's own experiences as a music therapist and as a teacher of children with special needs.

Many of the teachers in attendance shared their own stories about working with students with unique challenges. Many were concerned about the fact that many parents choose not to tell their music teacher about their child's needs. Often parents are afraid of their children being stigmatized. Ms. Griffin's advice was to make strong connections with the parents and to make the studio as inviting as possible. Ms. Griffin stressed that while private music teachers may not be mental health professionals, there is still so much that they can do to help students with special needs. Megann Griffin's Studio Teacher Meeting was inspiring and informative. Music lessons can be a positive force in every child's life if the teacher has enough patience and the right knowledge.