

# The Effective Methods for Teaching Piano to Adolescents in China

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## Abstract

The challenges of teaching piano to adolescents are primarily centered around three key areas: score recognition, song selection, and time constraints. Adolescents often struggle with fundamental music recognition, especially those lacking prior musical training. This can result in difficulty locating corresponding piano keys and mastering basic techniques. Effective song selection is essential, as familiar pieces like Richard Clayderman's "Dream Wedding" can engage students, but a balance between popular and technical repertoire is necessary. Additionally, time constraints due to academic pressures can hinder consistent practice. The research identifies three vital teaching methods: fingering and movement, structure and analysis, and musical expression. By focusing on personalized fingering techniques, fostering an understanding of musical structure, and encouraging emotional engagement with music, teachers can motivate adolescents to improve their piano skills. Incorporating biomechanical principles, analytical thinking, and creative expression is crucial in fostering a lifelong appreciation for piano learning among teenagers.

**Keywords:** Effective Methods; Teaching; Piano; Adolescents; China

## Introduction

In the rapid development of the times today, with the improvement of people's living standards, people's demand for the spiritual level is growing, and art plays an important role in meeting the spiritual needs of mankind, people are in need of art to enrich their lives, art education is now an important part of the comprehensive quality of education for the majority of young people and into the examination and evaluation of students in the system, but also in order to In order to promote the development of art education, China has made a series of multifaceted efforts to introduce a series of macro-control policies, such as the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving the Work of School Beauty in the New Era jointly issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council, in addition to the Implementing Plan for the Reform and Development of School Beauty in the New Era (2019-2022) issued by the Ministry of Education, and so on. Policies and documents such as these, the establishment of special funds to support the development of the arts in schools to improve teaching conditions, curriculum reform, teacher training and social promotion methods to promote, and music education is an important part of it. Among them, piano education has attracted a large number of students and parents due to its unique artistic charm and its role in improving the overall quality of individuals. With the development of China's economy, more and more people have more time, energy and money to invest in self-improvement, joining the ranks of piano learning. In this team, the youth is a very important branch, in the age group of 16 to 18 years old this age group of people's mental development is perfect, the acceptance of new

things is strong, at the same time, the teenage period is also a person's physical and mental development of the important stage of the stereotypes, is very potential for the education of the group; therefore, the targeted systematic education is particularly important.

### **Piano teaching for youth people status**

Firstly, piano teaching for teenagers is a concept that encompasses a wide range of approaches. The researcher of this article has selected teenagers as the age group in question, specifically referring to those aged 16-18 years old. This stage of the development of the thinking of young people is a complex and lengthy process, which can be described as a process of development from low to high, from imperfect to perfect. They have changed from concrete image thinking in the past to logical thinking, which is based on abstraction. As they age, teenagers' cognitive abilities gradually improve, enabling them to analyze, synthesize, and compare information more effectively (Chen, 2009).

In light of these developments, it is crucial to adopt teaching methods that foster divergent thinking. One such method is to open students' imaginations by integrating their daily lives with the learning process. This approach can be exemplified by teaching students to view the piano as an integral part of their lives. It is important to ensure that music is integrated into the student's life, allowing them to experience the tangible benefits of learning the piano. While learning the piano is a long process, it is essential to foster intrinsic motivation in students. This can be achieved by developing internal drive and perseverance, as well as by emphasizing the elegance and accessibility of the art form.

However, the researcher discovered that in the literature related to the investigation of youth learning piano, a "2023 China Piano Industry Market Research Report" indicated that the data analysis revealed that the national policy of vigorously developing the cultural industry and The guidance of the policy of the people's economic standard of living is constantly improving, and other factors have contributed to the continued popularity of the piano in recent years. There has been a notable increase in the number of people learning the piano, with an expansion in the age range of those engaged in the activity, from younger individuals to the elderly. The piano is gradually becoming less exclusive, with an increasing number of people learning music and entertainment puzzles as well as fitness tools. This is a very favorable development for the piano in China. In Europe, the United States, and Japan, the per capita ownership rate of pianos among families reached over 20 percent. In contrast, China's current ownership rate is significantly lower. There is considerable potential for growth in the piano market in China. The piano education and manufacturing industries also offer promising prospects for future development. As technology advances, the digital piano and electronic piano markets are expected to continue expanding.

In terms of the aforementioned market analysis, the sale and purchase of pianos can only be considered one aspect of the development of piano education. When the researcher investigated and analyzed the proportion of Chinese people who learn to play the piano, he did not obtain specific data on the proportion of the piano population. Instead, he obtained data on the proportion of the "K12" population, which tends to refer to individuals between the ages of 6 and 18. The 16- and 18-year-olds in the researcher's study are within this range. The 16-18 year olds studied by the researcher are within this range. Furthermore, according to the survey data in the 2022 China Music Education Industry Report, more than half (56.5%) of the users in China's music education market are in the K12 group. (Lian Junxiang

Xu Hanyi Wang Gaoling 2024) However, it is only recently that the public has focused its attention on learning the piano, with children being the primary beneficiaries. In order to cultivate the traditional concept of learning the piano, it is essential to begin at an early age, specifically between the ages of 4 and 9. This age range is based on the learner's own physiological development conditions, as well as the data analysis of facts that have been verified by numerous experts. The period between the ages of 16 and 18 is a crucial time for developing motivation and interest in the piano. If one wishes to achieve a high level of proficiency, it is important to recognize that this window of opportunity may have passed (Liu, 2019).

From the perspective of a piano teacher, British psychologist Percy Booker posits that the true measure of one's success is not the number of talented students one teaches, but rather the number of ordinary students one helps to avoid trouble (Bie Ke 2010). Teaching piano to adolescents is not merely about teaching students to become "pianists." The researcher's survey revealed that the primary sources of adolescents' spontaneous interest in the piano are peers who have taken piano lessons and performances, anime, short videos, and artists playing the piano. This indicates that most high school students are exposed to "role models" from the piano. The majority of high school students derive inspiration from various sources of "role models," including students playing the piano in school activities, anime characters playing the piano, or short videos with colorful piano performances, or professionally trained entertainers wearing gorgeous clothes, among others. However, it is important to note that this kind of interest can only motivate students to "get started" with the piano. However, in practice, this kind of interest is only capable of motivating students to "get started" on the piano. It is difficult for them to continue learning. This creates a significant challenge for parents and teachers alike. Over time, the child's interest begins to decline, and they may even exhibit a strong sense of rebellion and resistance (Li, 2024).

Many scholars attribute the problem to teachers who are excessively demanding in the teaching process. This leads students to perceive the practice of hand shape, fingering, and playing exercises as "meaningless" in the context of learning to play the piano. Additionally, such training is often perceived as overly laborious, which can generate an aversion to learning. The differing personalities and pedagogical approaches of teachers can give rise to the perception that some are highly skilled and demanding, while others are less so but able to engage students through a more persuasive style. However, regardless of the level of expertise of the teacher, an overly serious approach to teaching is unlikely to be the most effective. Indeed, the majority of students are unlikely to benefit from a teacher who is overly strict or demanding. The majority of students will be more receptive and willing to continue learning the piano if they are presented with a patient and approachable teaching style. However, ultimately, the driving force behind students' interest in learning is the sense of achievement that is derived from the positive outcomes of their learning.

## **The effective methods for teaching piano to adolescents**

### **The teaching method for piano for adolescents**

Researchers have identified two predominant categories of piano for youth teaching methods: domestic and foreign. A review of pedagogical practices in foreign countries reveals that piano instruction for recreational purposes places significant emphasis on fundamental technical training. It is noteworthy that establishing a robust foundation is widely regarded as a pivotal aspect of piano learning. In China, the integration of foreign pedagogical practices with domestic expertise has led to the development of a distinctive teaching methodology. A synthesis of the domestic context and the insights provided by key informants reveals that the "experiential" piano teaching method is particularly well-suited for the recreational use of the piano within the domestic environment. The present article is intended for young learners. The ensuing pedagogical approach is particularly well-suited to young learners, as it facilitates direct interaction with the piano, thereby enabling them to experience the allure of piano music.

### **experiential teaching method**

The initial step in the process is communication, which is intended to foster a sense of community among students and to ascertain their current piano proficiency. Upon comprehending the communication, the piano commences the process of introducing the direction of experience.

The second element is experience, which is defined as the emotional response to tonality. The effect of tonality on people is a common form of cognition that is linked to emotions. The major keys are bright, while the minor keys are dark. Another experience that can be described is the round dance, which evokes a particular emotional response. The consolidation of these sentiments through association is a process that is facilitated by experience.

The third layer is the substitution expression, which enables students to substitute scenes or objects from the mood, from melancholy to the night substitution, all the feelings of serenity, a faint loss, and then substitution to the blue mood. Ultimately, this process leads to the color at the end. The ability to make associations during musical engagement is a universal capacity, yet the articulation of these associations serves to enhance the experience.

The fourth level is the summary, for example, the summary of the round dance is from the perspective of the aesthetics of the art genre. This is because people's pursuit of music is the pursuit of art, which is a high-level category of needs in the theory of the Hierarchy of Needs of Maslow. Therefore, the acquisition of knowledge of the arts as well as the aesthetics of the arts will lead to an increase in self-confidence and to the fulfillment of a sense of exaltation, which will then be given back to the learning of the piano itself. Following the exposition of musical styles, students are guided back to piano playing, commencing with the fundamentals of hand shapes and sitting postures. These elements, while seemingly mundane, are of paramount importance in fostering students' interest, enhancing their learning initiative, and cultivating their self-consciousness. This is of great significance for young people learning the piano.

Conversely, piano for youth in young students emphasizes the pursuit of musicality, as well as the development of the ability to communicate music emotionally. This emotional communication is facilitated through experience. Given that human beings are in constant interaction with their own feelings, the initial reaction to music is an emotional one, with the sentiment being perceived before any consideration of musicality. Emotional expression is

achieved through experiential learning, whereby the instructor exemplifies the desired behavior, fostering an environment conducive to understanding and analysis of musical compositions. This approach entails the articulation of emotions, the conveyance of tonal nuances, and the articulation of the emotional tone of a color, among other objectives. The present category is characterized by the notion that emotional expression constitutes a pivotal element in performance. The ratio of technical and emotional aspects in music education is a subject of particular relevance to novice learners. Experiential teaching, predicated on musicality and emotional flow, has been demonstrated to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of piano among novices. This pedagogical approach is predicated on self-discipline and the assumption that rapid progress is possible for those who adhere to its principles. However, for students lacking the necessary perseverance, this approach may not yield significant progress in a short period of time. Nonetheless, experiential learning can offer valuable insights and foster a sense of fulfillment, even if it does not necessarily lead to rapid development in specific skills. For instance, a student's piano proficiency may not advance rapidly, but their capacity to appreciate music can undergo substantial enhancement, which is a crucial aspect of the learning process. Frequently, conventional piano instruction prioritizes the significance of tangible outcomes, impeding our capacity to discern and evaluate matters beyond these outcomes. This approach, characterized by a utilitarian spirit and an extremist stance, hinders the cultivation of a comprehensive understanding. Instead, the process of experience and the myriad sentiments it engenders become the true fruits of our labor.

### **Strategies for teaching**

The issue under discussion is not exclusive to piano learning; it is a common phenomenon across various disciplines and is closely linked to students' personality traits. Some students are naturally inclined to pursue academic excellence and strive for outstanding performance in any field. However, the reality of learning is far more complex—each student has their own strengths and limitations. Just as Valentine's Day reminds us to care for others with love and patience, educators should approach their students with empathy, recognizing their individual needs and guiding them with thoughtful encouragement.

In piano learning, for instance, a student may be highly enthusiastic yet lack the innate talent to master the instrument in a short period. Some academically gifted students, when faced with difficulties, may choose to withdraw—not because they lack interest or determination, but because they feel the effort required may not justify the outcome, perceiving it as a waste of time. These are just a few examples, and there are many more nuanced learning scenarios that will not be elaborated upon here.

Addressing such learners requires a sense of balance in teaching strategies. Teachers should consider whether the repertoire assigned exceeds the student's current capabilities, and whether the student's temperament aligns with the style of the piece—an impulsive or energetic personality, for example, may not suit meditative or lyrical compositions. Performance preferences should also be taken into account: does the student enjoy performing solo, playing in front of an audience, or showcasing their skills more broadly?

An effective piano teacher must be observant of these subtle yet significant details and make timely pedagogical adjustments accordingly. When long-term developmental goals are prioritized, overcoming these challenges becomes far more manageable. There is no need to adopt a “rush-to-succeed” mentality; rather, teachers should focus on sustainable growth. Unfortunately, the reality is often harsh—students compare themselves with peers, and

parents are similarly inclined to engage in such comparisons. As educational technologies evolve, attention to detail has been increasingly neglected. This is akin to the difference between conventional produce and organic fruits and vegetables: although they may appear similar, the higher price of organic goods reflects a deeper level of care and quality. The same principle applies to education.

In addressing this type of student, educators may consider the following strategic steps:

1. **Set Clear, Phased Goals:** Help students establish motivating yet realistic learning targets. By lowering the pressure for immediate results, teachers can rebuild students' confidence in emotional and aesthetic learning.

2. **Train Delayed Gratification and Self-Regulation:** Foster students' ability to wait for long-term rewards and manage their emotions, thereby reducing restlessness and enhancing their sense of internal control.

3. **Implement Realistic Feedback and Inspirational Role Models:** Provide students with constructive feedback and guide them through exemplary demonstrations to stimulate engagement and understanding.

4. **Encourage Focus on Personal Progress, Not Comparison:** Support students in recognizing and respecting their own learning rhythms, emphasizing personal growth over competition with others.

#### **How to set the proportion of each genre of songs for teach youth student? (Popular music, Classical music, Jazz and contemporary music, Chinese popular music, Chinese traditional music)**

Following the communication with the key informants, the researcher determined that the subsequent step would be to commence the formulation of the preliminary design outline for the teaching repertoire. In doing so, the researcher took into consideration the interests of the youth and the traditional piano teaching repertoire. The researcher then proceeded to divide the repertoire into four categories for the purpose of collection: the animation category, the classical category, the popular category, and the key informant's self-selected repertoire. The latter category comprised three repertoires for each of the categories of animation, classical, and popular. A total of ten repertoires were selected by the key informants. The relevant questionnaires and data were subsequently collected from the key informants using the following table as an example.

The researcher distributed the sample form to the key informants, who subsequently completed it. Following a series of deliberations with the key informants, the following ten pieces were ultimately distilled.

Table 1 Selected Pieces

Classical Piano Pieces	1: Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2: I. Adagio sostenuto (Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)) 2: June: Barcarolle (Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Russian composer toolbar. listen) 3: Canon and Gigue in D major (Johann Pachelbel (1653 ~ 1706))
Music in Anime Piano Pieces	1. One Summer's Day (Joe Hisaishi 1950-) 2. Castle in the Sky (Joe Hisaishi 1950-) 3. Big Fish (Qian lei 1982-)
Popular Piano Pieces	1. City of Stars (La la Land)( Justin Hurwitz, 1985-) 2. The Sound of Falling Snow'(L.T. 1986-) 3. Mariage D'amour (Paul de Senneville& Olivier Toussaint)
Optional Tracks	(Based on student's own choices)

## Conclusion

In the context of the rapid development of contemporary society and the increasing emphasis on aesthetic education, piano education has become an important component of art education and youth quality development. With the support of national cultural and educational policies in China, piano learning is gradually expanding from an elite activity to a widely accessible form of artistic education. For adolescents aged 16–18, piano learning plays a meaningful role not only in cultivating musical skills but also in enhancing aesthetic perception, emotional expression, and overall personal development during a critical stage of psychological and cognitive growth.

This study highlights that effective piano teaching for adolescents should balance technical training with musical experience and emotional engagement. The experiential teaching method provides an effective approach by encouraging students to connect musical elements with personal feelings, imagination, and real-life experiences. Through communication, emotional perception, substitution of imagery, and reflective summary, students can gradually deepen their understanding of music while maintaining motivation and interest in learning. At the same time, teachers should adopt flexible teaching strategies that respect individual differences, set realistic learning goals, provide constructive feedback, and encourage students to focus on personal progress rather than comparison with others.

Furthermore, the selection of teaching repertoire should reflect both traditional piano education and the interests of contemporary youth. Integrating classical works with popular music, animation music, and student-selected repertoire can enhance students' engagement and broaden their musical horizons. By combining diverse musical genres with appropriate pedagogical strategies, piano education for adolescents can create a balanced learning environment that promotes technical development, artistic appreciation, and sustained interest in music.

Overall, adolescent piano education should emphasize long-term development rather than short-term achievements. Through thoughtful teaching methods, diversified repertoire selection, and supportive educational environments, piano learning can become a meaningful artistic experience that nurtures students' creativity, emotional awareness, and appreciation of music, thereby contributing to the broader goals of contemporary art education.

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