

Mr. Lumpkin's 5th grade zoom class looks like any other normal zoom class where all cameras are required to be on. However, he manages to create a uniquely welcoming environment by catering to his kids' tastes—a 5 minute welcome window plays some soothing lo-fi music and the warm-ups right after also involve a lo-fi track. He keeps a calm demeanor while he shares small-talk interspersed in his lesson: things like the weather and upcoming football games. Overall there's an air of being relaxed and keeping pressure low on the class.

The goal for this lesson was to wrap things up and make sure all of his students made it through the assignments before giving them a break. Because this is a goal that mainly focuses on students who are behind, any of the students who were already doing well before class started had the opportunity to leave class early, further enhancing the notion that good work early means better rewards. It's difficult to assess exactly what students were working on in the lesson, not because there were no other goals but because the assignments they did were recorded and sent to Mr. Lumpkin. Thus it's difficult to see what students are working on improving. However, some educated guesswork based on what snippets of work are available tell me that we are working on playing with good tone by using relaxed air and hearing notes before we play them. It's tempting to say that those who had to stay for the whole class are learning how to manage time wisely, and indeed some of them probably are, but others might just be needing that extra time due to difficulties that arise from a pandemic while completing assignments. Students who engaged with the lesson felt better afterwards about their class standing and their ability to work on assignments and get things done. The

students at the back half of the lesson seemed to do much better with one-on-one instruction, but nothing is said about whether that is an okay learning style.

2

The main group activity in Mr. Lumpkin's lesson was the "Lo-fi Bb" warmup, a long tones exercise that used a drone and a lo-fi drum beat to keep things as interesting as possible while still being relaxed and fun. Mr. Lumpkin excels at identifying potential playing issues over zoom with only visual cues. Slouching bodies told him when some people weren't using good air, hand placement told him when students were getting carried away by the music. To play to that strength, he has the whole group do the exercise while he watches, and then afterwards he gives feedback to particular groups or even individuals if the situation calls for that.

When the students who had already completed the objective of the lesson left, Mr. Lumpkin did not change in teaching style all too much. Instead of having the whole group work on one exercise at the same time (which is difficult when audio is needed), he had people work on their missing assignments while he stayed around to help keep kids on track and to answer questions. Consistent check-ins while students were working on their own made sure students kept working and didn't get distracted or overwhelmed, and the calm demeanor he uses allows a firmer push towards getting work done without raising anxiety levels.

In the last bit of the lesson, Mr. Lumpkin worked with students on an exercise called "Wayfaring," a similarly styled lo-fi exercise that involved a more complex melody. Since not everyone was working on it, he had those who were doing their own individual tasks turn their cameras off, which kept both him and the student working on the exercise organized. Chris, the student working on the assignment with Mr. Lumpkin,

mentions at one point that the melody is “not really that hard,” which gives Mr. Lumpkin an opportunity to reiterate the goal of learning the melody. It’s a melody exercise developed to emphasize quality tone production, hearing notes before you play them, and being easy enough to allow for experimentation with harder techniques, specifically vibrato.

3

Mr. Lumpkin’s class seemed to have clear rules laid out from a while ago, mainly being to (1) keep cameras on while working as a group and to (2) keep mics off when not asking a question. Students generally followed these rules very well—there were some students who refused to engage and turn their cameras on, but since they weren’t engaging there was not a lot Mr. Lumpkin could do to change that behavior. He made references to people keeping their cameras off, made sure to mention some names when necessary, but ultimately it was up to the student to take the proper next step. Nothing Mr. Lumpkin ever said conveyed anger or annoyance, rather his calm and relaxed delivery seemed more like concern and attempts at lightening the mood than anything else. Most student interruptions were to ask a question, which seemed to be a totally normal and acceptable thing in Mr. Lumpkin’s class. Students understood Mr. Lumpkin’s expectations for them and most seemed to genuinely want to reach them, even and especially those who struggled.

The last thing I want to focus on with Mr. Lumpkin’s class is his troubleshooting of Chris’s technology issues. Chris was trying to record the assignment to catch up, but couldn’t due to some issues with his microphone. Mr. Lumpkin very quickly developed a sense for what was going on and helped Chris figure out what was going on by “going

through the key ring,” so to speak. That is, they tried different solutions together until one worked. This included teaching Chris how to share his screen so that they could see what was going on together. Another student chimed in very helpfully to mention that it could be because zoom was already using the microphone, which seemed to be the case. Chris left to test that out and didn’t come back, which means it worked per his instructions from Mr. Lumpkin. Mr. Lumpkin learned as much as he could about how all of the technology he’s using works before having his students use it as well, but he let his students help in the troubleshooting process when needed. This led to a cooperative classroom dynamic that felt better for all parties involved. It was no easy feat, but thanks to Mr. Lumpkin’s calm and relaxed demeanor and gentle but firm guidance and focus, the class was able to succeed in their goal of catching up on missing assignments.