

Chinese and American Beginning Piano Pedagogy: A Comparison of Approaches

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Chinese and American Beginning Piano Pedagogy: A Comparison of Approaches

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San Francisco, California  
2016

The purpose of this study was to compare the similarities and differences between Chinese and American beginning piano pedagogy through examining how parents and teachers support young children in their piano studies. Methodology for the study included interviews of two teachers and two parents in each country. Results from the research found: (a) methodological differences for teaching music reading such as Chinese teachers using solfège and American teachers using letter names; (b) teachers and parents from both countries shared the same frustration with students not practicing; (c) parents from both countries believed that piano studies benefited their child in non-musical ways such as brain development and emotional expression.

I certify that the abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Wendell Huang  
Chair, Thesis Committee

5/19/16

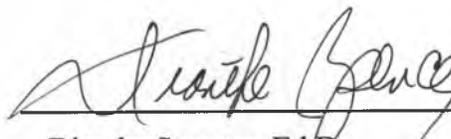
CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Chinese and American Beginning Piano Pedagogy: A Comparison of Approaches* by Shuyu Peng and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Art in Music: Music Education at San Francisco State University.



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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to compare Chinese and American piano teachers' views on teaching young beginners and to examine how parents and teachers in these countries support young children in their piano studies.

In Western culture, the role of music has been valued for an enjoyable and spontaneous learning without any pushing by the parents. It is very common that the children start having the interest to learn an instrument and inspired by their family members in western countries. American parents usually encourage their child to learn the instrument and would not force their child if they choose to not continue learning. In this case, children play a significant role on learning music and they are considered as independent individuals. The child has every right to make the decision, which gives the child more freedom to choose whether learn music. It is important to have the child having fun to learn, instead of thinking any beneficial purpose in the future. This makes much difference comparing to Asian cultures.

In Asian cultures, music is viewed differently. The parents are serious about academia and have high expectations for their children on musical achievement. These parents believe that studying piano at a young age provides their child with a comprehensive and well-rounded education as well as the full benefit of learning. Because of this belief, children are encouraged to take the lesson seriously and take full

advantage of their music potential. In most Asian countries, it is also common to have the concept of parenting style to govern or to control the children. In fact, the concept also has a more positive prospective that includes the idea of concern and love and want to give the children the best education and everything. They children should also obey the elder according to the Confucius philosophy.

Piano is the perfect instrument for young people to study and it is very visualized, not only for its musical potential but because it is physically easy for young children to play. The keys are easy to press and produce a lovely sound, which can provide the child with an immediately gratifying experience. Compare this with a child studying violin who has to struggle many years to produce a beautiful sound because of the difficulty of holding the instrument under their chin, standing properly using the bow correctly or a child studying a wind instrument who must develop breath control and embouchure strength. In addition to this, children can play on electronic instruments, which sound as beautiful as acoustic pianos and provide exciting additions that provide motivation and excitement. For instance there are drum beat, sound effects, and a world on instrumental sounds available to children to explore making the piano very fun to play.

The benefits of beginning piano lesson not only build musical talents of a student, but may also have an impact development of the child's entire life. Learning piano provides students the foundation to have a comprehensive ability of music. The aspect of playing and learning piano can be related to the student's development in the classroom

as well as social learning. For all these reasons, the piano is the perfect instrument for your child to begin their musical studies.

In both cultures, unfortunately, students start quitting piano lesson because it's easy to learn in the beginning, but gradually becomes a difficult instrument and there are many difficulties of learning piano such as more music theory comes up, spending much time and need countless repetition to work on one technique. Usually, children would not have patience consistently sit and practice for hours. According to Jean Piaget, the process of cognitive development is driven to the adaptation and assimilation to the environment. At this point, parents somehow need some encouragement to help the child to get through this stage.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions in the study as follows:

1. How do you help students to remember middle C? Would you introduce the staff first? Explain why?
2. How do you introduce the name of the keys of the piano? Are there any easy way helping them to remember?
3. What are the main frustrations you find in teaching beginners?

### **Importance of the Study**

In China and America, many children start piano lessons at an early age. A study such as “The effect of Violin, Keyboard, and singing Instruction on the Spatial Ability and Music Aptitude of Young Children” (Tai, 2010) shows that instrumental music studies foster cognitive development of young children. In addition, since the piano is a very visual instrument, it has musical potential because it is physically easy for young children to play. Therefore, to be able to give good piano instruction to young children is essential. This research is to compare how the piano teaching method works in China and America that will show the similar and different challenges and benefits of piano instruction in both cultures.

### **Definitions**

- Piano is the acoustic instrument with a wooden case enclosing a soundboard and metal strings, which are struck by hammers when the keys are depressed.
- Pedagogy is the method and the style that how piano teachers address and teach for young beginners.

### **Limitations of the study**

- Due to geography limitations in the research, only 2 of each piano teacher are interviewed in China and America. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the opinion from the teachers to the result of the study.
- Due to geography limitations, some of the interviews were completed through email. Future research may use personal interviews to gather precise information from the teachers and parents.

- The participants were selected from the teacher who has more than ten years teaching experience from China and America. Each teacher conveyed their perspectives from teaching.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Suzuki Method**

Suzuki method is one of the most famous teaching methods in the world. The founder – Shinichi believes that musical ability can be developed and the potential to learning is unlimited. According to John Kendall: “the Suzuki method is based on a belief that individuals can learn to play the instruments in the same way they learn to speak”. Meanwhile, music and language can be taught to young children at early stage because they are developing the brain and learn the information quickly and easy to be corrected. In this case, the process of learning music also can be seen as child development and it is essential to start music learning at young age.

Every child can be taught and learn is another belief in Suzuki method. Some teachers may prefer the students who have more musical talent and believe they have more potential. But every child can speak their mother tongue and music can be developed.

### **Teaching Young Beginners**

Young beginners are often taught with a focus on learning the melody first before learning the notes. Jinhwa Chon (2012) focuses on how best to help piano beginners. Chon mentions that James Bastien writes in his book *How to Teach Piano Successfully* (as cited in Chon, 2012), that “pre-notated melodies allow the student to play and make

music from the onset without the hindrance of learning notation simultaneously.” (Bastien, 1973, pp. 133-134) For a beginner piano player or when learning any new skill, a lot of attention and focus is required to take in each new step. For piano especially, it is already difficult enough to learn the placement of the keys and the sound of the notes. For the piano teacher to also include sheet music with staves is akin to introducing a foreign visual language to an already foreign touch and sound. Chon then follows up in his paper that “having students learn a pre-notated melody from the start can encourage the habit of playing without engaging all their learning senses. The eventual goal of keeping the eyes on the music should be deferred until students learn to make sound properly”. (Chon, 2012, pp.10) However, one of the issues that Chon brings up is that in “...a Wall Street Journal article, Greg Steinmetz contrasts the current “norms” in the United States, highlighting the following:

“In America, no instruction method is recognized as superior to all others. Eager to motivate students and encourage individual expression, many teachers teach whatever they and their students decide is best. ‘We give students and teachers complete flexibility,’ Mrs. Kruger says. ‘A lot of it is about getting kids to be interested in studying.’” (Steinmetz, 1999)”

which illustrates that one of the difficulties in teaching is the fact that there is no standard method used to teach basic beginner skills. (pp.14) After the student develops familiarity with the sound and placement on the instrument, the teacher can move on to the eventual goal of teaching the sheet music which would be similar to children learning how to speak before they learn how to read.

### **Chinese Parental Attitudes & Influences**

Parenting style is an important condition to factor in when discussing the effects on young piano beginners. Since the teacher is only with the student once a week for a window of 30 minutes to an hour, the parents of the children are expected to help the child follow through on their piano practices in the time away from the teacher. According to Juan Yu (2014) "...the tendency among Western scholars has been to view traditional Chinese parenting as controlling, restrictive, and authoritarian" in comparison to Western parenting. (pp.19) Chinese parents believed to take a very active role in their children's lives and many believe that the success of Chinese children is because of this style known as "Guan". Yu also writes that (2014, pp.18-19):

While this term, which can be literally translated as "to govern" or "to control," would seem to refer to an authoritarian approach to parenting with an emphasis on the control of children, in fact the concept is more complex. Guan, as Chao explains, citing Tobin, Wu, & Davidson (1989), has a more positive connotation and includes the idea of concern and even love (Chao, 1994, p. 1112)

and that shows that while it may seem to be very controlling in comparison, this parenting style carries also a sense of deep concern and love for their children and not just wanting to be in control of their child's lives. With Chinese mothers in particular, Yu (2014, pp. 21) cited Chao in describing the differences from Chinese and American parenting style in saying that:

Chao (1995) also found a distinctive interpersonal orientation in Chinese parenting. In her research, Chinese mothers emphasized their children's

relationships with others rather than their children's psychological attributes. This overall orientation, which emphasizes the interpersonal over the individual, is qualitatively different from views often associated with mainstream culture in the United States, in which individuality is stressed and individuals are viewed in terms of personality traits.

In this case, the Chinese parenting style shows that though the child knows what their desires are, what matters is that the children listen to what their parent's desires are because the parent's desires are what's best for their children even though that is not what the child may necessarily want in that current life stage.

In Chinese culture, for a parent to not take an active role in grooming and shaping their child to be the best that they can be would be considered negligent. In order to help facilitate that, the children are expected to understand and respect that authority the parents have over their children. This is what is considered a good interpersonal relationship between a parent and a child when the parent takes an active role and the child receives the instruction and follows through. This is highly respected in Chinese relationships. Yu (2014, pp.21) states that “[w]hile Chinese parenting includes elements of concern, warmth, and a stress on interpersonal relationships, it remains true that a distinctive element of Chinese parenting is the focus on obedience and respect for authority (Chao, 1995; Ho, 1976; Ho, 1989)”.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to compare the piano pedagogy between America and China, how the parents think and motivate their children, and how perspectives on influence and work affects children's music education in each culture. In this research, I use qualitative research methodology.

In this research, I chose two teachers and two parents in each country. I interviewed each individual and wrote the research questions in English and Chinese for all the participants in both countries. I expected to learn about the teachers' perspective on the way to teach young beginners and what challenges and benefits they perceive of teaching piano as well any similarities and differences in teaching methods between both cultures. I also expected to gain a better understanding from the parents' perspective on how to motivate their child to learn piano, value music in early childhood, as well as the role of music in their children's life in both cultures.

### **Sample**

**Settings and Participants.** I chose a set of two piano teachers and two parents from China and the United States for a total of 8 participants. The teacher participants needed to have at least five years teaching experience and have a focus on teaching children rather than adults. The sample of the participants was purposefully selected with

a wide difference in the number of years of teaching to see if there is a difference between their piano teaching styles and experience. The parent participants who were a part of this study all had a child under the age of ten who had been learning piano for at least a year.

One of the teacher participants in China that was contacted is working as a piano teacher and has been teaching piano lessons for around twenty years. The reason why I chose him is because of his teaching experience and his teaching style represents what a stereotypical traditional Chinese piano teacher would be like – strict and serious with a goal to train potential future pianists. The other Chinese teacher has a teaching history of teaching piano for more than ten years. This instructor was chosen because I wanted to see if there were any differences in the teaching methods with the previous teacher who has longer teaching experience. Perhaps there would be an interesting teaching method that may have been taught that was newer than with the previous teacher or different than American teachers.

The first American piano teacher selected has a history of being a piano teacher for over twenty-five years. This instructor's teaching style is more geared towards having fun while learning piano and not considered very strict. The other participant belongs to the national guild of piano teachers and has more than 30 years of teaching experience teaching piano. One of the reasons why I selected this instructor was because during my interview, she provided me with handouts that she had personally created that

displayed her unique way of teaching. I also wanted to see if there was any difference in teaching method between the two American teachers as well as the Chinese teachers.

**Instruments.** The research is based on interviews conducted with each individual either by asking questions in person or via email. If I was able to interview the participant in person, I asked each questions to the interviewee and took notes while recording audio at the same time. If I couldn't interview the participant in person, I would send my research questions by email. Since my first language is Chinese and English is my second language, I created my research questions first for teachers and parents in Chinese and then translated the exact same questions into English.

**Research questions for the teachers in English**

1. How do you help students to remember middle C? Would you introduce the staff first? Explain why.
2. How do you help students to learn the names of keys on the piano? Are there easy ways helping them to remember?
3. Do you teach solfege or letter names first? Please explain why.
4. Do you usually correct the hand position when students start to learn piano?
5. How do you explain quarter note, half note and whole note these note values to help them understand?
6. What textbook do you use for beginners? Explain why.
7. How do you explain middle C in treble and bass clef? How do you explain the same note on different staff if you don't teach staff first?
8. How long do you think a piano lesson for beginners should be? Half an hour or more, why?
9. Do you think it is important to have fun learning the lesson or should the teacher be professional during the whole lesson?
10. Do you have any other ways to encourage the students to keep learning/practicing piano?
11. What are the main frustrations you find in teaching beginners?
12. What do you find students get difficult to understand once adding treble and bass clef?
13. Do you have any strategies to help students with practicing challenges?
14. Do you think it is necessary to explain the lesson with parents after every lesson? Why.

**Interview the parents**

In my study, I asked the parents about the involvement they have in their children's piano learning and I expected to hear details of their experiences and opinions. In order to put their experience in context, I asked the parents to talk about any challenges and benefits they face regarding their children's learning and practicing piano as well as their relationship with their children and the teachers. I also encouraged the parents to recall in detail of any musical activities engaged in with their children at school and at home. For the research, I spoke with parents and recorded their information by listing their name and the ages of their children.

**Questions for the parents**

1. When did your child start piano lessons?
2. Was it you or your child that initiated the desire to learn piano?
3. Is your child learning any other instruments other than piano?
4. What other music activities does the family engage in at home or somewhere else? Concerts, church groups, dance lessons, etc.
5. How often and for how long does your child practice at home?
6. Why do you think it is important for your child to learn the piano?
7. What are your expectations for your child in how far they will progress on the piano?
8. As parent how do you support your child's piano studies?
9. What do you find most frustrating as a parent in having your child study piano?
10. What do you observe as the positive effects of studying piano?
11. What do you observe as the negative effects of studying piano?
12. Do you think your child is musically talented? How well do you think your child is doing for piano studies so far?

## **Measures**

**Data Collection.** The researcher audio recorded in person interview and transcribed the answers at the same time. I also contacted the participants through email for the research questions. All data is collected in a mac computer system and will be deleted in a year .

**Data Analysis.** The researcher analyzed the data through in person interviews, phone interviews and emails from the participants, and comparing the information they provided and use their answers in my research. The steps for the analysis include mark the same and different answers between the two Chinese piano teachers, and the American teachers as well. Next step is to compare the teaching method between the two countries. The procedures for the analysis for the parents are mark the same and different answers, and compare data from the answers. Last step is making charts and figures in order to have the data visualize to present. To make it easier to see the results of the interviews, I called Chinese interviewees CT1 and CT2, and American interviewees AT1 and AT2.

## Results

### Questions for Teachers

#### Question 1: how do you teach middle C for younger beginners?

**Teacher1:** Sit in the center of the piano, and I tell the students rule of two black notes and three black notes and the white key to the left of the 2 black notes is C.

**Teacher2:** I direct the students to sit in the center of the piano, and take a look at the brand name of the piano and down below it that's where middle c is.

**Teacher3:** First find the two and three group of black notes rule to find Cs, the white key on the left side of two black notes is c and then find the center of the piano to locate middle C

**Teacher4:** I direct them to the middle of the piano and to the note directly to the left of two black notes. Most pianos are made with their brand name very close to the middle C - this is a help as well.

#### Question 2: How do you help students to learn the names of keys on the piano? Are there easy ways helping them to remember?

**Teacher1:** Students need to remember Middle C by rote memorization and let them know the seven notes (from C to B) is like climbing stairs. Re is a step high than Do.

**Teacher2:** I will introduce the staff has five lines and four spaces. The line below ledger line is Do, the note right underneath the first line is Re...

**Teacher3:** I have always used the Alfred series of piano books. Their theory books are very helpful and detailed. Most students know the first seven letters of the alphabet so it is pretty easy for them. Please note that beginner students need to know how to read.

**Teacher4:** I teach staff first. The first note I teach is E, which is on the first line and show them it is letter E. Next note is D, which is right under the first line, then teach middle C. I also make up some short pieces for C.D.E. notes and help them to remember.

**Question 3: Do you teach solfege or letter names first? Please explain why.**

**Teacher1:** I teach solfege. Starting from middle C, I play a note and sing the note, and this is how I do, play c sing do, D-re, E-mi, F- fa, G-sol, A- la, B- ti, C-do.

**Teacher2:** When I teach the notes, I say solfege as well. For example, when I introduce middle C, I play C at the same time say do.

**Teacher3:** I have always used the Alfred series of piano books. Their theory books are very helpful and detailed. Most students know the first seven letters of the alphabet so it is pretty easy for them. Please note that beginner students need to know how to read.

**Teacher4:** I teach letter names first and never teach solfege names. In my opinion, solfege is for vocalists not pianists.

**Question 4: Do you usually correct the hand position when students start to learn piano?**

**Teacher1:** Yes

**Teacher2:** Not so often. It is restricted to younger children, it is fine as long as they have curved fingers

**Teacher3:** Yes, curved finger is important, especially have curved pinky, so the first 5 weeks I consistently remind the posture and hand position

**Teacher4:** As long as they have curved fingers, I don't usually correct high wrist.

**Question 5: How do you explain quarter note, half note and whole note these note values to help them understand?**

**Teacher1:** I incorporate solfege to explain the note values. For instance, whole note has 4 beats and I say do 2 3 4 as I play, half note is do 2, quarter note is do.

**Teacher2:** I tell students notes are short and long. In 4/4, quarter notes has one beat, half notes has 2 beats. Whole note has 4 beats.

**Teacher3:** In 4/4, quarter notes has one beat, half notes has 2 beats. Whole note has 4 beats.

**Teacher4:** I relate note values to dollars (whole notes), half dollars (half notes), and quarters (quarter notes). Another way to do it is to use fractions.

**Question 6: What textbook do you use for beginners?**

**Teacher1:** Beyer Preparatory School book

**Teacher2:** John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course

**Teacher3:** Bastien Primer A and make my own handout and piano sheet.

**Teacher4:** Alfred Level 1A.

**Question 7: How long do you think a piano lesson for beginners should be? Half an hour or more, why?**

**Teacher1:** 60 minutes.

**Teacher2:** 40-50 minutes.

**Teacher3:** 30 minutes is more than enough time to go over old and new material. Beginner students need review and any longer would probably result in lost attention.

**Teacher4:** 40 minutes.

**Question 8: Do you think it is important to have fun learning the lesson or should the teacher be professional during the whole lesson?**

**Teacher1:** Having fun learning the lesson is good, but I teach very seriously and it is my job.

**Teacher2:** Teacher should be professional during the whole lesson.

**Teacher3:** I think having fun is important and sometimes playing all the right notes is not necessarily important.

**Teacher4:** I believe in having fun. If a student sees the teacher having fun, then it will rub off on the student. This also helps in building relationships.

**Question 9: Do you have any other ways to encourage the students to keep learning/practicing piano?**

**Teacher1:** No.

**Teacher2:** No I don't.

**Teacher3:** Students get a treat if they behave well for a month.

**Teacher4:** I give students a booklet called the Wright Way Practice Method. This allows the student to list the amount of time they practice each day.

**Question 10: What are the main frustrations you find in teaching beginners?**

**Teacher1:** Students couldn't keep practicing the songs as gradually adding more things to learn. It's also difficult to build muscle of finger 4 and 5.

**Teacher2:** It's difficult for beginning to pay attention to dynamic marks, as well as practice piano for long term and still keep in interested playing at the same time.

**Teacher3:** Children have short attention span and they couldn't concentrate well during the whole lesson.

**Teacher4:** My main frustrations would be students who do not practice on a regular basis and they waste their parent's money. They also use flat fingers.

**Question 11: How do you help students build finger dexterity?**

**Teacher1:** 1) First half year build the muscle of using bend fingers  
2) Play staccato  
3) Always lift up the fingers high to practice.

**Teacher2:** There are 4 steps:

- 1) Using the same fingers number to play in both hands (L2+R2).
- 2) Practice with different finger numbers (L2+R4).
- 3) Play one hand with two fingers at one time (L2+4)
- 4) Gradually add Hannon exercise.

**Teacher3:** 1) Play slow  
2) Use bend fingers  
3) Start with simple exercises: with finger 1351, 24 and 5432.

**Teacher4:** I use the drills of technique in the Alfred series and add Hannon exercises later.

**Question 12: How do you explain the direction of higher notes go to the right, lower notes go to the left?**

**Teacher1:** The first lesson I will explain to the students that music notes just like climb the stairs. Notes climb upstairs is going to the right and vice versa.

**Teacher2:** Personally I think it's important to sing C major back and forth. Then learn every note on the staff so that to know when the notes go high or low.

**Teacher3:** I draw notes in different colors to differentiate high and low notes. Explain to them stand up to the right (notes go higher), sit down to the left (notes go lower).

**Teacher4:** Let the students know higher pitch goes to the right and lower pitch goes to the left and usually they can tell the difference between high and low sound.

**Question 13: What to remind students when they start to play both hands together?**

**Teacher1:** Practice very slow and sing the music both right and left hand.

**Teacher2:** Pay more attention on the left hand, because it's related to the beat and rhythm. It also plays a decisive role for the rhythm of right hand. Gounds the right hand

**Teacher3:** I talk while they play with both hands and say "together, right, together left".

**Teacher4:** I try to have them get use to see the two lines at the same time and it takes some time to practice.

**Question 14: Do you have any strategies to help students with practicing challenges?**

**Teacher1:** I tell students specially practice the bar they consistently couldn't play well, practicing very slow until they play well on these measures, then continue playing the rest of the song. Repeat using this step once they encounter the same issue.

**Teacher2:** If they can't concentrate well and hit the wrong notes, I'll ask them to do something else like scales and going back to do it again.

**Teacher3:** I have paper to assign every week and I leave comments for every student, telling them what need to work on and hand it to their parents.

**Teacher4:** One strategy that I use is having a student repeat after me "I will practice every day that I eat." This works - sometimes.

## **Questions for parents**

### **Question 1**

Question 1 asked about how old was the child when they started to learn piano. There are two of the children that started at the age of 5. One child began piano lessons since the age of 3.5 and the other started at 7 years old.

### **Question 2**

In question 2, the researcher asked who initially wanted to learn piano. The result is two out of four children asked their parents if they could start piano lessons. The other two started learning piano because of their parents' will to study.

### **Question 3**

Question 3 was "is your child learning any other instruments other than piano"? All of their answers were no.

### **Question 4**

Question 4 was "what other music activities does the family engage in at home or somewhere else? Concerts, church groups, dance lessons, etc." Their responses were: (1), I take my child to piano concerts, (2) No, (3) We go to children concerts, ballet performance, and musicals, (4) We sing along at home and my child loves singing Disney songs. We attend church group too on Sundays.

**Question 5**

Question 5 was how long does your child practice piano at home? The answers were: (1) 30-60mins, (2), 30-50mins, (3), 15-20mins, (4), 7-10mins.

**Question 6:**

Why do you think it is important for your child to learn the piano? (1) It helps to develop a comprehensive skill: moving fingers, listening, reading music, and thinking. It stimulates the brain, improves the ability of observing, understanding, listening and imagination, (2) learning piano helps to develop your brain and intelligence. It also helps to improve your coordination. Continually practicing piano is to improve endurance and persistence, (3) it started because my child wanted to learn piano. She loves music and is a way for her to express feelings. I think that it's important that she can read music notes, has basic understanding of music theory, so she is knowledgeable enough to express music, (4) learning piano helps to access different parts of the brain, and problem solving. Being creative and express emotions in a healthy way.

**Question 7**

Question 7 was what are the expectations of your child learning piano? The answers were: (1) to be able to express emotion and when life is tough, using piano as a tool to release pressure to some extent, (2) hope my child could develop learning piano as a hobby and this is what would belong to my child, (3) no specific expectations and it is my child's choice, (4) parents hope their child would continue piano, but let the child choose later.

**Question 8:** As parent how do you support your child's piano studies?

As parent how do you support your child's piano studies? Here is how the parents stated: (1) provide piano to the child at home, and also bought an electric piano at grandparents when my child is there and needs to practice piano, (2) I practice with the child when I have time, (3) provide instrument and find a good teacher, regular push to practice and help to my child with practice, (4) provide a keyboard for my child and try to speak positively and praise my child when she does well.

**Question 9**

Question 9 was what are the frustrations you observed your child when practicing piano? Here are the results: (1) child does not want to practice the songs, (2) reading notes and staves is hard and the child has the thought of giving up, (3) have my child practice regularly is tough and also getting my child to further improve with old songs is another challenge, (4) child gives a lot of excuses when they do not want to practice and they also have difficulties concentrating.

**Question 10**

What do you observe as the positive effects of studying piano? Here are the answers: (1) learning piano helps my child to concentrate and improve listening skill, also develops a sense of rhythm and beat, (2) I think it builds confidence as my practicing piano, (3) She is more musically in tone and her ears are starting to develop a sense of what sounds right and what doesn't. She also appreciates music even more than before

and understands the difficulty in playing music, (4) it helps my child build confidence because not everyone can play piano and she also enjoys learning the skill.

### **Question 11**

What do you observe as the negative effects of studying piano? The respondents said: (1) my child does not sit and practice after playing for a while and could not concentrate, (2) when there is a difficult song, my child does not want to practice and only spends more time the songs she likes that are less challenging, (3) the need for me to be mad at her because her level of practice is hugely different from mine, (4) my child doesn't like to practice and instead argues with parents.

### **Question 12**

Do you think your child is musically talented? How well do you think your child is doing for piano studies so far? The parents stated: (1) I think my child has some talents, but it is average overall, (2) yes, (3) No, I don't think she is musically talented, just average. She is progressing very slowly, (4) yes, my child is learning piano as enrichment and she is doing well on her lesson.

## Discussion

Below is my analysis and perspectives after gathering and analyzing the data from all the interviewees.

### Best way to find middle C

According to the interview, most teachers used the “2 and 3 black notes” rule to find middle C. It is very important to sit in the center of the piano first and it makes so much difference if the teacher reminds the students because they are very young and they tend sit on the edge without knowing. Once they have a sense of the center of the piano the teachers followed up with the “2 and 3 black notes” rule to find Cs and middle is the key in front. Using the brand name of the piano to find middle C does not always provide a clear instruction for the students since some children may only have a mini keyboard and in some cases the brand name may not be on the keyboard at all. Another benefit of teaching the “2 and 3 black note” rule is that it helps the student know the pattern of repeating the certain keys in order to teach them the seven notes in the future.

	CT1	CT2	AT1	AT2
Two black notes and three black notes		X	X	X
Brand name	O			O

Table 1. Best way to find middle C

**Learn solfege or letter name**

In the interview, Chinese teachers used the solfege method in piano learning whereas American teachers would teach and sing with letter names. Singing simple solfege would build the skill of listening with the ear that helps with practicing the piano. Singing is natural for children and they can tell if they play it right once they know the song. Singing solfege and piano practicing are helpful to each other. Also piano practice requires repetitious playing, constant concentration and consistent playing which may be difficult for children to do. Doing something different, such as singing solfege or singing the song would be another way to practice. On the other hand, teaching the letter name reinforces learning every note name that can help to effectively read the music. Only focusing on the reading the staff in the beginning of learning would be helpful and teacher would help students with singing the letter name while they play the music. However, it is challenging to remember the seven letters and being able to read and play for young beginners.

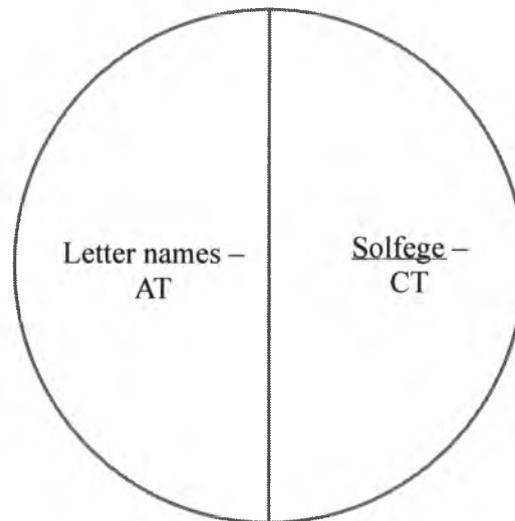


Figure 1. Letter name vs Solfege usage

### Note Value

Chinese teachers use solfege to teach the note value and count the beats for the students. As you can see from the figure below, Chinese teachers teach the same way. When they teach whole notes, teachers play the C and sing Do at the same time, and following with 2 3 4 as counting. Likewise, teachers teach half notes as playing C and singing Do, followed with 2.

American teachers address note value in different ways: one teacher used a similar way to Chinese teachers. The only difference is this teacher sing letter names and count for the students. Another teacher related note values to dollars (whole notes = 4 quarters), half dollars (half notes = 2 quarters), and quarters (quarter notes = 1 quarter). Therefore, Chinese and American way of teaching note values is very different.

Example for playing a whole note

CT1	do	2	3	4
CT2	do	2	3	4
AT1	C	2	3	4
AT2	1 Dollar (2 half dollars / 4 quarters)			

Table 2. Example for playing a whole note comparison

**Textbook choice**

All the teachers have their own preference on the book in this study and it depends on every child. Some teachers may not introduce the staff first, so John Thompson's book would not be their choice. Due to students receive and process information differently, teachers can be flexible with choosing the textbook for each student, and teachers also have textbook preference. In this research, 3 out of 4 teachers mentioned of using Hannon exercises in order to build finger dexterities and it should be gradually adding to it on practicing. At this point, Hannon is the book that teachers reach the agreement for improving students' techniques.

**Introduce staff notes**

According to the research, three of out of four teachers states that they would introduce the staff and teach the notes in the beginning. The Chinese teachers start to teach from middle C, whereas one American teacher would teach E first, and D and C. E is on the first line, and middle is written below the line in treble clef. Teaching E instead would be easier to understand for the students. Another American teacher chose Alfred piano book which does not introduce the staff notes and instead teaches how to play the black notes, simple songs, getting use to the finger numbers and note values first which applies to the young beginners. By adding this step, students will build the interest in learning piano and they won't necessarily feel as pressured or may having would have less trouble understanding the concept of music theory in the beginning of the lessons. However, all students will eventually need to learn all the staff notes.

### Lesson duration

In the teachers' response, Chinese teachers give longer lessons than American teachers. American teachers usually have 30-40 minutes, and Chinese teachers have 40-60-minute lessons. The American teacher who gives 30-minute lessons stated it is long enough to cover the old and new material. If the lessons are any longer than the lesson may end up being more of a distraction. The other American teacher stated that she divides her lesson into sections to introduce variety into the lessons in order to avoid an issue with the children's short attention span. However, Chinese teachers have longer period of time to teach and there is no break for the whole lesson. This requires more attention from the students.

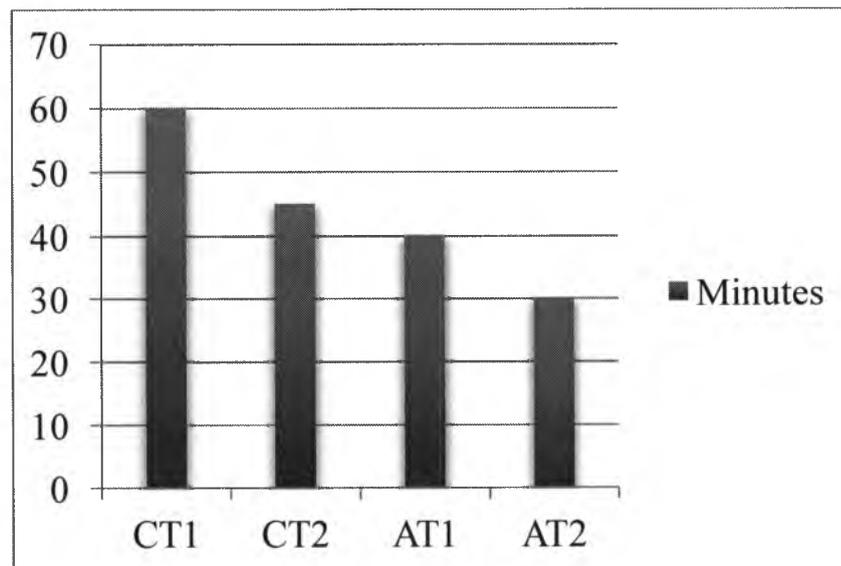


Figure 2. Chinese VS American teacher lesson time

### **Teachers' main frustration on teaching beginners**

In my research, both Chinese and American teachers face the challenge that students don't practice on the regular base or can't seem to practice for a long time. Another teacher mentioned that since children have short attention spans, they aren't able to focus on the whole lesson. According to the answers from the teachers, the main issue of the students is their inability to keep practicing, and it is more challenging for students to learn more information if they haven't learned enough from the previous lessons. Meanwhile, it is the same issue that parents face with their child. Every parent in the research mentioned practice regularly is tough for their child because it requires concentration, repetition of playing and patience. Young beginners have short attention span and usually in the beginning of piano learning, children like to practice, because it is new and interesting. Gradually as they learn more and add more complex concepts, they tend to not practice since it is very challenging for children to sit and practice for long time. Therefore, practicing regularly is an issue for both China and America between teachers and parents.

### **Ways to encourage students practicing**

In my study, Chinese teachers do emphasize on encouragement and do not have ways to encourage the students to practice. They believe that teachers should be professional for the lessons and they are only responsible for the teaching part and not to push the student to learn and practice. Therefore, they do not come up with ways to motivate the students. On the other hand, one American teacher would give rewards and

treats to the students if they do well on the lessons for a month, as well as have a report assessment for every students that is handed to the parents. At this point, parents acknowledge how their child is progressing on each lesson. The other teacher has a booklet to allow the student to list the amount of time they practice each day to show how much time they've invested to use it as a way to encourage them for their dedication.

### **Discussion on parents' view**

#### **When to learn piano**

According to the answers from the parents, 2 children started at 5 years old, 1 child from 3.5 and the other began piano lessons at 7 years old. The age range is between 3.5 and 7, and these are the possible years to start piano lessons. However the age of 5 would be considered the reference point because the children are from China and America instead of from one country. Therefore, 5 years old may be considered as a common age to start piano lesson, but each child is different and the extent of learning and understanding will vary from child to child.

#### **Engaging musical activities**

In my research, 2 parents from China and America would take their child to concerts or musicals. One parent would sing along with their child at home and another parent never engaged in musical activities with their child. The majority of parents in the study showed that the children have exposure to musical activities and this research

shows that more than half of both Chinese and American parents went to concerts with their child.

### **Practicing time**

According to the parents' response, all of the children have different practicing time, but the Chinese children's practicing time are close to 30 minutes or greater than 30 minutes, but on average it is about 45 minutes. However, American children had typically shorter practice times at about shorter than 30 minutes. On average, the time dedicated to practice is about 10-15 minutes for American students. When we compare the age to start piano for every student, we see something interesting between the age started and how long the practice sessions are. For instance, the student who started piano at the age of 3.5 ended up practicing the longest time out of all the students. To contrast, the child who began at 7 years old which was roughly one of the older children in the group ended up practicing the least. The statistics show that the earlier a child starts learning piano, the longer the practice session.

### **Parents supervision when practicing**

More than half of the parents supervised their children when they were practicing piano. The answers show that the parents acknowledge the importance and significant role on children's piano learning if they spend time with their children during practice. It is necessary to regularly push and give encouragement to their child and most parents oversee and make sure to see how the learning is progressing.

**Positive effects on learning piano**

Half of both Chinese and American parents respond that children have more confidence after starting piano lesson, because it is considered a skill that not everyone in the school can play. It is beneficial for children to build confidence while learning piano. Other parents state that their child is musically in tune as a result of playing piano and started to appreciate music more as well as developing a better ear to sense what sounds right or not. Other parents think it helps their child concentrate more in reading and boosts their memorization because of learning piano, as well as developing the sense of rhythm. The answers indicate that some of the positive effects directly relate to developing the musical talents, such as being musically in tune, the sense of rhythm, and music appreciation. Other positive effects reflect parents' view of building confidence and character in the child by learning piano that might influence the child eternally in a good way. Another view is to enhance the ability of studying by learning piano. As a result, parents have different perspectives on the positive effects on piano learning.

**Negative effect on learning piano**

All the parents noted that their child could not sit and practice long enough as desired by the parents and they found that their children couldn't concentrate or concentrate well on practicing. It is unnatural and challenging for children to sit and repeat playing the same song over and over again and the lack of ability for their children to sit and practice longer frustrated the parents. The negative effects reported by the parents were similar to the teachers' main frustration on teaching the lessons. Both

teachers and parents in China and America face the challenge of children having a lack of concentrating well, not being able to have enough practice time, as well as children not wanting to practice.

## **Conclusion**

After finishing all the data analysis from this study, I found the difference between Chinese and American piano teaching in solfege and letter name for learning the staff notes. I have engaged in both methods in the past, it would be better if students are introduced to both methods instead of just one. Not only do students learn the letter names, but they also develop their ear and practice singing in tone. The other difference is that American teachers believe in having fun while learning piano, whereas Chinese teachers consider teaching as something to be taken seriously and tend to not encourage the students. Chinese teachers could learn how to create a more relaxing environment during lessons from American teachers and American teachers could learn how to teach more seriously like the Chinese teachers. As a result, both teachers would learn new perspectives on teaching from another culture, and incorporate in their own teaching. Piano lessons are usually once a week and children practice the majority of the time at home away from the instructor. Since younger beginners have not yet developed the awareness of self-discipline and self-motivation, the parents bear the responsibility of helping their child in the process of learning piano. At this point, piano teacher, children and their parents play an important role on piano learning. In term of practicing at home, the parents role to supervise and encourage their child is essential.

## **Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

Implications of this research indicate that there are both positive and negative aspects of Chinese and American beginning piano pedagogies and perhaps the two

cultures could learn from each other? The American teachers might have higher expectations for student performance, attention span and practice ethic. The Chinese teachers might consider more positive reinforcement of children's efforts and respect a child's natural ability to learn through play-based pedagogy.

Both cultures share the same frustrations regarding practicing outside of lessons and maintaining motivation for piano studies after the initial novelty of exploring the instrument wears off and the shifting to musical notation reading begins.

This shared quandary is an important area for further research. How can the initial motivation and excitement for learning the piano be extended and maintained over years of study? What types of attitudes and reinforcement strategies from parents and teachers can help children develop good practice habits outside of lessons? How can parents and teachers best work together to support children's piano studies for long-term study? Are there particular methods of music notation learning that are less difficult for children to learn?

This research has shown that teaching piano to young beginners has many challenges in both Chinese and American cultures. However, the benefits may easily outweigh the challenges. When children learn piano at an early age they acquire a special knowledge and skill they can use and appreciate for the rest of their lives. Parents and piano teachers may well believe that the gift of music is worth the time and effort.

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Appendix 1  
Interview Chinese piano teacher 1

1. 您是怎样帮助学生记住中央 C?  
答：首先认识键盘，弹琴坐中间。看黑键，两个一组和三个一组。两个黑键的左边就是 C。而中央 C 就是在钢琴最中间位置两个黑键的左边。
2. 您是怎样帮助学生记住钢琴的各个音?  
答：中央 C 也就是 do，这个要死记硬背。Do 在下加一线上。就像上楼梯一样，re 就是上一层台阶。依次类推。
3. 您先教唱名还是音名?  
答：唱名。我的方法是弹琴唱谱，弹中央 C 同时唱 do，弹 D 时唱 re。弹一个音唱一个音。五线谱有五条线，对照上楼梯的方法看谱。
4. 您对手型有怎样的要求?  
答：我严格要求手型。首先小指要立 3 周，5 个手指的第一关节要立住，在平时练习时也需要家长的协助立手指。
5. 您是怎么解释四分音符，二分音符，全音符的时值?  
答：全音符时空心的唱四拍。以 do 为例，我边弹 do 会边唱 do 234；二分音符弹 do 唱 do 2，四分音符唱 do。
6. 您用什么教材?  
答：儿童拜耳初级。拜耳进入音阶后弹哈农。
7. 一节钢琴课多久?  
答：一个小时内无休息。
8. 您认为让学生快乐学习钢琴重要还是觉得老师要严格教钢琴?  
答：快乐学习很重要，但我是严格教学。

9. 您有其他方式去鼓励学生去学习或练习钢琴吗？

答：没有。

10. 初学者中您认为比较难教的点是什么？

答 1： 最难的是能坚持长期练琴。其次立手指也比较枯燥，尤其是小指，如果立不好，四指也不行。所以小指和四指的站立尤为重要。小指站要掌关节和小指的第一关节立住。我要求家长帮助扶孩子的小指第一关节扶三周。学生练习指站立时，第一周立三指，第二周立二四指，第三周加上一指。因为一指和其他四个指头弹琴方向不同，所以第三周加上一指。

11. 对于初学者你是怎样帮助学生练习手指灵活度？

答：个人认为初学者应练习半年立手指，要断音练习，单独立。之后才能练两个音的连音，然后能谈到手指灵活度。我强调高抬指：即两个音之间连接比较难，尤其四五指的练习。隔音练习还比较容易。两个连音做好之后，手指的灵活度就出来了。

12. 怎么样帮助学生看音符的方向？

答：教师第一节课就要讲明白钢琴键就像上楼梯一样，向右为向上，向左为向下。

13. 双手配合弹奏时有哪些要领要掌握？

答：慢练就能解决。要慢练更要唱谱，而且左右手都要唱。

14. 您有什么方法帮助学生应对练琴时候的困难？

答：遇到几小节学生练不好或一直弹不顺，我会要求学生单拿出弹不顺的小节练习，要慢练，直到弹熟练，之后再合起来练习。

Appendix 2  
Interview Chinese piano teacher 2

1. 您是怎样帮助学生记住中央 C?  
答：我会先介绍钢琴，看中间的位置。然后看钢琴的标牌的下面的位置就是中央 C。
2. 您是怎样帮助学生记住钢琴的各个音？  
答：我会直接介绍五线谱有五条线和四个间。在一线和五线可以往下或上加线。下加一线是 do。下加一间是 re。依次类推。识谱很重要，教五线谱是为了更好的读谱。会读谱和识谱才能更好的在自己练琴的时候发挥作用。
3. 您先教唱名还是音名？  
答：以唱名为主，教唱名的也同时教音名。我会在后半节课让学生读音名，但不唱谱。
4. 您对手型有怎样的要求？  
答：我不太要求手型。因为对孩子的约束力太强。学生没有折指就好。只要手型不是特别不好，我不太严格要求。但我会要求学生弹琴是手指立（挺）住钢琴键。
5. 您是怎么解释四分音符，二分音符，全音符的时值？  
答：我教学生印有长短和高低。全音符是长音，所以我会唱 do 2 3 4；二分音符我会唱 do 2，四分音符唱成 do。
6. 您用什么教材？  
答：小汤普森第一册。如果是七八岁的孩子，我会用儿童拜耳。按年龄来说，七岁可以加哈农。
7. 一节钢琴课多久？  
答：40-50 分钟，中间无休息。
8. 您认为让学生快乐学习钢琴重要还是觉得老师要严格教钢琴？  
答：老师需严格教学。

9. 您有其他方式去鼓励学生学习或练习钢琴吗？

答：没有。

10. 初学者中您认为比较难教的点是什么？

答：1) 音乐处理。由强到弱或由弱到强的渐变处理。

2) 学生可以长期练琴。保持兴趣性。由于刚开始谱子比较简单，音乐较单调。外加学生的能力有限。在单调的音乐中保持学生的兴趣相对较困难。需要家长的协调和沟通。家长的鼓励，奖励及严格要并用。

3) 认识音符的熟练性直接影响学生的读谱能力。读谱慢影响孩子的练琴的积极性。

4) 手指四五指支撑也是初学者的难点。

11. 对于初学者你是怎样帮助学生练习手指灵活度？

答：首先要分步骤练习：

1) 先用左右手相同手指（如四指对四指）同时弹奏，

2) 再用左右手不同手指（如2对4，1对5，1对3，3对5）同时弹奏

3) 再单拿出一只手两个音同时弹奏。弹奏整齐后，两个手指有站立能力后分解，交替弹奏。由于有双音的站立能力分解开来也应该能够弹的很好。反复练习，灵活度就很好。如果谈到拜耳就可遵循哈农的手指练习进行提高手指灵活度。对初学者来说个人认为手指灵活度应该放在识谱之后的训练。针对灵活度来说，对待每个学生可以手架练习为主。拿出两个手指单独训练。要跟节拍器训练并多练习慢速，锻炼手指肌肉能力，尤其是4，5指练习。但也不能过多练习，以免学生厌烦。所以要适度。

12. 怎么样帮助学生看音符的方向？

答：个人觉得刚开始学琴要反复演唱C大调音阶及各个音符之间的排列关系。了解钢琴键之后还要与五线谱对照，充分了解五线谱同向与反向，上行与下行。

13. 双手配合弹奏时有哪些要领要掌握？

答： 1) 初合手时要以左手为主，因为左手关系到拍子和节奏，对于右手节奏的准确性起决定作用。两手节奏都弹准确后，要以右手的音乐表达为主。

2) 双手配合时需要注意节奏的准确。音符弹奏的准确以及左手每一拍对准右手的旋律。

14. 您有什么方法帮助学生应对练琴时候的困难？

答：上课时如果孩子无法集中，我会选择唱音阶或者或其他教材练习。

Appendix 3  
Interview piano American teacher 1

1. How do you teach middle C to young beginners?  
I help students to remember middle C by directing them to the middle of the piano and to the note directly to the left of two black notes. Most pianos are made with their brand name very close to the middle C - this is a help as well.
  
2. How do you help students to learn the names of keys on the piano? Are there easy ways helping them to remember?  
I have always used the Alfred series of piano books. Their theory books are very helpful and detailed. Most students know the first seven letters of the alphabet so it is pretty easy for them. Please note that beginner students need to know how to read.
  
3. Do you teach solfege or letter names first? Please explain why.  
I teach letter names first and never teach solfege names. In my opinion, solfege is for vocalists not pianists.
  
4. Do you usually correct the hand position when students start to learn piano?  
No, as long as they have tip fingers. High wrist doesn't bother me.
  
5. How do you explain quarter note, half note and whole note these note values to help them understand?  
I relate note values to dollars (whole notes), half dollars (half notes), and quarters (quarter notes). Another way to do it is to use fractions.
  
6. What textbook do you use for beginners?  
Alfred Level 1A.
  
7. How long do you think a piano lesson for beginners should be? Half an hour or more, why?  
30 minutes is more than enough time to go over old and new material. Beginner students need review and any longer would probably result in lost attention.

8. Do you think it is important to have fun learning the lesson or should the teacher be professional during the whole lesson?

I believe in having fun. If a student sees the teacher having fun, then it will rub off on the student. This also helps in building relationships.

9. Do you have any other ways to encourage the students to keep learning/practicing piano?

I give students a booklet called the Wright Way Practice Method. This allows the student to list the amount of time they practice each day.

10. What are the main frustrations you find in teaching beginners?

My main frustrations would be students who do not practice on a regular basis and they waste their parent's money. Also, play with their tip fingers as opposed to flat fingers is another difficulty.

11. How do you help students build finger dexterity?

I use the drills of technique in the Alfred series and add Hannon exercises later.

12. How do you explain the direction of higher notes go to the right, lower notes go to the left?

Let the students know higher pitch goes to the right and lower pitch goes to the left and usually they can tell the difference between high and low sound.

13. What to remind students when they start to play both hands together?

I try to have them get use to see the line when to play with both hands and it takes some time to practice.

14. Do you have any strategies to help students with practicing challenges?

One strategy that I use is having a student repeat after me "I will practice every day that I eat." This works - sometimes.

Appendix 4  
Interview American piano teacher 2

1. How do you teach middle C to young beginners?  
Show the pattern of 2 black notes and 3 black notes to the students, the white key to the left of 2 black notes is C, then find all the Cs on the piano and middle C is in the middle of the piano.
  
2. How do you help students to learn the names of keys on the piano? Are there easy ways helping them to remember?  
I teach staff first. The first note I teach is E, which is on the first line and show them it is letter E. Next note is D, which is right under the first line, then teach middle C. I also make up some short pieces for C.D.E notes and help them to remember.
  
3. Do you teach solfege or letter names first? Please explain why.  
I teach letter name. Sing the letter name while play the notes.
  
4. Do you usually correct the hand position when students start to learn piano?  
I do correct the hand position.
  
5. How do you explain quarter note, half note and whole note these note values to help them understand?  
I tell the students in 4/4 time signature, quarter note has 1 count, half note has 2 counts, whole notes has 4 counts.
  
6. What textbook do you use for beginners?  
I use Bastien piano basic primer A and I also make my own handouts for students. Robert Pace for theory and Elizabeth Clark's book.
  
7. How long do you think a piano lesson for beginners should be? Half an hour or more, why?  
It's 40 minutes.

8. Do you think it is important to have fun learning the lesson or should the teacher be professional during the whole lesson?  
I think having fun is important. What's the purpose of playing the song?  
Sometimes playing only the right notes is not the important part.
9. Do you have any other ways to encourage the students to keep learning/practicing piano?  
I have paper to assign to the students and leave comments, telling them what to work on. If they behave well for 1 month, they get a treat!
10. What are the main frustrations you find in teaching beginners?  
Children have short attention span and they couldn't concentrate well during the whole lesson. I divide my lesson into 6 sections in every 5 minutes. If they are distracted, I will do something else and go back.
11. How do you help students build finger dexterity?  
First, they need to have bend fingers and keep finger 1, 5 on edge. Finger 2,3,4 keep bended and play very slow. I have exercises on finger 1231,1351, 5432. At the same time keep practice the finger exercises.
12. How do you explain the direction of higher notes go to the right, lower notes go to the left?  
I draw notes in different colors to differentiate high and low notes. Explain to them stand up to the right (notes go higher), sit down to the left (notes go lower).
13. What to remind students when they start to play both hands together?  
Practice slowly and teacher talks to the students as they play: together left, together right, together, together left.
14. Do you have any strategies to help students with practicing challenges?  
I use flash cards too with the notes and different rewards to the students if they play well.

Appendix 5  
Interview Chinese parent 1

1. 几岁孩子开始学钢琴?  
三岁半开始。
2. 学习钢琴的初衷是孩子的还是家长的意愿?  
家长的意愿。
3. 家庭成员有学乐器的吗? 如有, 是哪种乐器。  
没有。
4. 您有带孩子去参加音乐活动吗? 如音乐会, 音乐节等。  
有带孩子去听钢琴独奏会, 音乐会。
5. 您的孩子每天练习多长时间?  
半小时到一小时。
6. 您认为学习钢琴的重要性是什么?  
刺激脑细胞发育, 提高孩子观察力和记忆力。也能调剂心情无论开心与否, 弹琴能让自己适度放松。缓解压力。
7. 您对孩子学习钢琴有何期待? 想让孩子以后把钢琴作为职业吗?  
没有。只希望作为一种抒发。钢琴可以变成倾听对象。
8. 您用何种方式支持孩子学琴? 有鼓励或是奖励吗?  
给孩子买钢琴。有时去姥姥家, 也在那里买了电钢琴孩子可以练习。练的好可以玩电子产品。
9. 在孩子学琴的过程中, 家长是否有灰心或沮丧的时候?  
没有。
10. 请问您观察到孩子在学琴练琴过程中的积极影响有哪些?  
读书更集中注意力, 增加记忆里和想象力。律动和节奏感也提高了。

11. 请问您观察到孩子在学琴练琴过程中的消极影响有哪些？  
孩子比较好动，无法长时间集中弹琴。练习一遍错一遍，准确率低。
12. 您认为您的孩子具有音乐天赋吗？  
我的孩子比其他孩子多一些音乐细胞，但相较音乐天赋还差一些。

Appendix 6  
Interview Chinese parent 2

1. 几岁孩子开始学钢琴?  
5岁。
2. 学习钢琴的初衷是孩子的还是家长的意愿?  
孩子。
3. 家庭成员有学乐器的吗? 如有, 是哪种乐器。  
没有。
4. 您有带孩子去参加音乐活动吗? 如音乐会, 音乐节等。  
没有带孩子去听音乐会。
5. 您的孩子每天练习多长时间?  
半小时到五十分钟。
6. 您认为学习钢琴的重要性是什么?  
开发大脑和智力, 手脚协调性。提高孩子耐力和持久力。
7. 您对孩子学习钢琴有何期待? 想让孩子以后把钢琴作为职业吗?  
没有过多期望, 只希望孩子将来有个爱好跟属于自己的东西。
8. 您用何种方式支持孩子学琴? 有鼓励或是奖励吗?  
给孩子买钢琴。只要有时间, 我就会陪他练琴, 经常鼓励孩子。
9. 在孩子学琴的过程中, 家长是否有灰心或沮丧的时候?  
有。孩子有段时间识谱有点困难, 和我说不想练琴了。但是老师说过, 学琴家长要坚持, 孩子就能。要有耐心, 不能因为一点困难就退缩。
10. 请问您观察到孩子在学琴练琴过程中的积极影响有哪些?  
有时我会故意弹的没有孩子好, 让孩子弹会很自豪并建立自信心。

11. 请问您观察到孩子在学琴练琴过程中的消极影响有哪些？  
孩子在练琴过程中会感到枯燥，好听的曲子会多练，难一点的不想练。
  
12. 您认为您的孩子具有音乐天赋吗？  
我觉得我的孩子有音乐天赋。

Appendix 7  
Interview American parent 1

1. When did your child start piano lessons?  
7 years old.
2. Was it you or your child that initiated the desire to learn piano?  
It was probably me (mom), but last year she said she wanted to learn piano.
3. Is your child learning any other instruments other than piano?  
No.
4. What other music activities does the family engage in at home or somewhere else? Concerts, church groups, dance lessons, etc.  
She has a church group and also does sing along Disney music at home.
5. How often and for how long does your child practice at home?  
7-10 minutes.
6. Why do you think it is important for your child to learn the piano?  
Learning piano access different parts of the brain. It helps to problem solve, to be a better thinker, as well as have a creative outlet. It can also help for expressing emotion in a healthy way.
7. What are your expectations for your child in how far they will progress on the piano?  
I personally want her to continue piano lesson, but I will let my child direct and decide in the future.
8. As parent how do you support your child's piano studies?  
Provide keyboard for her. Parents try to speak positively and praise a lot.
9. What do you find most frustrating as a parent in having your child study piano?  
When my child doesn't practice piano and give excuses, and can't concentrate well.
10. What do you observe as the positive effects of studying piano?

She's more confidently, because not everyone can play the piano. She also enjoys learning the skill.

11. What do you observe as the negative effects of studying piano?

She doesn't want to practice and argue with parents.

12. Do you think your child is musically talented? How well do you think your child is doing for piano studies so far?

I think my child is musically talented. What my child does is an enrichment, and she is doing well on her lesson.

Appendix 8  
Interview American parents 2

1. When did you child start piano lessons?  
When she was 5 years old.
2. Was it you or your child that initiated the desire to learn piano?  
Yes, my child.
3. Is your child learning any other instruments other than piano?  
No.
4. What other music activities does the family engage in at home or somewhere else? Concerts, church groups, dance lessons, etc.  
She has music class at school twice a week, and they also sing Chinese songs throughout their teaching. We go to children concerts, ballet performance, and musicals.
5. How often and for how long does your child practice at home?  
About 15-20 minutes every other day. I wish it's higher.
6. Why do you think it is important for your child to learn the piano?  
It started because she wanted to learn piano. She loves music and is a way for her to express feelings. I think that it's important that she can read music notes, has basic understanding of music theory, so she is knowledgeable enough to express music.
7. What are your expectations for your child in how far they progress on piano?  
I don't have a specific expectation on her piano progress. It needs to be her choice. If she wants it, she needs to work for it.
8. As parent how do you support your child's piano studies?  
Providing the instrument, the means to hire a good teacher, and regular push to practice. I also help her with the practice.
9. What do you find most frustrating as a parent in having your child study piano?

Getting her to practice regularly is tough. And then getting her to practice to a level when she is actually familiar with the songs, that's another challenge.

10. What do you observe as the positive effects of studying piano?

She is more musically in tune and her ears are starting to develop a sense of what sounds right and what doesn't. She also appreciates music even more than before and understands the difficulty in playing music.

11. What do you observe as the negative effects of studying piano?

Me to be mad at her, because her level of practice is hugely different from mine.

12. Do you think your child is musically talented? How well do you think your child is doing for piano studies so far?

No, I don't think she is musically talented, just average. She is progressing very slowly.