

**The Midwest Clinic  
62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference  
December 16-20, 2008**

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**Introduction:**

Thank to... Midwest Clinic Board of Directors, Paula Thornton, and YOU, for considering guitar.

“My Slides About Me” (a la Dr. Seuss book): Ed Prasse “from Tallahassee”; Florida State University BME and MME; Leon High School 1994-present full-time four year guitar program and Sound Engineering; FMEA General Music Committee chair 2004-present; MENC G.E.T (Guitar Education Team) final year intern; Partner, Class Guitar Resources, Inc. 2000-present; play for my church and bi-monthly restaurant “acoustic duo” gig.

“Guitar greetings” from my 156 students who are taking...final exams this week.

Guitar news from Florida: (evidence from my perspective that guitar is on the move) Incoming Freshman “Fine Arts” credit is having an effect; FMEA sessions from one to a full track (5-7) 2005 to present; Beginning guitar sessions 40+ attendees (whereas intermediate and advanced topics average 15-20); Guitar included in the first and second FMEA Summer Institute workshops. 1<sup>st</sup> FMEA statewide Guitar Ensemble Festival-doubled attendance expectations; Class Guitar Resources, Inc. textbook/training program in Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Polk Counties. Next year, Duval; All of these counties are ADDING guitar.

Guitar news from MENC: MENC/GAMA/NAMM and Duquesne University; 5-day summer workshop; huge stack of textbooks, free guitar and scholarship for tuition costs; Duquesne provides (3) graduate credits; Clinicians are veteran classroom guitar instructors who have built 4-year programs; Training began in 1995 with 3 sites and 75 participants; 2009 offers 11 sites to 275; Over 2,000 teachers and 500,000 students served; [www.guitaredunet.org](http://www.guitaredunet.org) get on the “hot list” for a priority application.

# “Teaching Guitar, for the Non-Guitarist”

## Description of Session:

This session will introduce the “non-guitarist” music educator to theoretical concepts and practical tips for teaching a fundamental-based guitar curriculum. When combined with an individual assessment approach, the curricular model can provide the non-traditional music population of your school with a life-long musical endeavor. (P.S....more illiterate guitarists, the world needs not!)

## Session Summary: Who, How, What, When, Where and Why Class Guitar?

**WHO are your students in class guitar on DAY ONE?** My classes of 30:

Absolute beginners-first music class since elementary school.

A few are experienced players- Uncle Ken showed them a few chords.

Some have experience on another instrument- band or piano.

A few traditional music students-currently in band or chorus.

Academically-from honor students to “I just wanna pass”.

Lovers/consumers of mainstream styles AND fringe styles or both.

“Gamers” desiring the real thing yet, expect instant gratification.

Overall, a very diverse group with much more individualized expectations than a band or chorus member.

**Bottom line-** You get a class *full of individuals* with individual goals and abilities.

**Challenge for the instructor-** How are you going to meet all of these individual needs simultaneously?

**Proposal-** set up a curriculum structure that allows the teacher to teach *the guitar*, and the students teach themselves style. Use an assessment system that accommodates “Driven”, “Sweet but Slow”, “Apathy” and “Goes with the Flow”.

## HOW are you going to teach them...songs or skills?

### Concerns with the songs approach:

Not every student likes what you like and VICE VERSA!

Songs often present new playing techniques in an illogical order.

“Driven” will be able to follow you but “Sweet but Slow” will quickly retreat (as yet another failure in their life). Teach the best forget the rest?

Course outcome is a collection of songs learned.

Do you really have time to learn the latest “Shadows Fall” riff by Monday? What then on Tuesday? When is Country day?

Materials and Copyright issues.

Students' stylistic interests will change in 1, 10, 20 years from now and continue to change.

**Benefits of a skills approach:**

Fundamental skills allow for the logical progression from skill 1 to 2 to 3 etc.

This moves a *class of individuals* through a unit sequence.

Use of a textbook presents information in notation-based format (literacy).

Teaching fundamentals allows the teacher to **master** a relatively small amount of curricular material, and become a style **coach**.

G – C – D7 – em – G = songs in many styles simultaneously.

Fundamental skills gained can accommodate a lifetime of musical style shifts and interests.

**Bottom line-** A *fundamentals* approach will serve the lifelong music needs of all students and put the teacher in a more confident position.

**Challenge for the instructor-** What fundamental skills do you currently possess...need to improve?

**Proposal-** Purchase the *First-Year Guitar* textbook series and prepare the first 15 lessons.

Next fall, play along with each student during individual assessment. Each assignment 20-30 times WILL MAKE YOU a better player and teacher in just one year (without lessons!!)

**WHAT are these fundamental skills?**

**Semester One sequence**

Chords first. Why?	Text sample p. 13
Standard notation. Why before TAB?	Text sample p. 31, 32
Simple R-5 bass position	Text sample p. 43
Ensemble unit as application of skills learned thus far	Text sample p. 44
Barre chords	Text sample p. 48

**Semester Two sequence**

Major scales played with right hand "I-m" fingers	Text sample p. 56
Right hand "pima" block chord and arpeggios	Text sample p. 65
2 & 3 note power chords, palm muting, power chord blues	Text sample p. 82
Slur technique: hammer-on, pull-off	Text sample p. 71
Tablature (TAB)	Text sample p. 70
Reading standard notation in upper positions	Text sample p. 76
Final ensemble unit: application of all skills learned	

**Bottom line-** literacy-based playing skills, applicable to all styles simultaneously.

**Challenge for the instructor-** What fundamental skills do you currently possess...need to improve?

**Proposal-** Purchase the *First-Year Guitar* textbook series and prepare the first 15 lessons.

Next fall, play along with each student during individual assessment. Each assignment 20-30 times WILL MAKE YOU a better player and teacher in just one year (without lessons!!)

**Style application opportunities-** each unit should conclude with a individual recital. This gives each student the opportunity to apply the new skills directly to the style of his/her choice. Students are exposed to new styles as a result of these recitals.

**HOW are you going to structure the curriculum sequence?** Unit Cycle:

Present the material; often days or weeks in advance and in small doses.

Post the written and playing assignment due dates on the board.

Students come to the teacher to play for feedback and grades.

Begin presenting the next unit's material during the waning days of the current.

Hold a style recital, REPEAT CYCLE.

**HOW are you going to assess the curriculum sequence?** Individually.

**Some thoughts from the classroom:**

Students may replay any time before the due date.

Students form two lines so one is always ready to go.

**Always** allow students to work through the sequence ahead of due dates.

“Driven”, “Sweet but Slow”, “Goes with the Flow” and “Apathy” all play during different days of the pass-off period.

Record the grades on some type of easily visible chart. Record the date along with the grade. “Apathy” or others will stand out with blank records. Prompt.

Each deadline is from 2-7 days.

Deadline/Due date brings finality to each task.

Deadlines provide short-term incentives, within a long-term progression.

The teacher and students feel the progress: daily, weekly and by semester.

Slower students do not “fall through the cracks” as in a performance class.

Creates a “chain of successes”.

Parents and administrators are pleased when you post grades on-line.

Students become addicted to accomplishment.

Written assignments reinforce and evaluate mental aspects.

Begin introducing new unit information in the last weeks of the current unit.

Repeat the cycle, to much success.

**Teacher manual sample: Unit One, days 16-20.**

**But how are you REALLY going to assess the curriculum sequence?**

Rubric assessment sheets for every *PROFICIENCY*, are provided in the teacher manual. **Teacher manual sample: Proficiency 1 p. XX** full page view.

Rubric assessment sheets:

Clearly stated achievement goals.  
Quantified performance descriptions.  
Reinforces technique items.  
Provides the student with precise diagnosis of the problem.  
Allows for quick, effective communication between teacher and student.  
Student conversation: Q: “What’d you get? A: “25 of 25 dog! Oh yeah!”

**Teacher manual sample: Proficiency 1 p. XX top half-readable.**

**Teacher manual sample: Proficiency 1 p. XX bottom half-readable.**

**Bottom line-** This is NOT A PRIVATE LESSON. It is one of a fifty or more “visits” along a logical, progressive sequence of playing skills. This is where the “real teaching” happens.

**Challenges for the instructor-**

Need for sharp pedagogical skills. Move the lines quickly.

What are the other students doing during this “individual” time? (Not “free time”)

**Proposals-**

**A timer.** For you but also ends the “let me try it one more time” request.

Students get a sense that the lines move and progress is being made each time the beeper goes off.

**Require** the first assignment of a unit from every student on the first or second day, then proceed through the remaining items on a volunteer basis over the next few days until the due date. This eliminates the, “too little, too late syndrome, and keeps students from stalling.

**Allow Johnny to work ahead** of the due dates in the sequence. He will be more likely to return to his seat and work on the next assignment, debunking the idea of “I’m done with today’s work so now it is talk time”.

**Establish** one essential classroom procedure: in your seat or in the pass-off line.

**Provide ample** supplementary music songbooks. One copy of a mixture of styles is sure to keep a busy Johnny is a happy Johnny!

**WHEN, in terms of time does this all take place during a 50 minute class period?**

Typically a 2-10 minute daily warm up is used to drill previous skills and advance others. Strum and sing enjoyable songs from supplementary songbooks.

Technique drills are great “class grabbers”. Ex. LH position drill. Power chord “trip around the world” drill.

Play a few of the current assignment lines.

Announcements or class business as needed, therefore...

A typical day allows for 40-48 minutes of individual assessment.

**Teacher manual sample: Unit One, days 13-15.**

**Teacher manual sample: Unit One, days 16-20.**

**WHEN, in terms of time does this all take place during a 90 minute block?**

Work concurrently in two units.

At the 45-minute mark, literally blow a horn. Cease all unit 1 activities and start a “new class” period in unit 2.

**Bottom line-** Time is spent everyday meeting individual needs, *simultaneously*.

**Challenge for the instructor-**

Streamlined drills and instruction for a “non-guitarist” music educator.

Effective classroom management.

**Proposal-**

Daily lesson plans in the First Year Teacher Manual provide drills and instructional pacing.

Curriculum deadlines and style recitals provide classroom management assistance. “A busy Johnny is a better-behaved Johnny”.

Guitar in-service training to become better at the craft.

**WHERE and WHY? -a recap**

**Where do guitar students come from?**

Everywhere. Each student comes with unique skills and personal goals.

**Why should you teach *the guitar* and let the students adapt these skills to their style preferences?**

Styles change, fundamentals do not. Fundamentals can be applied across all styles simultaneously.

**Why teach chords first?**

Big sound and quick results. Fast track to performance.

**Why standard notation before TAB?**

When notation and rhythm are taught first, TAB is performed within a rhythmic context.

My “TAB first” private lessons students seem to have far more trouble reading notation. My notation first classroom students have no trouble reading TAB. The order seems to matter a great deal.

**Where do you get to do some “real teaching”?**

Guiding each student from step 1 to 2 to 3 (via dozens of visits per year) to an end-goal of solid fundamental music understanding and broad-based performance ability is... real teaching!!

\_\_\_ YES, I am interested in a closer look at the H.O.T. Hands-On Training First Year Guitar student text and Teacher Manual. **Visit booth #56 Continental Ballroom.**

\_\_\_ YES, I am interested in gaining more information about the GAMA/NAMM/MENC Summer Guitar Workshop opportunities. **Visit [www.guitaredunet.org](http://www.guitaredunet.org)**

\_\_\_ YES, I am interested in gaining more information about the Class Guitar Resources, Inc. Summer/Fall/Spring district workshop-training program. **Visit booth #56 Continental Ballroom.**

Example scenario:

20 NEW guitar teachers teaching classes of 25 students = 500 total students.

First Year Guitar student book w/ CD

\$19.95 x 500 = \$9,975

First Year Guitar Teacher Manual

\$22.95 x 20 = free of charge

Two day Summer Training

= free of charge

October one day training

= \$1000

February one day training

= \$1000

Total text/training package

= \$11,975

First Year Guitar student book only

\$14.95 x 500 = \$7,475

First Year Guitar Teacher Manual

\$22.95 x 20 = free of charge

Two day Summer Training

= free of charge

October one day training

= \$1000

February one day training

= \$1000

Total text/training package

= \$9,475

Please contact me at:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School or District \_\_\_\_\_

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