

All-State: Using Skype and Online Technologies in Lessons

presented by Jeremy Swider — reported by Brenda Radloff

Why would any teacher or student choose to have lessons using Skype instead of in person? There are some very good reasons! Sometimes it is difficult to have transportation to and from the lesson. This is especially true in the metro area. Mild illness is another good reason. I always hate it when I am giving a lesson to a student and they are coughing and sneezing on me. In Minnesota, having a Skype lesson is great in the winter time. There is no reason to miss a lesson during a blizzard!

Using Skype requires some materials. Both the student and the teacher need to have a computer (or a cell phone) with internet. They also need a webcam or a built-in camera. They also need a Skype account, or face time. There is now a browser-based version of Skype. This can be used if regular Skype isn't working. The only problem with it is that it tends to be

a little slower.

Unfortunately, there are some limitations with Skype. You cannot physically tune the instrument. You can only give instructions for the student (or parent) on how to turn the pegs. You cannot put finger tapes on. You would need to meet with the student in person to get this done. You cannot play simultaneously with the student because of the slight delay. Judging tone can also be difficult because of poor sound on the computer affected both by the microphone and the speaker.

When setting up for his lessons, Jeremy always has the music in hand that the student will be playing. In order to be ready for the lesson, he builds in 15 minutes prior to the lesson. This also gives him time to send an email to the student just prior to the lesson. It includes the lesson plan. This is very helpful if the student forgets to

log in and attend the lesson. It also helps Jeremy know from week to week what the assignment was and where to pick up from week to week.

I really like the idea of using Skype for lessons. Before I started teaching full time, I was a studio teacher. I think I would have liked being able to have students use this as a back-up if they had not been able to get to their lesson. I don't know that I will be able to use this at school, since the lessons I give are in a group setting. This only would work for private lessons.

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