



**NAA PRESENTATION Part II 2026
APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY
IN TEACHING ACCORDION
TO THOSE WITH UNIQUE LEARNING NEEDS**

Before Covid, even with advancing technology and new Apps for iPad & iPhone often being introduced, the use of electronic recording & technology in a private music lesson setting was given little credence. Students had to depend upon their memory to listen to a teacher's rendition of a solo piece or exercise and attempt to remember a myriad of details that they would hopefully be able to retain for practice during the coming week.

When teachers suddenly had to depend on online Zoom lessons to maintain even a modicum of progress for their students, a new set of guidelines & lesson plans had to be developed instantly. Teachers had to spend additional time practicing and perfecting demonstration recordings to include within a 30 to 45 minute lesson. There were few quality demonstrations of ear-training studies and exercises and most of these were often at a high-school or collegiate level. Recorded ear training study materials specific for the accordion are still very limited.

Fortunately, master educators such as Patricia Bartell, had the foresight to begin building what has become a comprehensive online course for accordion: **The Accordion Life Academy** (accordionlife.com) which is now available on a monthly subscription basis. Occasionally a lifetime membership is offered which is well worth the expense.

This type of online instruction is a valuable tool for those living in rural areas or anywhere they would have to travel 50 to 100 miles or more to find a qualified teacher. For the adult or senior student, an ideal situation is to complement online instruction with a private lesson once or twice a month in order to maintain the *in-person student-teacher relationship* that is essential to building a strong internal motivation.

Combining the appropriate use of technology with traditional in-person instruction is valuable in that the teacher is better able to identify the type of cognitive learning style, whether it be analytical or creative, through one-on-one interaction and direct observation of the student to determine how to best meet the individual's needs.



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This is especially important if the adult student previously had a negative experience as a child taking music lessons in a stilted environment where he or she was made to feel that no amount of practice could ever result in praise or the motivation to want to develop their inner desire to learn to make music.

Many adult students cling to these past negative experiences that make them very reticent to attempt learning to play later in life. That not-so-little “inner thought” hangs over them like a “heavy cloud” impeding progress, unaware that the attitude of “I can’t because...” is hiding in plain sight.

This is where the ability to start the study of the accordion with a program such as **Accordion Life Academy** combined with a basic music theory and ear training course online or with one of the instructional curriculums, videos, games and teaching aids published by **Theory Time** (www.theorytime.com) which can provide an non-threatening environment where mistakes are never greeted with negativity.

Today there are hundreds (or more) of “music theory” or “ear training” apps available from Apple or the Google Store, but without guidance from a teacher as to which ones are the most appropriate at which level, it is much like playing a “*game of darts in space*” to find ones that actually meet the individual student’s needs.

In the digital age, the fusion of technology and education has paved the way for innovative learning methodologies, particularly in the field of music. And as the convergence of music and technology continues to evolve, there will be many exciting new ways to learn, teach, and experience music. Technology in music education is about keeping pace with the digital age and setting the stage for a future where everyone has the opportunity to access, enjoy, and excel in music learning.

Music learning apps and games are at the forefront of this educational revolution, offering interactive and engaging ways for students to delve into the world of music. These digital platforms are designed to both educate and to entertain, increasing student engagement and motivation.



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Music learning apps and games leverage interactive technology to create immersive learning experiences. From basic rhythm training to complex composition tools, these apps offer a wide range of functionalities tailored to different age groups and skill levels.

Impact on Student Engagement and Motivation

Interactive features such as real-time feedback, progress tracking, and gamified learning challenges make these tools highly effective and motivational for music education.

By engaging students in a hands-on learning process, these apps foster a deeper understanding of musical concepts and skills.

Through the incorporation of elements of play, these digital tools make learning music more enjoyable and less intimidating.

A great place to experience a myriad of these opportunities, seminars & workshops is at the Annual TMEA (Texas Music Educators Association) Convention held in San Antonio in February of each year.

Challenges, achievements, and progress rewards within the apps encourage students to set goals and persevere, fostering a sense of accomplishment as they develop their musical abilities. Furthermore, the flexibility and accessibility of app-based learning allows students to practice and learn at their own pace, anytime and anywhere.

Although app-based learning boosts motivation and also supports personalized learning paths which accommodate individual interests and learning styles, it is important to realize that nothing will completely replace in-person instruction.

Structured Learning

One of the foundational features of **online music education platforms** such as the **Accordion Life Academy** is structured learning. These platforms offer progressively structured courses that enable systematic skill development, and guide students through their musical journey.



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App-based learning in conjunction with traditional in-person lessons help a student to build a solid foundation in music theory and practice before advancing to more complex concepts and techniques.

It is essential to develop a curriculum tailored to meet a student's individual needs to ensure a path of learning that is defined by clarity and purpose that leads to a well-rounded musical education.

Technology has become an indispensable ally in the journey of music education. Engaging apps and games inject fun and interaction into learning, making music more approachable and enjoyable for students of all ages.

As we continue to explore and integrate these technologies into music learning, we open up new possibilities for learners around the world to explore their musical passions, develop their talents, and connect with the universal language of music in ways that were once beyond our imagination.

Technology must serve as a bridge rather than a barrier to musical exploration. The future of music education lies in our ability to blend the best of traditional teaching with the boundless opportunities of digital innovation, creating learning experiences that are rich, engaging, and transformative.

I have listed and categorized a few apps in the Power Point Presentation on Pedagogical Principles of Teaching Accordion that I have found which will support and enhance the student's basic understanding of the structure of the music they are learning to play.

While there are many Music Theory Apps that offer supportive exercises in note reading skills, the fundamentals of pitch, melodic lines, scales, intervals, counterpoint, chords, harmony and composition, most will be more effective if used in accompaniment with a basic written music theory course, such as Alfred's Essentials of Music Theory or Edith McIntosh Theory & Musicianship Series.



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Theory Time Excellence in Music Theory Education is one of the most nationally recognized methods and is used in conjunction with the Texas Music Teachers Association State Music Exams for grades 1 - 12 beginning with the most elementary concepts through pre-college or freshman level. Theory Time is also designed to meet all of the theory requirements of the NFMC (National Federated Music Clubs).

Alfred's Essentials of Music Theory is appropriate for a student who has had several years of music training in high school band, orchestra or choir, as it progresses quite rapidly through each concept. The McIntosh Theory & Musicianship Series is an excellent course for someone who has had several years of piano study prior to learning the accordion.

Ten to fifteen minutes a day spent with any one of the music apps will lead the student to more rapid progress and self enjoyment. Apps or Video recordings that include exercises/selections that give the student the opportunity to play with the recording also offer a great challenge that is very worthwhile.