

It was great talking with everyone today – I hope you learned something and are inspired! Here are some notes/links for specific programs and books and licenses that I promised I'd send over. I also summarized the topics we talked about, and added in a few things we didn't get to that I remembered afterwards.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out (see "Talk with People" point below).

Software:

- My Music Staff: <https://www.mymusicstaff.com>
- Music Teacher's Helper: <https://musicteachershelper.com>
- Studio Helper (one of my schools uses this one, and it's pretty intuitive) <https://studiohelper.com>
- Xero (thanks for the suggestion!): <https://www.xero.com/us/>
- Google Spreadsheets
- Pen and paper!

Lesson Rates/Contract:

Ask what your colleagues are charging. Keep in mind the area you work in. Keep in mind your qualifications. Give yourself a regular raise so parents are used to it. Federal raises are set at 3% every year. My friend increases \$2/hour every 2 years (so he doesn't have to deal with decimals for the half hour lessons). Send out a new contract every rate increase. Most families don't mind. My sample contract is included. Please use what works for you!

Books:

Some are studio-business-specific, and some are more along the "self-help" lines. Every student approaches lessons with a different mindset - some of these books have helped me stay flexible in my teaching style in order to meet the student where the student is on each day. I also recommend reading to some of my students and I'll have them sign out the book and return it when they're done.

I've found that a good percentage of my work as a private lesson teacher is to walk with my students through their lives - major life events from bat mitzvahs and graduations to divorces and deaths in the family. A lot of these books have also helped me be appropriately sympathetic.

- Blanchard, Bonnie, and Cynthia Blanchard. Acree. *Making Music and Enriching Lives: a Guide for All Music Teachers*. Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Ristad, Eloise. *A Soprano on Her Head: Right-Side-up Reflections on Life and Other Performances*. Real People Press, 2002.
- Zander, Rosamund Stone, and Benjamin Zander. *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*. Penguin, 2002.
- McGill, David. *Sound in Motion: a Performer's Guide to Greater Musical Expression*. Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Gallwey, W. Timothy., and Pete Carroll. *The Inner Game of Tennis: the Classic Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance*. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008.
- Bruser, Madeline. *The Art of Practicing a Guide to Making Music from the Heart*. Random House International, 2000.
- Westney, William. *The Perfect Wrong Note: Learning to Trust Your Musical Self*. Amadeus Press, 2006.
- Ruiz, Miguel. *The Four Agreements: a Practical Guide to Personal Freedom*. Amber-Allen Publishing, 2017.

It's also a good idea to have instrument-specific pedagogy books on you for reference. I tend to be very scientific when I teach, so I like having very specific language at my fingertips when I'm stumped on a particular student. I also use repertoire anthologies for picking and discovering level-appropriate repertoire.

Benchmarks/Curriculum Planning

I used pedagogy resources to help me create and maintain a loose trajectory for my studio. I have written down in a binder specific goals for students from 4th grade-senior in college. These goals include repertoire, method books, etudes, as well as aural/theory skills (I do teach theory to my students!). Each student is different and so I am very flexible within the "plan" I make, but this has helped me stay relatively on track.

Licenses

City of Chicago: Children's Activities Facility Licensing - \$500, renews every 2 years. You should do it if you're renting a space, but really small businesses have gotten away with not having this license. If you work at a school, you should have this license. You can write it off your taxes!

- <https://www.chicago.gov/dam/city/depts/bacp/caflicense/caffactsheet.pdf>

Additional certifications and licensing is only necessary if you want. My certifications and licenses have been paid for by my school, which is the only reason why I am certified. I am interested in looking into more certifications (Dalcroze and Kodaly, specifically), but they're not necessary for the work that I do..

Business Insurance

I have a great relationship with my insurance agent, so I'd recommend talking with your current agent and seeing what your options are. You'll need basic liability coverage for your business if you're teaching out of your home. You can write it off your taxes!

Taxes

Keep impeccable records. Write everything down at least weekly to keep it from being too much at the end of the month/year. It makes a difference and saves you money! You do have to pay self-employment tax, but you get a teacher deduction, which is around \$250. I use a CPA to file my taxes and it has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. They cost money, but often save you more than they cost.

Marketing

We didn't talk about this! Schools will market for you, but it's important to market yourself. The best way hands down is word of mouth. Your students will do it for you! Another great way to market yourself is online with your website - pay for the SEO settings to have you show up right away for music lessons in your area. Google Maps, and Yelp are also extremely effective. Fliers in coffee shops and schools work, but they take a ton of time for not a lot of payoff. Some people do family/referral discounts. They work, and I've used them. Some teachers still get new students by word-of-mouth without the discounts. Find what feels authentic for you.

Talk with people

Talk with your colleagues! Go to lunch, get a drink and talk about pedagogy. That's a 100% networking tax write-off. We are all in this together, and some of my best games and teaching strategies have come from someone else or out of a brainstorming session.

Non-Compete Agreements in Schools and Services

I forgot to mention that most schools/teaching services will make you sign a non-compete clause. Each contract is a little different, but in general this means you cannot teach a student you inherited from the

school/service outside of that school or service for "x" months (typically a year). A school didn't do this with one teacher and she moved to another school, and took 25 students with her. So before moving students to a new school or studio, check to see if you've signed a non-compete in your teaching contract.

Summer Lessons

Some people require "x" lessons during the summer (or a payment of "x" lessons). One of my schools requires 8 summer lessons. A friend requires 4. I require 0 because of my summer teaching schedule, but strongly recommend a few. A few ideas to keep students engaged:

- Scales/arpeggios contest
- "On Your Own" recital at the end of the summer - show off what they've worked on "on their own" while everyone was away!
- Summer music camp - have an older student as a TA for free/discounted lessons!

Self Care

Keep the triangle even! Teaching/Practicing/Personal - they're all equally important. Know when to stop accepting students! Be honest with yourself - which students are a struggle to teach? Is it something you can fix? If not, you probably know a teacher who would be a great fit with that student. It's ok to not get along with everyone, but *it's your responsibility as a teacher to help everyone have a positive experience with music and art*, so pass students on if you need to.

****A quick note**** I LOVE TEACHING. But sometimes I get tired. When I am so tired and I don't want to go in to teach, I hype myself up by telling myself all my favorite things about each student, even if it's "I love how so-and-so acts like they're too cool for me." It reminds me that I teach some pretty amazing people, and that usually puts my mind and heart in the right place.

In summary - be flexible, be patient (this doesn't happen overnight), work hard, stay organized, but most of all **have fun!** You love music, and you get to share the love of discovery and creativity and expression with others.