

SETH BUTLER MUSIC STUDIO

Modern Piano Education in the Cedar Valley

Individual Instructor-Specific Policy and Procedure Statements 2017-2018 Academic Year

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Please read all the information.

Sign and return the signature page with your first payment.

Thank you!

1. Teaching Philosophy.

My mission

The purpose of Seth Butler Music Studio: Modern Piano Education is to develop creative and passionate musicians for the 21st century.

Students I will accept

This section is directed towards parents/guardians looking to enroll their youth in piano lessons. I generally best serve students age 8 and up. This is roughly the age that young people can *choose* whether or not piano lessons are appealing. *The student must actively show a strong desire to play the piano and take instruction.* Please do not bring me any students who don't want to be there.

What I do

1. Creativity. Creativity in music is developed by learning *music fundamentals* such as playing by ear, playing from written notes, learning chords and scales, and improvising. Creative musicians use these fundamentals to create original compositions. They also use these fundamentals to easily master the classics.
2. Critical thinking. I constantly ask my students to observe, form opinions, and determine the "best" solution.
3. Confidence. Students learn to exhibit spirit, poise, and stage presence both on the music stage and in everyday life. They also develop the habits of hard work, strategy, and perseverance to achieve their goals and make music a life-long joy.

What I *don't* do

What you can expect to avoid in my studio:

1. Formal competition. I have never enrolled a student in a competition festival and I never plan to.
2. Rewards for doing good. I have no use for stickers, suckers, or trinkets as motivational factors in my studio.
3. The words "right" and "wrong". I am not here to teach compliance, but rather to teach critical thought, innovation, and self-sufficiency. The most successful musicians I know (students, hobbyists, and professionals alike) are the ones that think outside the box and search for the "best" way to play something, rather than the "right" way.

2. Types of Lessons Offered.

Basic Lessons are 30-minute lessons targeted towards beginners in their first few years of piano playing. Students enrolled in Basic Lessons will have access to the following skills, opportunities, and resources:

- Music fundamentals: learn how to play music by ear and from written notes.
- Learn well-known folk songs and classical themes.
- Performance opportunities: three studio recitals each year. Select students may be invited to more opportunities.
- Access to playalong recordings to guide your practice sessions at home.

Premium Lessons are 45-minute lessons for students who have a minimum of three years of music experience (either in lessons, at school, or independently). In addition to the features listed above, students enrolled in Premium Lessons will have access to the following skills, opportunities, and resources:

- Composition: create your own music with guidance from a professional.
- Improvisation: learn to improvise in the jazz styles—*VERY useful for MS/HS students wanting to play in their school jazz ensembles.*
- Music recording: record your performances in the studio using multi-track recording and MIDI sequencing.

3. Calendar.

2017-2018 Academic year.

Our organization holds 34 lessons across 39 weeks during the academic year, taking 5 holiday weeks. Seth Butler Music Studio will follow this schedule:

Week of September 4, 2017:	Lessons begin for academic year, held weekly.
Week of November 20, 2017:	NO LESSONS (Thanksgiving week)
Week of December 25, 2017:	NO LESSONS (Christmas)
Week of January 1, 2018:	NO LESSONS (New year's day)
Week of February 19, 2018:	NO LESSONS (personal week)
Week of May 22, 2018:	Final week of lessons for academic year.
Week of May 29, 2018:	NO LESSONS (summer session starts next week)

2018 Summer session.

Our organization holds 8 lessons across 13 weeks during the summer session. Seth Butler Music Studio will communicate with students and families to accommodate for travel and leisure during the summer months. Scheduling will take place during the week of May 29.

Week of June 4, 2018	Summer session lessons begin, occurring as scheduled
Week of July 2, 2018	NO LESSONS (Independence day week)
Week of August 27, 2018	Final week of lessons for summer session

4. Absences.

Absences may be made up one of two ways: *Video Correspondence* or *Flex Week*. If either the student or I need to cancel a lesson (due to sickness, family emergency, etc.), we will choose to either hold the lesson through video correspondence, or hold the lesson during a Flex Week.

Video Correspondence.

Video correspondence is the preferred method to hold a lesson that cannot be held during the regular lesson time. This is advantageous because instruction will not be delayed a week while you are gone.

1. Record yourself playing one or more of your tasks
2. Send it to me via email.
3. I will record a thorough feedback video for you and return it through email.

Students with mild illness (well enough to play, but not well enough to visit my studio) may conduct their lessons through video correspondence.

Live video lessons (such as Skype) are not available at this time.

Flex Weeks.

If video correspondence is not possible, I keep a couple flex weeks per year built into my schedule. These are weeks in which we would normally hold no lessons.

Flex weeks:

Week of January 1, 2018

Week of May 29, 2018

Flex week limits.

Since there are only two Flex Weeks, only two student absences may be made up using a Flex Week. As many absences as needed may be made up using video correspondence.

Instructor absences.

In the rare case of an instructor absence, the lesson will be made up using the preferred method of the student/family.

Exceptions.

Please read the following exceptions carefully...

1. A student's no-call, no-show absence will not be made up.
2. Students who show up without their necessary materials will not receive a lesson. Materials-related absences will not be made up. Bring your stuff!
3. Weather-related cancellations are *not* considered a student-related absence and do not count towards the maximum absences. Travel wisely. Do not travel if the school district nearest you cancels their operations.
4. In the rare case of extenuating circumstances such as long-term illness or injury, please communicate with me and we will reach an agreement based upon your individual and unique circumstances.

5. Student Materials List.

Bring to each lesson

To each lesson, bring a pocketed 3-ring binder with the following:

1. All papers and books regularly used in lessons
2. Blank notebook paper to log weekly tasks and progress
3. Blank staff paper
4. A pencil

Bring the binder to each lesson! *If you do not bring your binder, no lesson will be held that week and the lesson will be forfeited.*

Have at home

At home, have the following available:

1. A working piano! Acoustic and Digital pianos have their strengths and weaknesses. The most dedicated students and families have both.
 - a. Acoustic piano: This is the traditional piano used in concert halls around the world. They come in a variety of styles (spinet, upright, grand) and can be obtained for a variety of prices. They must be maintained and tuned regularly to be used effectively.
 - b. Digital piano: The digital piano is the modern keyboard used by traveling performers, synthesizer players, and recording studios. They have convenience of headphone usage. They may also have many built-in sounds, built-in playalong songs, and can connect to computers using MIDI technology.
2. Ability to listen to/play along with recordings at the piano (either CD player or internet connection--preferably both)
 - a. I will supply playalong files for certain tasks. Use these frequently!
3. Metronome. If you have an digital piano, it may have a metronome built in.

Making the most of it

Here are some tips on making the most of your practice sessions.

1. Keep the piano in a location without distractions. Don't let the piano compete with the TV, video games, kitchen, or telephone. Uninterrupted practice is best.
2. Measure your practice with *musical* goals - accomplish what you want to accomplish. Never measure practice sessions by watching the clock!
3. Practice every day. Consider practicing multiple times a day. Don't try to cram it all in on a Saturday afternoon.

6. Performances.

All students are heavily encouraged to participate in performances regularly. The best part of making music is participating in an opportunity to share it with others. A performance is not a test or a competition - it is an opportunity to display the wonderful craft you take part in.

Studio Recitals are held 3 times per year: Spring, Summer, and Fall. Students are generally expected to participate in each Studio Recital - mark your calendars when the dates are announced!

To participate in a studio recital, students will prepare a short selection of music. The student and I will discuss "what do you want to play?" and make selections roughly one month before the recital.

Students should dress professionally for Studio Recitals. Dress shirts, dress pants, dresses, skirts, ties, etc. Practice in your attire and make sure it is comfortable!

Student-organized performances outside of the studio are encouraged. This can include school variety shows, open mic performances, special music in a liturgical service, etc.

Students planning to perform must discuss the performance with me before committing to the performance. This is so we can discuss the music to be performed and make a strategy to prepare it.

Got other ideas?

Students who prefer not to perform publicly in a featured performance should develop an alternative. All students must share their craft in some way!

Consider:

1. Performing in a church worship team
2. Recording audio/video
 - a. Releasing on internet services such as Youtube, Soundcloud, or Bandcamp
 - b. Use the recording as part of a school project or independent learning project
3. Perform background music at an event such as a wedding or fancy luncheon

7. Parents Observing Lessons.

Parents and guardians are more than welcome to observe their youth's lessons. I generally leave this decision up to the families. However, any observers (including parents) must remain transparent when the instruction begins. Observers not adhering to this policy will be asked to leave the lesson room.

Here are some examples...

1. Answering a question directed toward the student.
2. Attempting to reprimand the student during the instruction.
3. Offering encouragement, praise, advice, solutions, corrections, etc. directly toward the student.
4. Offering excuses on behalf of the student.
5. Stomping the beat, singing the melody, etc. while the student is performing.
6. Interfering with the teacher's intentions to develop independence, problem solving, goal setting, strategy, forming and defending an opinion, or developing interpersonal skills.

The reasoning for this policy is simple. Most "infractions" are well-intended attempts to save small amounts of time, limit an inconvenience, or cover a weakness to avoid embarrassment. I understand! However, they also rob students of valuable problem-solving or skill-building experience. Please consider the long-range goal in these situations.

8. Student and Family Expectations.

Make a love of music.

Play recordings of music in the home. Invent instruments out of everyday household objects. Attend concerts. Watch musicians perform on YouTube. Figure out what your favorite artists are and tell me all about them. The most important element in music instruction is an enthusiasm for music!

Regular practice sessions.

At each lesson, the student and I will determine specific goals for the week. These goals are best achieved with regular practice every day, or almost every day. It is better to visit the piano each day than to try to cram it all in on a Saturday afternoon.

Practice sessions should NEVER be guided by watching the clock. Rather, they should be guided by setting and meeting goals in a focused manner. More can be accomplished in 10 minutes of focused practice than in an hour of unfocused practice.

Growth mindset [THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ON THIS LIST].

Effort and strategy are the guiding forces behind the acquisition of skill and knowledge. This is true regardless of the skill being developed, how easy or effortless it looks, and *whether the person developing the skill realizes it or not*. This applies to any skill, such as walking, speaking, singing, shooting a basketball, cooking, driving a car, or playing the piano.

When students understand the control they have over their skills at an early age, they become equipped with a **growth mindset**. Parents can facilitate this by praising their youth for displaying traits that are “hard-working”, “strategic”, “observant”, “dedicated”, “independent”, or “optimistic”.

Contrarily, many young people develop a **fixed mindset** when they achieve early success in music. They do not understand the level of effort that has carried them so far, and when the task becomes a little too challenging, they give up. Parents can unknowingly instill a fixed mindset by praising their youth for being “smart”, “good”, or “talented”. *The student may be led to believe they cannot control the skills they associate their value with--this is a very dangerous way to grow up!*

For more information on the Growth Mindset topic, look into the work of leading psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck.

(Student and Family Expectations, continued)

“Fun”.

Many students and families believe that music lessons should be for “fun”. I agree! So, let’s establish a proper definition of “fun” in the context of a music lesson.

I will make music lessons fun by...

1. Maintaining a positive and happy atmosphere.
2. Exhibiting utmost care and respect to my students.
3. Guiding them to successful learning and performing experiences.

The student will make music lessons fun by...

1. Keeping a positive, hard-working, can-do attitude during the lesson and during individual practice.
2. Respecting teacher, instrument, peers, and self.
3. Participating in performances to share your craft with others.

Having an opinion.

I believe that the most universal skill in today’s world is to form and defend an opinion, and that this skill is to be developed in people of all ages. The era of “children are to be seen and not heard” has come to an end. I constantly ask my students to make choices, observations, and strategies. Students who are trained to think critically during lessons make stronger progress outside of their lessons.

The role of the parent/guardian.

The parent has a critical and difficult role in providing music lessons for their youth. The parent must facilitate, encourage, and inquire. Resist the urge to interfere with processes, solve problems for the student, or take responsibility for the achievements or setbacks the student faces. Allow the student to OWN the experience.

Closing Remarks.

Why do we take piano lessons? Some parents enroll their children in piano lessons for the sake of enrichment: that music teaches motor skills, problem solving, practical mathematical skill, science, and work ethic.

Yes, that is all true. However, those points are all overshadowed by three more important points: (1) Music is a form of *entertainment* for positive passing of time; (2) Music is a form of *fine art* that reaches us and heals us in ways that nothing else can; and (3) Music is a tool that fosters *community* within and between families, generations, and nations.

9. Signature Page.

By signing below, you agree that you have read and understood the policies and procedures for the SETH BUTLER MUSIC STUDIO.

Sign below and return with your first lesson payment.

Student name

Student signature

Date

Parent/guardian signature (if student is under 18)

Date

Thank you!