

Vocal Study Guidelines

At Community Music School we approach each student as an individual and tailor our instruction to fit his/her background and goals. However, based on our many years of experience teaching students of all ages and levels, we have found that the following conditions are important to each student's success:



For Everyone

- DESIRE TO LEARN
- purchase of music which the teacher requests, as soon as possible
- regular attendance at lessons
- scheduling of **daily** practice time (as agreed upon with the teacher) in a quiet place, free from distractions and interruptions

Adults (in addition to the above)

- realistic expectation of progress and keeping an open dialog with their teacher regarding progress

Children (in addition to the above)

- minimum age, depending upon the individual child's physical and emotional maturity and the availability of an instructor with the interest and skills in teaching younger children (under 12 but older than 10)
- readiness to accept and follow directions
- readiness to relate to a non-parental adult
- ability to concentrate for about 30 minutes on musical activities
- realization that progress may occur in very small steps, **especially** with young children

For Everyone: Please come to the first lesson (and/or interview, if appropriate – see below) prepared:

- to sing (if you have previously studied or sung on your own) or to bring a sample of music you have sung before (which will indicate the level you had reached).
- to discuss goals you may have in mind relating to your study.
- to tell us any limitations or conditions which may affect your study (occupational, physical, etc).

Interview for Prospective Voice Students

Under certain special circumstances and after consultation with the Manager of Music Education, 10 year-olds (and others having special needs or concerns) may be scheduled for an interview with one of the Department Co-Chairs. (These special circumstances include the child having an older sibling who is a current CMS student or the child's unavailability at the time *The Joy of Singing* or *Totally Tween* classes are being offered.) There will be no charge for this interview. However, if the family fails to come (and does not notify the School in advance of the interview time) and wishes to reschedule, there will be a \$7.50 charge for the rescheduled interview.

The purpose of the interview is:

- to confirm that the student meets all or most of the readiness components listed above (in order to prevent future disappointment on the part of the student and the School) or to recommend that lessons be postponed until the child is "ready." There are other musical options for a child who needs more time and experiences. See the information at the top of this page or consult the current catalog.
- to confirm a good match between each young student and a teacher (depending upon the student's background, skills and goals).

- to give the teacher some advance information on each new student's background and skills.
- to complete the registration process.

**If you must cancel or reschedule the interview,
please call 884-4887 in advance.**

Home Practice

There is a direct correlation between musical progress and consistent home practice between lessons. We have developed a procedure for setting practice goals and the use of the optional Music Practice Record as a tool for students, parents and teachers.

The teacher and the student will talk about good practice, including designating a time each day for practice and evaluating the conditions under which good practice should occur (no television on in the background, no sibling distractions, etc.). They will discuss a realistic practice goal which involves both length of time each day and the number of days each week practicing should occur.

Crucial to the process is the support of families in planning for home practice on a regular basis. Parental encouragement for practice and **consistent** practice is expected. The teacher *may* introduce the Music Practice Record as an easy way for the student to keep track of his/her practice. A parent will probably need to assist the student in completing the form, if used. The Music Practice Record contains a place for a parent/caregiver to initial confirming that the practice was done. (At the teacher's discretion, teens may omit this step.) The form should be brought to the lesson each week. At the end of the 13 weeks covered on each form the student begins a new form. Practice goals may be renegotiated during the year.

Ruth W. Marcy Scholarship Competition

CMS students of all ages and levels are encouraged to participate in the Marcy Scholarship Competition held each year in March. An application with guidelines will be distributed to each student and teacher in January.

Consultation with Teachers

Although children often thrive in lessons without a parent being present, we invite parents to periodically come to a lesson specifically to chat with the teacher about things such as progress and lesson preparation, practice goals, recital and exam participation, skills and more. This is also an opportunity for parents to become better acquainted with the teacher (or even to meet for the first time) and to ask questions they may have. A parent may also schedule a phone conversation with the teacher for this same purpose.

Performance Exams

Performance exams for students of all ages and levels are held each May. Although exams are held at the Elmwood location, students from all sites are involved. We hope that parents will support their child's participation and that adults will choose to be involved. Our exams are intended to be positive, motivational experiences that accomplish several things:

- give the student the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of certain skills* and repertoire/pieces and to feel satisfaction from having succeeded in doing that
- provide an incentive for each student to practice more diligently, knowing that teachers other than his or her own will be listening to the exam

- provide parents and adult students with the assurance that the School is overseeing the quality of instruction.

Because of excellent performances during exams and notable progress over previous exams, some students will be selected to receive a Special Commendation or Honors Certificate. Others will be chosen to perform in the annual June Honors Recital, based on outstanding, memorized performances.

*These are specific fundamentals (called Basic Skills) on which students work during their first years of study. They are important building blocks for successful singing at more advanced levels. The skills range from identifying notes, note values and time signatures to demonstrating various technical skills such as proper breathing and posture, intonation and more.

The second level of skills (called Stylistic Development) encompasses more advanced skills such as sightreading, key signatures, memorization in a foreign language and more.

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