

SHOULD MY SON OR DAUGHTER BE TAKING PRIVATE LESSONS?

Private instruction is not merely for purposes of remediation. Private instruction can and should inspire the student who loves to play to achieve higher levels. It enables them to move ahead and master new skills that their school group may not be ready to attempt. It allows students to explore different kinds of music than that which is taught in a group setting.

HOW DO WE SELECT A TEACHER?

It is important to select a teacher who is competent, knowledgeable, experienced, and capable of building a rapport with your child. For elementary students, an extremely talented high school student may be a good choice. The high school player can reinforce good posture, hand position and other skills new to the beginning student. Middle school and high school students will probably require a more professional teacher, as concepts that the advancing student is learning are more complex.

WHAT SHOULD WE ASK A PROSPECTIVE PRIVATE INSTRUCTOR?

1. Do you have a college degree in music?

While there are no regulations or certification in being a private teacher, it is important that they possess some formal training in the field.

2. What teaching experience have you had?

Experience isn't everything, but generally speaking, a more experienced teacher will have a wider range of techniques for relating different ideas to different students.

3. Do you perform on your instrument regularly? Professionally?

Teaching a string instrument is teaching a performing art. Most teachers who teach these instruments perform regularly with area orchestras and/or as freelance musicians.

4. Do you use a specific method? If so, where did you receive your training in that method?

There are many methods for teaching developed by pedagogues such as Suzuki, Rolland, Havas and others. Find out why this teacher likes that particular method and what you child will gain from it. Beware of a teacher who says he or she teaches using the Suzuki method but has never attended a Suzuki teacher training program. Simply using the materials of a particular method does not mean that the teacher is actually using the philosophy of that method.

5. What do you charge, and what is your cancellation policy?

Remember, for a private instructor, this is his or her business. If you don't show up for a lesson, or cancel at the last minute, the teacher suffers financially. Many teachers have established policies regarding your financial responsibilities. Ask about these policies up front.