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Woodwind Specialist

Choosing a Private Teacher A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

When selecting a private teacher for your budding musician, there are certain aspects to look for in a teacher to ensure that your child is receiving the instruction you are anticipating. I have compiled a checklist for parents looking for a teacher for wind instruments. A teacher that covers all the fundamentals is one you want in order for your child to make improvements on their instrument.

A private teacher should:

- Insist parents to sit in on the first lesson - Parents need to know what is going on.
- Be able to provide references - from past students/parents and other music educators.
- Have a music degree - Proper training and education on the applicable instrument is absolutely necessary for a qualified teacher.
- Insist on student organization - Organization of assignments with a notebook and/or audio recording of lessons to ensure all items are addressed at home.
- Insist on regular home practice - Without home practice, improvement will be minimal or non-existent.
- Have progressive and projected goals for student - A planned method for improvement with goals will help students achieve the improvement they desire at a reasonable pace.

Essential Items Every QUALIFIED Teacher Will CONSISTENTLY Address:

- Correct Posture - including lower body/legs/feet, upper body, shoulders, arms, wrists, fingers, neck. Many tone problems and injuries are due to poor posture!
- Tone - Describes and corrects what to do with the embouchure (mouth/lips/teeth/tongue) to make a great tone. Great tone is the first thing anyone hears!
- Articulation - How a note begins and ends. This is a common frustration of younger musicians.
- Scales - These are the foundational patterns of all music beginning students play. Knowing these makes learning new music easier and quicker!
- Musicality - How to music from the basic directions on the page. This includes breathing, phrasing, dynamics, style, and other nuances to make the music alive!
- Breathing - How and when to breathe properly to make a great sound and appropriate phrase. Air is a must for wind instruments!
- Music Literacy (Reading) - Correcting and teaching the reading of notes, rhythms, and other markings. It is important that the student is learning to read on their own, rather than learning by rote (imitation only). Music literacy is fundamental for musicians to play new music. The better you read, the more you can read!
- Practice Techniques - Just playing through music won't make it better. Knowing HOW to practice each technique and phrase will help home practice sessions be efficient and effective.

A Great Qualified Teacher Will Also:

- Perform the Instrument Professionally - The teacher should be professionally active performing OR have a resume of outstanding professional playing. This includes performing as a free-lance artist, as a member of a professional ensemble(s), and/or presenting solo recitals. Professional skills are necessary for great, qualified teacher.
- Participate in Professional Development - Participate in masterclasses, workshops, and other events to develop and improve his/her teaching and performing.
- Teach Music Theory - Understanding how and why the notes work together.
- Provide Performance Opportunities - Recitals, master classes, regular performance classes, and solo competitions are a great way to demonstrate all the hard work that happens behind closed doors. The more a student performs, the better he/she will perform in a playing test, band audition, or scholarship audition. Many great teachers host guest artists to come work with their students and have regular recitals for parents and local community members.
- Offer More Than Just Lessons - Such as performance and technique classes, workshops, and small ensembles.
- Know Local Junior High, High School, and State Competitions - OMEA solo and ensemble and honors ensemble events are a part of learning and growth for students.
- Write Letters of Recommendation - For college, scholarships, honors activities.