



Teacher Handbook

Southern Oregon School of Music is dedicated to fostering a community of teachers and students where all work together and support one another.

This handbook outlines guidelines and current practices reflecting our desire to uphold a high standard in all we do.

Please review and sign the Acknowledgement on the last page. By signing, you confirm that you have read and agree to abide by the policies in this manual.

It is the supreme art of the
teacher to awaken joy in
creative expression and
knowledge.

~ Einstein

Our Mission – The Musician’s Journey

At Southern Oregon School of Music, we invite students and their families to embark on a seven to ten year journey with us that will. . .

Nurture Musicianship.

We design our curriculum and learning activities to nurture our students' musicianship. We focus on the foundational concepts and fundamental skills necessary for playing any style of music. As students advance in their musical journey, they will be able to take their music wherever they want it to go.

For our youngest music learners, Kindermusik teachers guide children ages 0-7 through every developmental level as they begin to understand basic music concepts and gain the key musical skills of keeping a steady beat and singing in tune.

Unlock Potential.

Part of our mission is to ensure that our teaching style and learning activities go beyond the music to support our students' personal growth and development.

Over the last 25 years research has demonstrated the amazing power of music making to promote learning and development in every area. In addition to being fun and enjoyable, music making provides a myriad of benefits for students including development of a greater ability to focus, perseverance, listening skills, increased coordination, and even improvement in the physical structure of the brain.

Music making activates almost all brain regions and networks. It keeps brain pathways strong, including those networks involved in cognitive function, well-being, quality of life, and happiness. In fact, research has shown that the area connecting the two sides of the brain is larger in musicians.

For the little ones, Kindermusik activities are specifically designed to harness the power of music to foster a child's cognitive, language, physical, creative, and social-emotional development. Older children and adults benefit from the amazing power of music to enhance learning, build life skills, and keep the brain active and healthy.

Celebrate Family and Community.

Music has the unique ability to connect people together. One of the joys of making music is to share it with family and friends. Part of our mission is to see families grow closer as they experience musical moments together both at home and at Southern Oregon School of Music events.

Southern Oregon School of Music is a community of musicians who share their music together and support one another. Musical friendships often last a lifetime! In our Band and Ensemble programs students are invited to play and sing together, rehearsing regularly to perform together at one of our concerts.

How Do We Accomplish Our Mission?

We strive to provide a warm and accepting environment where both teachers and students experience joy in music making.

We commit to enhancing relationships between teachers and students, valuing the personal connection that enriches the learning experience.

Simultaneously, we aim to grow closer together as a community of teachers and administrative staff, ensuring a supportive and fulfilling work environment for everyone. We all work together to create a transformative atmosphere at Southern Oregon School of Music. Our hope is that the power of music together with our love for the young musicians we teach will encourage them to stay with us for this seven to ten year musician's journey, developing a lifelong love of music and learning with a passion that propels them forward into a bright and successful future both personally and musically.

Our Core Values

Teachers and staff at Southern Oregon School of Music have worked together to identify these core values that guide all our decisions, activities, and interpersonal relationships:

- **Warm, Welcoming, Caring Community.** We are a warm and caring community that likes to have fun, to celebrate successes, and collaborate together as we experience the joy of shared music making and learning.

- **Highest Levels of Character.** We strive for personal excellence, being committed to continued personal improvement, professionalism, honesty, integrity and mutual respect for one another, our students, and their families.
- **Consistent, Prompt Communication.** We commit to quickly respond to communication from each other, our students, and their families with accurate information, kindness, and encouragement.
- **Personalized, Structured, Classical Musical Foundation.** We provide a structured, personalized music education with a classical foundation. As their musical skills mature, we help each student to build upon this foundation, equipping each one to excel at playing their chosen musical style(s).
- **Consistent and Effective Curriculum.** We work together as teachers to curate, develop, and agree upon an effective, consistent curriculum for every instrument that includes weekly focus on foundational skills and music theory and progressive mastery of the instrument through method books and supplemental music of interest to the student.
- **Positive and Uplifting Music.** We vet all the music that we use in our curricula and lessons to make sure the lyrics and the emotional impact of the music is age appropriate, positive, and uplifting. We are aware that the music students learn in our lessons becomes part of their personal mental playlist. We only teach music that we would want our students to be singing in their heads for life.

Teacher Responsibilities

See Appendix for Practice Notes form, Notes in the Fast Lane chart, Practice Streak Tracker, Summer Practice Tracker

- Using curricula approved for use at Southern Oregon School of Music, develop lesson plans and instructional materials for music classes. This must include systematic development of technical skills including scales, chords, arpeggios, and chord progressions. If you wish to use different curricula, discuss this with the Education Coordinator.
- Using workbooks and/or other materials approved for use at Southern Oregon School of Music, teach students the fundamentals of music theory, including

rhythm, harmony, scales, and chord theory. To use different method books or materials, discuss this with the Education Coordinator.

- Give each student these items at their first paid lesson: Lesson Book(s), Southern Oregon School of Music Tote Bag, Purple folder with page protectors for loose music, pencil, Southern Oregon School of Music Door Hanger. These are all located in the Music Library.
- At the first paid lesson, give to and discuss with student and parents the practice plan sheet and the current practice tracker. Explain self-determined goals and the practice awards available to students who meet their self-determined goals. See Section 4 on Practice Awards.
- At the beginning of every lesson, check the practice tracker. If they have not filled it out, help them to do so. Go to the practice chart in the hallway and give them their sticker.
- Piano Teachers: After reviewing the practice tracker, and once students have finished the “Notes in the Fast Lane” On-Ramp Workbook, have each student do the one-minute “Notes in the Fast Lane” challenge. Following the Notes in the Fast Lane challenge, there is a Ledger Line Notebook to help students learn those difficult ledger line notes.
- Send lesson notes through Opus client messages within 24 hours of each lesson. Strive to include specific suggestions for each piece being practiced.
- Instruct students in how to sing or play the musical instrument(s) you teach through listening and observation and using positive comments and encouragement to guide them. Always point out what they did well before offering a way to improve. Keep the suggestions for improvement down to one or two things each time. Include these in your lesson notes.
- Ensure that students make consistent progress through the curriculum – they should have one or two new pieces to work on each week. More advanced students working on a long-term piece they should be given one or two specific techniques to focus on each week. Include these in the practice notes.
- Prepare students for musical performances, examinations, or auditions.
- Participate in all concerts and performances to assist and support your students.
- Create a positive and engaging learning environment that encourages students’ musical growth and promotes their love for music.
- Evaluate students’ musical progress and adjust teaching strategies as needed.

- Immediately take lesson attendance online using Opus1 and record/send lesson notes/practice assignments to the student/parent through the system within 24 hours of the lesson.
- Communicate with parents about their child's musical development and progress.
- Attend monthly team meetings to remain aware of all the activities of Southern Oregon School of Music, to collaborate with your colleagues, and to provide important thoughts and perspective on the operation of our music school.

Check List of What to Give New Students

- Southern Oregon School of Music Tote Bag
- Black binder with page protectors for loose music, Southern Oregon School of Music pencil, Southern Oregon School of Music Door Hanger.
- Welcome Pack with:
 - Practice Tracker with Practice Plan. Explain goals and practice awards available to students who meet them.
 - Current practice tracker (there is a different tracker for the summer).
 - Southern Oregon School of Music Calendar
 - Practice Tips
 - Membership Information

General Guidelines

IMPORTANT!! Do not take photos of students in lessons or at concerts. Some students' parents have asked that photos not be taken/posted. Our Marketing Specialist takes official photos and shares them on our social media pages. You are welcome to share those on your own social media pages and groups. If you want specific photos or videos of your students, please contact our Marketing Specialist to do the photography.

Personal Instruments and Belongings Southern Oregon School of Music cannot be held accountable for any loss or theft of personal belongings of our teachers as they are not covered by our insurance policy. You are advised against bringing valuable items to the workplace unless absolutely necessary. If you are bringing personal instruments or other items to use in your teaching, please let us know so we can evaluate whether we can purchase them for your use in teaching at Southern Oregon School of Music.

If you do keep instruments here, you must provide a written description of the instrument(s) including the brand, model # and serial # so that we can add it to our inventory under your name as a personally owned item. This allows us to keep track of the ownership of every item in the school.

Personal Hygiene In addition to our general employment guidelines for dress, in the small areas of our lesson rooms it is important to pay special attention to personal grooming and hygiene. Many people are allergic to colognes and perfumes. Please be mindful of strong body odors, colognes, and perfumes/lotions used prior to your class or lesson time.

Contacting Students and Families Do not share your personal contact information with students and families. Teachers should not share personal phone numbers, email addresses, social media profiles, or physical addresses with students and their families. Similarly, we are committed to safeguarding your personal information and will not share it with any students or their families.

All communication between teachers and student families must be done through the "Client Comments" section of the student's Opus1 portal. Even if you know the student personally, please use Client Comments to communicate about anything related to the student's lessons at Southern Oregon School of Music.

Social Media and Public Platforms Teachers are reminded to always uphold the reputation of Southern Oregon School of Music. Kindly pay attention to the language and text you use in any public forum, including personal social media profiles. Staff are strictly prohibited from connecting with students who are minors on social media or any other social forum.

Time Off Requests We accommodate teacher time-off requests, when possible, while also working to ensure that our students' lessons are consistent and uninterrupted as much as possible.

All time-off requests must be submitted through Opus1.io with ample notice, preferably 30 days and no less than 14 days in advance. Requests will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis.

In the notes with your time off request, you must include an explanation of how your student's lessons will be covered during your time off. This may include makeup lessons

scheduled in advance of the absence or arrangements you have made with another teacher to serve as a substitute. Note: if a student cancels a lesson with a substitute, any makeup lesson must also be scheduled with that substitute.

Your time off request is not completely approved until these arrangements have been completed and put on the Opus1 calendar.

It is the teacher's responsibility to be sure all lessons during your time off have been rescheduled BEFORE you leave. Double check your schedule the day before your absence to be sure you have no lessons scheduled while you are gone.

Time off during your available times when you Are Not Scheduled When you are requesting specific hours off (not a full day), look on your profile to see what your availability is and include these times in your request. For example, if you currently only have lessons and classes scheduled from 2:15 p.m. – 4:30 pm., but your availability is 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. then you would need to request the hours of 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. off so we can ensure you do not get a trial lesson or enrollment booked during that time based off of your availability.

"Blackout" Days Please check our annual calendar now and save the dates for Southern Oregon School of Music performances and events so that you do not request time off for these times.

Of course, the best time to schedule weekday activities and vacations is during school closures, also included in the annual calendar.

Emergency Time Off If you must be absent due to illness or family emergency, communicate this both by text to the Director AND submitted in Opus. Let us know as soon as possible, preferably no later than 4 hours before your first lesson of the day.

Annual One-on-One Meetings with Education Coordinator Each teacher meets one-on-one with the Director/Education Coordinator once a year, usually during winter break in December. These meetings serve as an opportunity to connect one-on-one and to support your ongoing personal and professional development. We will discuss student progress and challenges, teaching methods, and ways in which we can support you in your teaching. This is also an opportunity for you to bring up any concerns you have or any suggestions you have for improvement in our music school.

Together we will discuss and evaluate your success as well as the challenges you experience and explore strategies for addressing concerns that arise.

INDICATORS OF TEACHING SUCCESS:

- Conversion from trial lessons to ongoing lessons/memberships
- Student retention
- Evidence of student progression
- Reliability and attendance for scheduled teaching times, meetings, and Southern Oregon School of Music events.
- Time management - starting/ending classes on time
- Regular completion of duties such as lesson notes, etc.
- Positive feedback from students and parents

The ultimate purpose of these meetings is for us to work together to ensure that all of your students are progressing successfully and experiencing a learning environment that is consistent with Southern Oregon School of Music core values.

Thoughtful, Intentional Communication

Creating a Positive Atmosphere

When speaking with other staff always remain aware of students and their families within earshot and do not discuss challenging teaching situations, issues with other staff, issues with other families, or anything that would put anyone in a bad light. Always remain aware that we are creating a positive, encouraging atmosphere for everyone.

When talking with parents use positive language always. For example, instead of saying, "We were supposed to accomplish three music games today and couldn't because of the students' behavior." you could say "We got through two of our three music games and are continuing to work on our listening skills in class. Thank you for your encouragement at home!"

Special Considerations When Interacting With Young Children

When talking with young children, get down to their eye level. This helps the child feel comfortable and connected with you as their teacher.

When talking with other adults, be aware when young children are present and avoid discussing adult topics in front of them. Be thoughtful and intentional about discussing behavior issues in front of the student. Only do so if it is for the purpose of the student hearing it and learning from it.

When families are leaving a Kindermusik class, stand at the gate at the top of the stairs and open it for each family, saying goodbye to children and adults by name.

Pick-up and Drop-Off Times

Pick-up and drop-off times may feel rushed, but they are valuable opportunities to interact with parents and share important information. For parents who regularly come in to pick up their child, end your lesson a few minutes early so that you can share a friendly greeting and talk briefly with the parent about what their child is doing.

Communicating With Parents

It is very important that you communicate with parents exclusively through Opus1.io in the Student's Profile Client Comments. Do not exchange personal contact details, including social profiles, with parents or students.

Refrain from making any scheduling or billing commitments or promises. Refer any scheduling or billing inquiries to the office or administrative staff.

Opus1.io

What is Opus1.io

Opus serves as our Music Studio Management Software, offering a comprehensive solution for scheduling, billing, and communication. It handles staff schedules, availabilities, locations, room assignments, time-off requests, and more all in one place. It also serves as an online "classroom" for students.

How Teachers Use Opus1:

- View your lesson schedule daily

- Take attendance for each student in classes/lessons
- Write lesson notes for all students and classes in the client comments section of the student profile in Opus1
- Easily share files, videos, etc. uploaded directly for each student/class
- Parents are able to message teacher directly
- Request time off
- Confirm your availability in your profile and request any updates by email to email@soschoolofmusic.com.

Email

Your Southern Oregon School of Music email is only to be used for communication with other Southern Oregon School of Music staff. To communicate with parents and students, ALWAYS use the client communication feature of Opus1.

All messages sent via Southern Oregon School of Music' email domain, including personal emails, are deemed the property of the organization. Please be aware that there is no expectation of privacy concerning any content you create, save, send, or receive using Southern Oregon School of Music' email domain. Monitoring of emails may take place without prior notification if deemed essential.

Inclement Weather

Southern Oregon School of Music generally follows the inclement weather school closures of the Grants Pass District 7 School District.

When we close due to inclement weather, we contact all of our students by text and email to inform them that our classes and lessons are canceled.

In case of inclement weather when the studio does not close, employees are advised to use wisdom in assessing their ability to come to work. We want all to be safe. If unable to come in, inform the Director as promptly as possible via text. An absence of this type would be considered unpaid time off.

In this case, the Office will attempt to find a substitute for your classes and lessons. If that is not possible, we will contact your students and let them know that you will arrange a makeup with them at their next class or lesson.

Teaching Responsibilities

In Advance of Classes

- CHECK YOUR SCHEDULE every day for any changes or important updates. Things may have changed without your knowledge or you may forget a change that you did know about.
- Plan/prepare lessons in advance. This includes sourcing games, materials & repertoire for each student.
- Arrive at least 10 minutes prior to your lesson/class start time to ensure you and your space are fully prepared.
- Greet your student at the door of your classroom or in the waiting area unless you are finishing a lesson with another student.

During and After Classes

- Take attendance for each lesson/class.
- Send lesson reports within 24 hours of teaching each class to share student(s) progress and other information in a constructive & positive manner.
- Maintain a clean & organized studio.
- Share promotions & events with students, including handouts when requested
- Take photos and/or videos of student successes to show your students & parents the progress being made. If you get a great picture or video, please send it to the Office Manager to be used for our marketing. All students have been informed that we will use photos and videos in our marketing and are given the opportunity to opt out. We have a short list of students who have opted out which is posted on the bulletin board across from the Office Manager's Desk.

Student Absences

If a student or parent contacts you to tell you that they will be absent, please ask them to cancel their attendance online. Do not offer to do this for them. If they have difficulties, ask them to call the office at 541-583-0123 and we can walk them through it. The only way for them to receive a makeup credit and schedule a makeup is if they cancel their attendance online. We make exceptions as they are learning how to do this, but this is our goal.

It is the responsibility of the students and families to initiate discussion with you about makeups for absences. If they do not speak to you about it, you are not responsible for initiating the makeup lesson. When they ask about a makeup lesson, look in their profile to see if they have a makeup credit. If they do, make every effort to find a time for a makeup. This may include adding 15 minutes to the beginning or end of a private lesson or arranging a time that is not on a day you normally teach. In this case, before you confirm a makeup time with a student, check with the office manager to see if there is a room available for the lesson.

If YOU cancel the lesson, it is your responsibility to schedule the makeup as soon as possible.

I acknowledge that I have read the Southern Oregon School of Music Teacher Handbook completely.

I acknowledge that the Teacher Handbook is not a contract of employment and may undergo revisions. I commit to adhering to the guidelines outlined in this handbook, including any future updates or modifications.

Teacher Signature

Date

Appendix 1

Practice Notes

Always include the name and level of the book when listing assignments.

Template

XX/XX/XXXX Lesson and Practice Notes

Focus this week: List one or two concepts to focus on

Scales/Warmups:

Playing Assignment:

Written Assignment:

Encouraging comment (change it up week to week)

Example

9/24/24 Lesson and Practice Notes

Focus for the Week:

- Keep your fingers curved
- Keep your eyes on the music

Play:

- Scales Skills Level 1 – p. 21 Finger Exercises
- Piano Pronto Mvt 1 - #6 hands separately
- Concert Song – Interstellar – Work on marked sections
- End with a favorite piece

Written Work – Piano Theory p. 26-27

Great playing this week!

Appendix 2