

In-Home Private Music Lessons

As you may know, since we opened Music and Play has been strongly opposed to offering in-home private music lessons. The reasons for avoiding this area of music education can be summed up in two areas: quality and value. More specifically:

- **In-home music teachers are typically less experienced and this impacts the education of the student.** Often teachers who are dispatched to homes are new music teachers and are not well prepared to deal with challenges of individual music instruction. As new teachers take their first steps from student to teacher, they need in-studio support from experienced professionals, or the success for both the teacher and student can be at risk. Senior teachers rarely take on in-home assignments as their schedules are full and they are not interested in this type of teaching due to the uncompensated commuting that is required.
- **In-home teaching may provide the student and teacher with less than adequate instruments and learning environments.** For a student to succeed, a proper instrument is critical to ensure that parents are getting the value out of the cost of their child's lessons – good studios ensure that student's lessons are on quality instruments (specifically when it comes to piano). A space that is dedicated to instruction and free from distraction and interruption is also critical to a child's success. As many studios arrange and book in-home lessons site unseen, this can be a problem for many in-home private teachers. And, since many of the junior teachers who are sent out on these assignments are new to the job, they will not provide sufficient comments to either the studio or the parents. In the end, it is the student who suffers.
- **An in-home teacher's time is typically not truly valued.** The reality is that in-home lessons are mostly about convenience for the student and their family. The time it takes to commute from one home to the other however is rarely compensated at an appropriate rate to make it worthwhile for experienced teachers to be interested in this avenue of education. This sacrifice of quality instruction can significantly impact the potential and growth of the student – especially at the beginning levels. Realistically for a lesson to be offered in someone's home a minimum of 30 additional minutes (15 minutes on each side of the lesson) is required for the teacher to commute.

Why is Music and Play addressing this issue now?

That is a good question. Simply put, we are addressing this now because we are in the business of quality arts education and we believe that students in Calgary deserve better than they are currently getting from in-home private music lessons and from unlicensed, in-home studios and music teachers. Those who know our Company, know that our consideration of entering this market is a huge step and one that it is not taken lightly. However, we simply cannot be a passive bystander any longer. The quality of what is happening in people's homes impacts everyone who has chosen music education as their career as well as the families who value arts education for their children - but find themselves constrained by busy schedules. Students can be damaged both physically and emotionally by a poor lesson experience and new teachers who do not receive the mentoring they need to become great teachers will leave the profession. Music and arts education MUST be more highly valued and there is a need for greater recognition of the great music and arts teachers who are helping to build the young artists in our city.

Most of the arts education occurring for young people in Calgary is done on a commercial basis with no access to grants, property tax relief or any sort of funds to support this necessary endeavour. Experienced arts teachers have committed decades of time and effort to become great educators. However, for many consumers their choice of arts education may be defined by the answers to 'is the studio within 5 minutes from my house,' and 'is there a Starbucks nearby?'

In-home music lessons can bring the best of both worlds – convenience and quality – but only if they are delivered properly and with integrity.

To do so, there is a need for the standards and rigour of a high-quality instructional facility, combined with the convenience of the local private music teacher who is teaching out of their house. There is a need for someone to help consumers understand what quality in-home music education really looks like - and Music and Play is just that someone.

So, What's Next?

In September 2017, we will be introducing *M&P Certified In-Home Private Lessons*. These private lessons will be delivered by the same quality teachers that we choose to employ at our studios and within the same quality guidelines that our families trust us to deliver. Raising the bar though, comes with some added commitment for in-home families and we know that there will be some for whom M&P Certified In-Home Private Lessons will not be suitable, even though they really want an in-home solution for their family. We also know that those who choose M&P for this type of instruction will indeed experience the best of both worlds: quality and convenience.

Our Certified In-Home Private Lesson Program mirrors our In-Studio private lessons and includes:

- **A trial lesson.** This ensures the right fit between student and teacher. The fee for a (30-minute) trial In-Home lesson is \$45. When the student enrolls in lessons, this amount is credited back to the student's account and applied against their first month of lessons.
- **A commitment by Music and Play to provide quality instructors.** Just like in our Studios, we will only be offering faculty for In-Home private instruction who meet our high standards for music education. This means that our options for in-home teachers may be more limited than some other studios as our practice is to not send out any junior teachers for In-Home instruction.
- **A commitment by the student to enrol for a full-year.** This includes 36 lessons plus 2 recitals (September through June). We need this commitment as all of our music teachers are private contractors, and for a quality teacher to commit to teaching at a Studio, or In-Home, they require some assurance that they will be able to make a reliable living for the year.
- **A commitment by parents to support their child's musical growth.** Musical ability is not something that simply happens overnight. By committing to a year of study, this will help a student achieve the success they deserve. A commitment of this type also helps children to learn focus and discipline, both valuable life skills that will benefit them in anything they pursue throughout their life. Practice between lessons is expected and teachers will keep parents updated on their child's progress and expectations for the coming weeks.
- **Student participation in Recitals.** Music and Play hosts two recitals each year – one in December and one in June - along with other community performance opportunities during the year. Just like our In-Studio students, our In-Home students are invited, and expected, to participate if they are ready for these opportunities. Recitals allow students to showcase what they have been working on to their family and peers and it also provides an opportunity for them to watch other students. This is even more important for in-home music students as they work in greater isolation and recital opportunities such as this reinforce that they are not alone in their love of music and the arts.
- **Fees that support quality music education.** In-Home private lesson fees are higher than in-studio fees. While these fees are set to properly recognize the senior level and accomplishments of our teachers, they most importantly recognize the travel time required to deliver lessons in a student's home. Fees for *M&P Certified In-Home Private Lessons* start at \$47 for weekly (30-minute) private lessons. As a student progresses in their music education, they will require longer lesson durations to accommodate their advanced learning and exam preparation, should they choose that path.

Note: for multiple students in the same family receiving instruction from the same teacher consecutively on the same day, they may register for twice the single lesson length and realize savings over two separate lessons (i.e. for two 30-minute consecutive lessons, the family would qualify for a 60-minute lesson at a significant savings.)