

Piano / Voice Lessons with Melanie's Melody
FAQ's, Policies and Procedures
September 2011

How much experience does Ms. Melanie have?

A lot! I have played the piano since 1st grade and have been singing since 5th grade. I have a degree from Abilene Christian University in Music Education. My major was voice and minor was piano. I was an elementary music teacher for 7 years and in 2000 was named Teacher of the Year for Cimarron Elementary in Katy ISD. During the 9 years which followed, I served as the Worship and Children's Minister at the Bering Drive Church of Christ. I have directed 10 choirs and 18 staged musical productions and have taught private lessons in both voice and piano in some capacity for the past 16 years. Now I am able to enjoy my "dream job", teaching piano and voice lessons full time.

How would you describe your teaching style?

Others describe me as enthusiastic, positive, and very organized. If I were describing myself, I would agree.

How much is this going to cost and when do we have to pay?

Tuition for 30 minutes of instruction per week (voice or piano) is \$80 /month. Tuition for 45 minutes of instruction per week is \$120 / month. Please note that these prices are per child, per subject area. Tuition is due on the first lesson of each month. Tuition will not be pro-rated. If you know about an absence in advance, you are welcome to take advantage of a make-up slot.

Because of the number of students rotating in and out each day, it is imperative that you are on time for your lesson. If you are late, I will not be able to compensate for that time by running long. It is my goal to give every student their full time.

How many lessons do I get each month?

You will be scheduled for about 35 lessons during the 39 weeks between September and May. **The 4 weeks with no lessons are: Thanksgiving week, two weeks at Christmas, and KISD Spring Break week.** These are paid vacation weeks for Ms. Melanie. Some months have 4 weeks and some have 5, so on average you will have 4 lessons per month.

There will be no lessons on “major” national holidays that fall on a Monday – Labor Day, Memorial Day, etc. However, I will be teaching on Monday holidays that are simply school district holidays or “minor” holidays – Columbus Day, etc.

In the summer, you only pay for the lessons you take. Summer sign-ups begin in May. You can request a convenient time slot and can let me know when you plan to be out of town.

What if my child can't make it to a lesson?

Please contact me as soon as possible if you are not going to make your lesson. Credit will not be given for a missed lesson. You are welcome, however, to take advantage of a make-up slot.

Make-up slots are offered on Fridays in Katy only. These will be available on a first-come basis each week.

In the rare event that I must cancel a lesson, you will have the option to either make up the lesson or receive a credit on your next month's bill.

Do I have to go to the music store to buy my student's books?

No, I keep lots of music in stock and make a trip to the music store at least once a month. When a student needs a new book, I'll give it to them at the next lesson and include the charges on your next monthly bill. Most piano books are \$8. Vocal books are between \$15 -\$25 because they come with an accompaniment CD.

What kind of music will my child play or sing?

Beginners start their musical experience with "method" books. Alfred's *Basic Piano Library* is one of the most popular methods in America today. I use these method books the most. Students progress into classical pieces, jazz pieces, great pieces by contemporary American "teaching" composers and even popular music, like theme songs from "Star Wars" and other movies.

Singers may choose their books based on the genre they prefer: folk songs, classical and musical theatre are the most popular genres.

How much should my child practice?

Your student will excel if they practice consistently. Have a daily practice time. Make it part of your routine. Prioritize it early in your day. A student should be able to tell you when their daily practice time is. Consistency is more important than quantity, but I offer these guidelines for how much to practice:

Grade K	20 minutes, 5 days a week (can be broken into 2 sessions)
Grades 1-3	25 minutes, 5 days a week
Grades 4-8	30 minutes, 5 days a week
Grades 9-12	30-45 minutes, 5 days a week

During the school year, we have a monthly practice contest as an incentive for regular practice. The winner each month is awarded a \$25 gift card and is mentioned in the e-newsletter!

Will my child get to participate in a recital?

Absolutely! I schedule two recitals a year – one in the Fall and one in the Spring. Our vocal recitals are held at Bering Drive Church of Christ in the Galleria area and our piano recitals are held at Dowling Music. Both are on typically on Sunday afternoons. Following the recital, we

have a cookie reception for all the students and their families and friends.

What is a good age to start lessons?

This depends on your child. Girls are usually ready before boys, especially for piano, however, there are exceptions to this. Your child needs to have at least a 30 minute attention span. A good age to begin is usually 5 or 6.

Do you teach adults, or am I too old?

You are never too old. Unless, of course, you are falling asleep on the bench! I teach moms, dads and grandparents too and offer lessons during the school-day hours. There is no time like the present!

What are the chances my child will learn to play the piano and/or sing well?

The chances are very good. Virtually anyone can learn to play the piano well. Most people can also be taught to sing well. I believe that the three elements needed for musical success are (in order):

1. The student's desire to play / sing
2. Parents that encourage their children to practice consistently
3. A good teacher

If your child has #1 and you focus on #2, your child will probably excel! I've got #3 covered. ☺

You may contact Ms. Melanie at:

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