

Beyond Scheduling—When, Why and How to Make a Move to a New Teacher

Margaret Denton, Director of Admissions and Education

Learning a musical instrument is an undertaking that often involves a commitment of ten years or more of study. Although some students stay with the same teacher for their entire length of study, many times a student will benefit from guidance from different teachers as they move from beginner through intermediate to advanced levels. All too often this transition becomes a needlessly arduous process.

How long should I stay with one teacher?

Every student moves at a different pace and every teacher/student relationship will have a unique dynamic, so it's impossible to give any absolute answers. However, in general a student should at the very least complete one academic year of study with the same teacher, and usually two to four years are more desirable. This time span allows the teacher to set both short and long term goals for the student and gives time for both student and teacher to develop a rapport. This also provides a sense of stability and continuity to lessons that ensures steady progress.

Is it a bad thing to stay with the same teacher past four years?

Not at all! In fact, many graduating seniors who stayed with the same teacher since age 8, for example, remark that while everything else around them changed and they themselves went through physical and emotional changes, the teacher provided a real sense of stability and support. Many teachers are equally comfortable teaching all levels and ages of students.

Why switch?

There are many reasons to considering moving to a new teacher. Often, it is simply a matter of scheduling. Brookline Music School provides a cohesive curriculum that makes moving to a new teacher a smoother process—curriculum guidelines provide a graded system that ensures evenness in materials a student will have covered at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. Beyond scheduling, a student may want to consider a change if their progress has become stagnant, if they have moved past the level their current teacher works with, or if the student's goals do not match the teacher's expectations.

How do I initiate the process of moving to a new teacher?

Transitioning is ideally a positive and relatively painless process. The decision that it's time for a change may be made in consultation with the current teacher, or a student may want to arrange to move to a new teacher before informing the current teacher. Depending on the reason for the switch, either way works. Most often it is best if the current teacher is notified before the final lesson so that he or she can provide a sense of closure with the student. The parents and students will most likely also want to thank the current teacher for their instruction, and the teacher will want to give best wishes for the future to the student.

Within Brookline Music School, transitioning is even easier—all of our teachers are highly qualified and professional. Parents may consult with the Director of Education at any time if they are considering a change, and we have a variety of teachers with different styles including some that specialize with beginners and others that are more suitable for advanced students.

The important thing to remember is that it is completely normal to study with different teachers along the way, and ideally a student will absorb the best of what each teacher has to offer. Feel free to contact Margaret Denton, Director of Education at Brookline Music School if you have any questions or are considering moving to a new teacher.