The MAYRON COLE PIANO METHOD

Starting a Group Piano Studio from Scratch
Webinar Outline

2007 The Mayron Cole Music Conservatory, Inc

Step One: Creating an Identity for Your Piano Studio



- Give your piano studio a name
  - You are a real business. If you treat yourself as a real business, others will too
  - Try to have the word "piano" in your business name
    - You want everyone to know what your business does
- You can create a logo even if it is just a specific font
  - Use that logo on all of your ads, signs, business cards, registration forms, everything
  - People will start to recognize the logo and identify it with your business
  - Make sure your logo is easily legible
- Check with your local authorities regarding any requirements they have for businesses in your area
- Talk to your insurance agent about business insurance policy for your piano studio

Step Two: Where to Teach

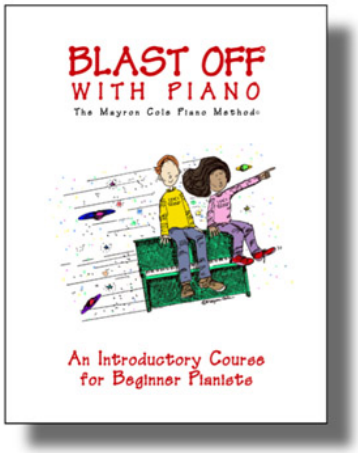


- Are you going to teach at home or in a commercial space?
  - Pros and cons of teaching at home
    - PRO: No overhead costs! BIG PRO – especially for a new teacher
    - PRO: You can tax deduct a portion of your mortgage payment and utilities (consult an accountant regarding the specifics of these deductions)
    - CON: No signage to tell the public you are there
    - CON: Property Owner's Association might not allow it
    - CON: May have to limit advertising by not publishing your address
    - PRO or CON (depending on how you feel about it): Many people in your home
  - Pros of teaching in a commercial space
    - PRO: High visibility with ability to have signage
    - PRO: Having a commercial space presents a more professional image to the public
    - CON: High overhead (especially as a new studio when you don't know how many students you will have)



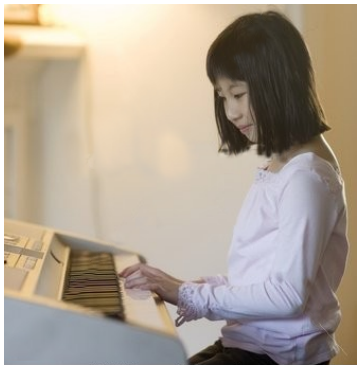
- CON: As a new group piano teacher, you usually have to find a place and sign a lease before you have any idea how many students you will have
- CON: Might only be using the space for a few hours a week 30 or so weeks/year, but have to pay rent 24/7/365

- Other Location Options
  - Church – if you are the church pianist, your church may allow you to teach piano in one of their rooms
  - Rec Center – may have an afterschool program that your piano classes could be a part of
  - Music Store - many music stores have rooms set aside for teaching
  - Private School – make sure you are hired as Contract Labor and not as an employee of the school
- How much space do you need?
  - Minimum 200'sq – tight but it will work
  - 400'-500' sq is a comfortable size
  - A few studios are as large as 2000' sq
    - if you are going to have other teachers working for you



Step Three: Pianos

- How many pianos
  - The number of pianos you need will depend on how many students you plan to teach at a time
    - You need to have 1 piano for each student in the class
    - Most group piano studios have 4 – 8 pianos
  - You can wait to see how many students have signed up before you purchase keyboards
    - If you are going to start by teaching *Blast Off with Piano* and/or *Blast Off with Piano Junior*, you can have 2 students at each piano, then once they have signed up for the school year purchase more keyboards
    - For more about the *Blast Off* courses, please attend our "How to Market and Teach *Blast Off with Piano* and *Blast Off with Piano Junior*" Webinar
- What type of pianos
    - Need to be digital pianos so you can control the volume and all the keyboards will always be in tune with each other (acoustic pianos do not work well in a group setting)
    - Not all of your keyboards need to "match" – you can mix and match brands, models, colors, and sizes
    - Keep in mind that a student will only be using your keyboard for about 20 minutes per week, so the keyboard does not have to be top-of-the-line
    - You do not need headphones or a teacher's console
      - This is a class, not multiple simultaneous private lessons
      - Headphones can spread lice



- What to look for when buying a piano (in order of importance)
  1. All keyboards need to have full size keys – the width of each key is a standard piano key width
  2. All keyboards need to have a rack to hold up the music
  3. All keyboards should have at least 61 keys
  4. Very beneficial to have a jack in the back in which to plug-in a sustain pedal (pedal is usually sold separately)
  5. Very beneficial to have touch sensitive keys
  6. Less important to have 88 keys
  7. Least important and very expensive – Weighted keys are very nice, but not necessary if you don't want to spend the money

- How much do keyboards cost
  - Comes down to how much you want to spend
  - Prices vary greatly, but many of the bells-and-whistles are not items that you need for teaching (ie: hundreds of instrument sounds)
  - You can spend as little as $125 for a new keyboard that has 61 full-size keys, touch sensitive, pedal jack, music rack, and usually comes with a stand
    - These keyboards can range up to about $250
  - In the price range between $400-$600, keyboard just has more bells-and-whistles that you don't necessarily need for teaching group piano
  - In the $900 and up range, there are very nice digital keyboards that have 88 weighted keys and nice stands
- Where is a good place to buy keyboards
  - Check your local stores
    - Large discount electronics stores
    - Large music stores
      - These stores also usually have some used keyboards for sale
    - Large "big box" stores sometimes carry keyboards
      - Some only carry keyboards during the winter holidays
  - Internet
    - Ebay.com, Amazon, and lots of other sites
      - Look at the shipping charges
  - Advertise that you are looking to buy used keyboards in good condition
    - Place a classified ad
    - Place a sign in your studio window
- When setting up the pianos in your studio, have the pianos face each other
  - This is a class so you don't want the pianos facing the walls
  - Allows the students to interact with you and with each other
    - Will make piano lessons more fun



Step Four: What else do you need to get started?

- If you are in a commercial space, you need to have a sign for your business
- Adjustable-height folding tables to hold pianos
  - Available at large office supply stores
  - Can use X stands that come with most pianos, but they are not very sturdy and have been known to collapse on students
- Game table or area on the floor
- Piano benches and/or stools
  - Most "Big Box" stores carry a variety of stools
    - Folding stools are as low as $10 - $15 each
- A selection of pens, pencils, and/or crayons for theory fun sheets
- *Mayron Cole Piano Method* board games
  - You can start out with as few as 1 game, but the kids like to have a variety of games so eventually you might want to purchase more
- Studio Start-Up Kit
  - 20 Items specifically for teachers who are starting a Group Piano Studio sold at $100 off regular prices
  - plus a free gift to you is our *Student Audition Book*
- A *Mayron Cole Piano Method* text book for each student
  - This is a pass-through expense
  - You need to charge the student for the book and shipping on top of their tuition
  - Teacher should order all of the student books together to save on shipping



Step Five: Brief Overview of Advertising & Marketing

- Advertising is extremely important
  - The public **has** to know you are there
  - Don't rely solely on word of mouth
  - Budget a percentage of your income each year to advertising
  - Advertising is trial and error
    - Place ads in multiple papers and see which ones get the most response
    - Perhaps in your area postcards are more effective than ads, perhaps vice-versa
    - Don't just place one ad then give up if you don't get a response
- Place ads in small newspapers
  - More affordable that large papers
  - Targets a neighborhood rather than an entire city
  - School newspapers also target your customers
- Postcard mail-out
  - Purchase a mailing list
    - Mailing list companies can be found on-line
    - Give them your criteria
      - Certain zip codes
      - Certain income brackets
      - Households with children
  - Use your child's school directory, or borrow school directories from friends
  - Mail out postcards advertising an open house
    - People respond to deadlines rather than open-ended information
    - Perhaps offer a discount if they bring the postcard to the open house
    - At the open house have advertising brochure and/or coloring book for potential students/parents to take home
- Marketing can be as effective as advertising
  - Brainstorm about how to get the word out about your studio without spending very much money
    - These tactics usually take more work, but save you money
    - Always brainstorm for new and unique ways to reach your customers
  - Offer to teach *Mr. Christofori Invents the Soft-Loud* in music classes at area elementary schools
  - Perhaps hire the boy-scouts in your area to put flyers on doors or on car windshields in the grocery store parking lot
  - Perhaps put up signs in the median of a busy intersection
  - Perhaps put a magnetic sign on your car
  - Contact your local rec center or school district outreach program about offering a class though their program





