

# The Sustainable Studio

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## The Music Teacher Burnout Problem

- Teaching too many students
- Makeup lessons, cancellations, reschedules
- Time & energy spent on business operations (billing, logistics, emails)
- Poor fit students/families

## Sustainability

- Maximize income per hour
- Set & hold clear boundaries / studio policies
- Simplify, automate business operations, do more during lessons
- Attract & retain students/families who are an ideal fit
- You can be happier, less stressed, and make more money, leading to stability & space in your life, and BETTER teaching!

## Money

- Flat rate monthly tuition, 9 or 12-month commitment “term,” fee to end early
- Pay as you go “punch card” style
- No refunds
- Yearly tuition increase. Compare rates with colleagues, compare to other extracurriculars.
- You decide what you charge. Charge what you need. You are worth it.
- Educate students/families on what their tuition pays for. They are not paying you for 1 hour of your time. Paying for membership in studio, access to your expertise & mentorship.
- Remember, your expertise is always growing! Make your “evidence” list for why you are great. Money is always scary! It gets easier the more you talk about it.

## Time

- Do things DURING lessons. Repertoire research. Email a reminder to a parent. Etc.
- No makeups
- Plan in holidays and extra “sick” weeks / “flex” weeks.
- You decide when you want to teach. Who can take lessons during daytime hours? Homeschoolers, nontraditional students, adults with flexible job, retirees.
- Consider different structures: 3 individual lessons/month +1 group class. Etc.

## Software

- My Music Staff (\$14.94/month), Fons (\$29.95/month) (<https://fons.com/join/@lisarosejuliannaneher>), Acuity (\$16/month for individual appointments, \$27/month for subscriptions), Calendly (\$15 for professional version that can take PayPal payments)
- “Set it and forget it” tuition payments, lesson scheduling, reminders
- Fees are normal. Raise rates accordingly and don’t worry about it.
- Beware of using Paypal Friends & Family, Venmo, etc, for business purposes.
- Google forms for studio registration, add check boxes for important studio policies

## Boundaries

- Lay out policies & expectations in studio policies, review yearly in real time. Educate them.
- Studio contract/agreement/registration with key points reiterated.
- Politely but firmly hold to your policies. “Okay, see you next week!”
- When to let a student/family go.
- Avoid poor fits as much as possible with trial lesson/ trial period. You are giving them a trial as much as they are giving you a trial.

## Attracting Ideal Students

- Who are the students in your studio who are the “best fit” for you? What do they have in common? In business terms: “Ideal Client Avatar.”
- Social Media can be a “bat signal” to attract more ideal students. Share tips, demonstrations, (with parent/student permission) share student photos, videos, successes.
- You cannot be the perfect teacher for everyone. And that’s OK.
- Do your colleagues know your “genius teaching zones”?
- Networking in person and online where your ideal student(s) are.
- Retention: goal setting, recital, masterclasses, studio events, practice charts.
- Communication: keeping parents involved face-to-face and via text/email, start of term orientation, naming & celebrating student success. Help them see what they’re buying.

## Support for You

- Colleagues: fellow teachers who are also interested in ending the burnout cycle, share tips
- Professional organizations
- Books, podcasts, blogs

## Resources

- Book: *The Savvy Music Teacher* by David Culter
- Savvymusicstudio Instagram account & blog run by Sara Campbell: <https://www.instagram.com/savvymusicstudio/>
- Book: *Freelancing for Dummies* by Susan M. Drake
- Fons Family Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fonsfamily>
- Soprano Jenny Cresswell’s TikTok channel: <https://www.tiktok.com/@mamajcress>
- Podcasts: Studio Class by Megan Ihnen, The Portfolio Composer by Garrett Hope, Crushing Classical by Jenet Ingle, Full Voice Podcast by Nikki Loney
- Speakeasy Cooperative Instagram account by Michelle Markwart Deveaux <https://www.instagram.com/thespeakeasycooperative/>

## Let’s Stay in Touch

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