

# The Issues of Private Lessons

## The need for lessons

Studying privately is one of the most important things for a young musician who wants to be successful. For anybody who wants (or think they want) to go to college for music, it is imperative to start studying privately ASAP! At college auditions, there is stiff competition for scholarships with people who have been studying privately from very young ages. Another very important benefit of taking lessons is that it allows your band program to be more competitive. As a teacher of a local high school marching band, I would love to see all of the students studying privately so that I could spend less time teaching how to play the instruments and more time putting together more advanced music, and really getting to a professional level.

## Other areas

Colorado, especially Jefferson, Denver, and Douglas Counties, is quite underwhelming in the number of students receiving private instruction. In Texas, when students first begin learning their instrument, it is expected that they will take lessons or be stuck in the lowest ensembles. Unfortunately, most schools in Colorado only have one ensemble so there is little incentive to become better individually. This results in a lot of mediocre ensembles where the best students are not challenged, and the worst players cannot keep up. Thus, the growth of Colorado music is limited, the incentive to get better remains low and the cycle continues.

## The money problem

So why aren't more Denver area Coloradans taking lessons? Because they are expensive! With 14.3% of Denver residents being under the poverty line (\$980/month for one person), and Denver being one of the highest real estate markets (\$600-\$800/month for studio apartment), many cannot afford \$30-\$60 per week for private lessons. However, we should not let poverty prevent our children from receiving a quality education. It has been shown time and time again that the only way out of poverty is education, and a key to completing and succeeding at a quality education is music.

## The solution

For those who don't think you could ever possibly afford private lessons, think again. As a private teacher, I am very willing to make arrangements for financial difficulties, and I am sure many teachers are. One option could be to take lessons only every other week, even monthly lessons can yield huge improvements. Another way is to work with local universities, and see if there are music majors who would be willing to teach at more accessible rates, or even asking more advanced players at your home school to help you out. Group lessons are another great idea. Private lessons are an important part of the growing music education programs in Colorado, and I encourage young musicians who previously thought private study to be impossible to come up with some creative solutions to become the level of musician that they want to be.