



2025-26



Handbook



Welcome to KinderFlute!

I am truly overjoyed to get to know you and begin our musical journey together! We're going to have so much FUN in KinderFlute classes this year!

Each of my students is unique and precious to me, and I look forward to spending time together learning the flute.

Sarah Richards

This handbook is being provided to communicate essential details about our studio expectations, rules, and policies, and logistics. Parents and students should take a few moments to read its contents carefully and thoroughly. Keep it handy and refer to it throughout the year.

Enforcement Date: August 15, 2025

Your continued enrollment past this date AND/OR submission of a KinderFlute Sign Up response (Google form) in August 2025 indicates your full agreement until further notice or revision.

Overview

What is the KinderFlute® Method?

This award-winning method is designed to give the elementary age flutist an excellent foundation in beautiful tone, embouchure flexibility, rhythm, and technique, and includes theory, ear training, and composition projects.. This comprehensive and step-by-step approach was written to ensure success!



Master flutist/educator Kathy Blocki is the author of the Blocki Flute Method and Flute Zoo books, and creator of KinderFlute®. She began developing the KinderFlute method while building a flute studio in the Pittsburgh area after leaving her position as flute professor at Goshen College. Her friend, Chinese flutist and flute maker Di Zhao, showed her a small flute for children, called the Mini-D. She was intrigued and used it to begin teaching a friend's four-year-old daughter the flute.

Around the same time, she was learning about *neurogenesis* and brain development. This led to the unique combination of aerobic activity paired with the complex skills needed to play the flute that became the KinderFlute method.

Neurogenesis literally means "birth of neurons." It is most prevalent during prenatal development and is the process by which neurons are created to populate the growing brain. Contrary to what was believed in recent decades, new research has shown that neurogenesis also can occur throughout life.

Key factors that have been proven to stimulate significant neurogenesis are:

- exercise,
- a loving and supportive environment, and
- new, enriching experiences.

KinderFlute group lessons are carefully planned to maximize learning potential. Movement and games are a major component in the group classes so that students maintain a keen sense of alertness while introducing complex skills.

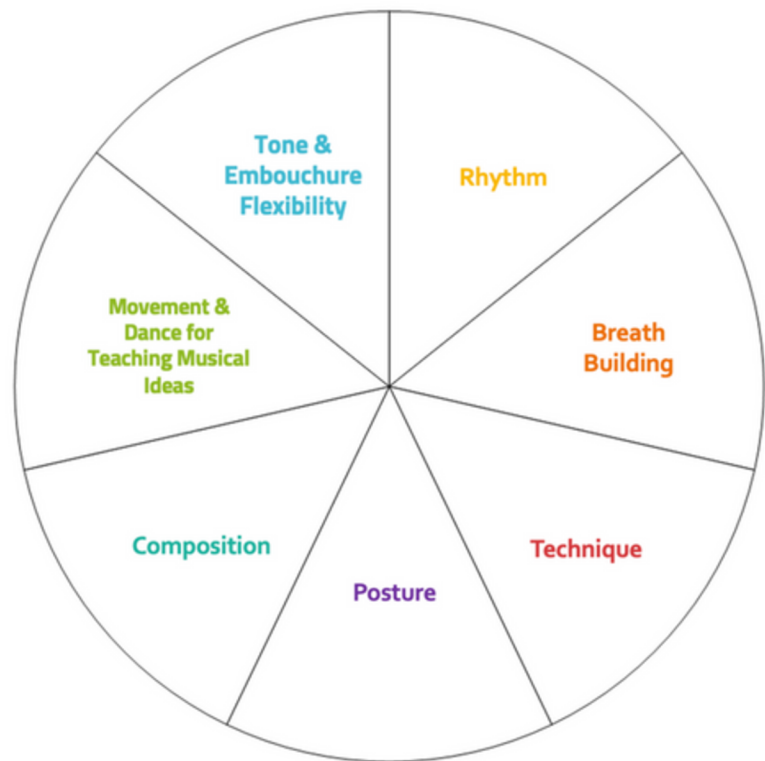
"Physical exercise improves the fitness of the neocortex, which in turn improves mental agility and mood, as well as cognitive processes that require attention, alertness, and motivation. But not all physical activity is created equal, and some types are more effective than others at accomplishing specific goals. For the greatest intellectual benefit, aerobic exercise in combination with complex activity has been found to maximize brain power" - John Ratey



KinderFlute Skills Pie

While learning to play the flute, KinderFlute kids will explore music theory and listen to great flute music through games and proven music teaching techniques.

Lessons will be structured to offer a balanced approach to the many skills involved in playing the flute and developing the young musician to ensure success from day one!



Music in Early Childhood

Music instruction for preschool and elementary children has many compelling benefits. Specifically, *instrumental* music lessons give your child a tremendous boost in cognitive, social/emotional and physical development that can help set them up for success in all areas of learning and discipline. And learning a musical instrument is just FUN!

The flute makes a fantastic first instrument for young learners, with the right kind of instruction and a caring teacher. It may be a unique and appealing alternative or complement to early piano lessons, Suzuki violin, or guitar/ukulele.

Read more about why I am so passionate about children learning to play musical instruments in my blog post [10 Reasons Why Music Lessons Should Be on Your Young Child's Activity List](#).





Goals & Expectations

Teacher's Objectives:

- Develop the whole child, not just a musician.
- Engage students' attention through enjoyable music and activities
- See students master great technique instead of building poor habits
- Motivate through positivity and affirmation
- Create an environment where parents can participate in their student's learning and feel empowered to further their exploration at home.
- Give each student the best chance of success from DAY ONE!
- Have fun together!

Student Expectations:

- **Play the flute** every day! (at least 5 days/week)
- Complete **lesson assignments** and check off practice boxes
- Arrive to lessons & classes with an open mind, **positive attitude** and teachable spirit
- **Persevere!** Keep trying when something feels hard the first time.
- Learn to **assemble** and **care** for your flute
- Bring your **lesson books, flute, and accessories** to your lesson
- Demonstrate appropriate **behavior** at all times (see the "Million Dollar Lesson")
- **Participate** enthusiastically in group lessons
- Be **kind** and **encouraging** to your classmates

Parent's Role:

- **Encourage** and affirm! Be your child's biggest fan/cheerleader. Praise their efforts! (refrain from negativity and shaming - these tactics will only de-motivate)
- **Establish a regular practice routine** and enforce boundaries at home that promote musical learning and the achievement of goals.
- Facilitate effective practice at home by **attending & observing all lessons and classes with your child** (or the last 10-15 minutes, whichever Ms. Sarah has specified), so that you know what we are working on. Gently assist your child his/her practice time at home, keeping notes from class handy.
- **Gentle reminders** are helpful - for practice, for packing up for a lesson, etc.
- Provide and assist with any **technology** needed for at-home practice - students will often be asked to play along with recordings on a portable device with speaker.
- **Communicate** with me! I want to hear about how things are going at home so I can either do a happy dance with you or give you some new ideas to help you out.
- Keep your child's **flute maintained and in good repair**. Instruct all household members to treat instruments with respect and care.
- Coordinate **transportation** to classes and lessons, arriving on time, and communicating via text and/or email when plans change or unforeseen circumstances get in the way.



Behavior

Very young students are still developing in their executive functions and social-emotional control, and may need help at times to learn what is and is not appropriate lesson behavior. Sometimes, students may intentionally “test the waters” of what is allowed in the studio. At other times, the student may simply be demonstrating the limits of their age and maturity when inappropriate behavior arises, or the behavior may be a result of external circumstances such as being tired/hungry, inadequate lesson preparation, disruptions to the child’s schedule/routine, or even family trauma. Whatever the cause, these behaviors waste valuable instruction time, and cannot be allowed to continue in a lesson.

Some Examples of Inappropriate Lesson Behavior:

- Hiding in the corner or under a table
- Clinging to mom while sucking thumb
- Refusing to follow the teacher’s instruction or participate
- Having a temper tantrum for any reason
- Talking or playing instrument while the teacher is talking/demonstrating
- Distracting or bothering other students
- Being intentionally ornery/wiley/contrary/oppositional to manipulate the lesson
- Using the instrument in an inappropriate/unsafe way, such as “sword-fighting” or similar

How these behaviors will be addressed:

- Reminders. If possible, the teacher will first remind and demonstrate to the student which behavior is desirable instead of the behavior being shown by the child.
- The behavior square. If the behavior persists, the teacher may intervene by isolating or confining the child to a physical location still visible by the teacher and parent, but where their misbehavior is “allowed.” The teacher may say something like “if you need to continue your temper tantrum, that’s ok, but it has to happen here, [in this square, or outside this door, etc.] The parent will then take the child’s place in the lesson or group class, and be taught as if they were the student. The parent *must not acknowledge the student in any way*, and the teacher may invite the child to rejoin the class when she observes the behavior has stopped.
- Quick break. If the child remains inconsolable/non-compliant, the parent may need to step out of the room with the child briefly to re-group and talk, and perhaps get a drink of water or snack, or take a bathroom break. The child may rejoin the class as soon as he/she is ready to participate with appropriate behavior. This approach is effective with a child who is simply feeling overwhelmed.
- The Million Dollar Lesson. As a last resort, or the behavior is particularly disruptive or persistent, and has been irreversible with other tactics, it is agreed that the **parent will remove the child from the studio immediately--with no discussion, anger, or negotiation--and the child taken directly home**. The effectiveness is lost if there is discussion or delay. The child needs to experience a swift loss of reward/attention for the wrong behavior to learn a valuable lesson in self-control – the “million-dollar” lesson. Only *one* Million Dollar Lesson is usually necessary, and it may even be sufficient for a child to observe *another* student experiencing *their* Million Dollar Lesson for the impact to be had. [Read more about the Million Dollar Lesson here](#).



Lessons & Classes



Intro to KinderFlute

- FREE, one-time class, 60 minutes.
- Ages 5-9 with a parent/guardian
- No prior experience necessary
- All materials provided (including a REAL flute headjoint!)
- **Register:** [Intro to KinderFlute Registration Form](#)



KinderFlute Beginnings

- *Prerequisite: KinderFlute Intro Class or First Meeting with Ms. Sarah*
- **\$275**
- 8 weeks in the summer
- Ages 5-9 with parent/guardian
- Type of Flute needed: Nuvo Toot (included)
- Method Book: Flute Zoo Book 1
- What we'll learn: tone production, hand positions for holding the Toot, first eight notes, listening skills, music alphabet, rhythm with quarter and half notes, many songs!
- **Register:** [KinderFlute Beginnings Registration Form](#)



KinderFlute

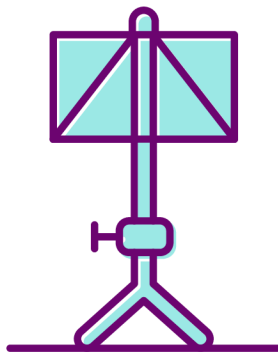
- *Prerequisite: KinderFlute Beginnings*
- **\$120/month**
- Ages 5-9 with parent/guardian
- Alternating bi-weekly Group Classes (60 min.) and Private Lessons (25 min.)
- Type of Flute needed: Nuvo jFlute or metal student flute (*not included*)
- Method Book: Flute Zoo Books 1 -3 or Blocki Flute Method Book 1
- What we'll learn: tone production, embouchure flexibility, posture, technique, articulation, breath support, nine Major and four Minor 5-note scales, two-beat rhythm patterns, composition projects, many songs (including classical repertoire) transposition, and early flute ensemble playing.
- Participation in two yearly recitals (either solo or ensemble playing, or both).
- **Register:** [KinderFlute 2025-26 Sign Up Form](#)



Materials

Student flutists need reliable equipment and books! Here is what you'll need to be successful in KinderFlute classes (after KinderFlute Beginnings)

- A quality student flute in good working order + cleaning cloth & rod. A curved headjoint flute may be necessary depending on your child's size (see recommendations in the next section)
- Spiral lesson notebook
- Music books (as assigned by Ms. Sarah)
- Music stand for at-home practice (folding stands will work, but I recommend a sturdier stand, such as the [Manhasset Model 48](#))
- Pneumo Pro Wind Director - purchase through me or at [Blockiflute.com](#)
- [Thumbport](#) (if I've recommended)
- Flute Flex Pro (if I've recommended; also available at [Blockiflute.com](#))
- A metronome or free metronome app/website (I recommend [Metronome Beats](#), but most free metronome apps are just fine)
- A digital tuner device, or free tuner app such as [Flute Tuner by LikeTones](#) or [Soundcorset](#) (this one is an All-in-One Tuner + Metronome)
- A tote bag or backpack to carry music books and flute





Plastic Flutes

Plastic flutes are a great first flute for young players, and can be durable and inexpensive, though they are not long-term flutes; be prepared to upgrade to a metal flute within 3 months to 2 years or so.

Nuvo Toot

- Small
- Great for very young students (age 4-6) and older students just trying the flute for the first time.
- Comes with two interchangeable lip plates (we will only use the flute lip plate, not the recorder-style “fipple”)
- Uses recorder cross-fingerings, and the range is limited
- Comes in fun colors!
- Inexpensive (around \$35)



Nuvo jFlute

- The perfect “first flute” choice for ages 4-9 years
- “stepping stone” to grow into full-size metal flute
- Innovative “donut” curved headjoint
- Offset G with key extensions to help small hands.
- Comes with two interchangeable lip plates (we will only use the flute lip plate, not the recorder-style “fipple”)
- Silicone soft-touch keys
- Standard flute fingerings and plays down to low D
- Upgradable to straight headjoint and C footjoint when ready
- Lightweight but durable; protective case with carry strap
- Comes in fun colors!
- Relatively inexpensive (\$120-170)



Maintenance/Care & Repair

Nuvo plastic flutes may be played in the bathtub, a fun place to practice! They can be easily cleaned with warm water and soap. They can also be stored out of the case at home for easy access to encourage practice.

Many repairs can be done with the available spare parts kit, and detailed repair instructions are available at NUVOInstrumental.com.



Metal Flutes

Metal is the standard material for a flute. They require a little more maintenance and daily cleaning to keep in top condition, but offer the best tone and response. It is always a great to start any child on such a quality instrument, if your budget allows!

Di Zhao Mini-D

- The best flute on the market for young beginners (age 4-6)
- silver-plated curved headjoint only
- one-piece body (no footjoint); plays to low D
- very lightweight
- pearlized finger pads for easy finger placement that positioned just right for little hands
- offset G key
- excellent tone and scale
- \$650 (new)



Blocki Beginner Flute with Curved & Straight Headjoint

- Economical curved headjoint flute with included straight headjoint (this flute can last a long time because it will grow with the child).
- Relatively inexpensive \$450 (new); sometimes a used one is available for less at BlockiFlute.com
- well-made and reliable
- excellent tone
- offset G key



Gemeinhardt 2SP with curved and straight headjoint

- standard student flute
- reliable, well-known maker
- may be available with silver-plated headjoint or not
- offset G key, C foot
- Not available new, but may be easy to find used





Other curved headjoint flutes

These may cost a bit more brand new, but are excellent flutes; It may be possible to find one used or refurbished for a bargain.

- Yamaha YFL-222 (option to purchase a curved headjoint separately)
- Trevor James 10XC2
- Jupiter Model 700 (formerly Prodigy) with “wave” headjoint
- Eastman EFL210-CS

Flutes to avoid

Any metal flutes sold on Amazon, Walmart, etc., especially if only ~\$100-150ish. These are extremely poor quality flutes that may work for a while, but are not a good long-term investment. There is no guarantee they are in good adjustment even when brand new, and are likely to develop problems quickly. Repair shops may not be willing to work on them. However, if you are willing to gamble on one and are commit to upgrading to a better brand as soon as it becomes unplayable, (which could be remarkably soon!) one of these flutes could have some potential.

Maintenance/Care & Repair

Metal flutes should be swabbed (inside) and wiped of fingerprints (outside) after each use and stored in its case for safekeeping and transportation. Correct assembly, cleaning, and maintenance techniques will be demonstrated to parents and students in lessons to be sure you’ve got the hang of it.

It is important that your child’s flute is responsive and easy to play, so please keep them in good working order with an annual visit to a technician, or any time something is not working. Young learners will often assume any problem is “their fault” and not “the flute,” which can be unnecessarily discouraging.

Sometimes I can fix or assess a needed repair during a lesson, but many things will need a skilled technician. Don’t hesitate to check with me first though!

I recommend Rieman Music in Urbandale and Sleister Music in Ankeny.



Practice

- **Parents should plan to assist the child throughout each practice session.**
- Students should try to practice at least **5 days/week**. Multiple shorter practice sessions are always better than one big “cram” session the day before a lesson.
- Practice boxes are drawn on all exercises/pages that are assigned, and the page is flagged. Play the piece/exercise **THREE** times, and check off **ONE** practice box per day (**each box = “I practiced this 3x today”**)
- Focus on goals, not time. 5 minutes spent perfecting a tricky spot is infinitely more effective than fumbling through “the whole piece” for 10 minutes *ignoring all the mistakes*.
- The following times can be used as *guidelines only*:

Age 5-6	Age 7-9	Age 10+
5-15 minutes daily	15-30 minutes daily	30-60 minutes daily

- Parents: I recommend setting an expectation that flute practice **MUST** happen before screen time (or whatever that favorite activity is for your child). Discuss a consequence in advance of enforcing this rule, and then stick to it without exception.
- I know there will be days and even weeks when it's next to impossible (or impractical) to practice. We all need a break from time to time! But I want my students to not just “get by” in music lessons, but to **THRIVE**, and that won't happen without intentional, daily practice at home.
- Let me know what successes/struggles you are experiencing so I can help!



Incentives

Polished Piece Chart

- This is probably my favorite incentive! We enjoy the friendly competition of seeing who has the most polished pieces by the end of the year!
 - Students can earn a sticker on our chart for each piece of music they polish.
 - Level 1+ piano students & intermediate+ flute students: 1 page = 1 polish sticker + \$20 music bucks
 - “Double-polish” a piece for ANOTHER sticker (at my discretion)

Music Bucks & Store

- Students can earn music bucks for the following:
 - Arriving on time and prepared (\$5)
 - Checking off practice boxes (\$1/box; double bucks when all 5 boxes are checked in a week)
 - Polishing a Piece (\$20)
 - Memorize a Polished Piece (\$40)
 - Sightread 1 solo book (approx. 10 pieces) (\$50)
 - Perform home recital for family/friends (play at least 3 Polished Pieces) (\$100)
 - Pass a Scale (5-note, 1-octave, or 2+ octaves); play from memory in 3 lessons. (\$30)
 - Attend a live classical, jazz, or folk performance (suggestions: the Des Moines Symphony, a Drake recital, Ms. Sarah’s Flute Choir performances, etc.)
 - Complete a method book (\$100)
 - Do pages in your theory book (\$5/page)
 - Playing music games (\$ varies)
 - Ms. Sarah may “hand out” music bucks throughout a lesson for a variety of good behaviors or for demonstrating musical knowledge and skills!
- I will add more ways to earn bucks regularly! Have a suggestion? Let me know!
- Music Bucks will be stored in each student’s music lab folder in the lab station (they should not be taken home).
- The music store will be open about once a month for shopping.
- Items in the treasure chests and on top of the music store cabinet can be purchased anytime.
- Shopping must be completed during your Music Lab time.
- Younger students may need a little help from a parent to count their music bucks and make their selections from the store.



Performances

Holiday Musicale (optional)

- A “musicale” is a recital given in a home or residence.
- We schedule two Holiday Musicales in December at local retirement facilities. It is a joy to share our music with the residents and bless them in this way! They *really* enjoy having us. It is a fantastic way to serve our community with our talents and skills, while practicing the art of performance.
- Two dates will be offered, and you can sign up for the date you prefer (each program will have a mix of flute and piano students)
- KinderFlute Students will perform solos (possibly with accompaniment backing tracks), and/or play small groups/ensembles (duets, trios, etc.)

Spring Showcase Recital (expected)

- Always on a Sunday afternoon in April or May
- All KinderFlute Students will prepare a solo with piano accompaniment and possibly a small group/ensemble (duet, trio, etc.)
- Family members are asked to plan to attend the recital in its entirety to support all of the performers and avoid distraction of audience members leaving early.





Location & Logistics

KinderFlute Group Lessons

- Held at: **Artful Art & Craft Playground, 8805 Chambery Blvd Suite 150, Johnston, IA 50131**
- We are guests here! Please treat the facility and all property with respect and help keep the space clean, tidy, and free of damage. If something does get broken or damaged, let me know.
- Please consider supporting this local business by checking out all the fun art projects and parties they offer! makeitartfull.com

Private Lessons

- at my home: **8029 Brookview Drive, Urbandale, IA 50322**
- Please let yourself in the front door if you are **arriving within 5 minutes** prior to your scheduled lesson time (**if arriving earlier, please wait outside**). There is no need to ring the doorbell or knock; it can be distracting for the student currently in a lesson. If I am with a student, please wait quietly in the foyer area and use this time to take off your coat and get your flute out).
- Upon arrival, students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.
- The bathroom located off the hallway/foyer may be used by students and their families or guests. **Please do not enter any other area of my home, and instruct children not to do so either.**
- You may park in the street (on our side of the street) or on the RIGHT side of our driveway (closest to our front door) to allow my husband access to the left side of the garage.
- I encourage you to **bring a water bottle** with you to your lesson if you like; please do not ask for a drink of water while at my home for a lesson.
- **No food or gum** is allowed in the studio. Students should consume any snacks before entering the studio.
- **Shoes** may be left on or taken off at the door - I don't really care. (If you have foot odor, go ahead and leave 'em on for me, eh?)
- Young **siblings** are welcome in the studio but must not become a distraction. Parents, use your best judgment; either bring a quiet activity for them to do in the studio or plan to stay outside/in the car during the lesson.





Calendar & Scheduling

School Year (Last week of August through May)

- A total of at least **31 Weekly group and private lessons are guaranteed** through the school year.
- A Studio Calendar will be provided.
- Planned No-Lesson Days:
 - Thanksgiving and Black Friday
 - Winter Break (usually 2 weeks)
 - Spring Break (3rd week of March)
 - Week of Memorial Day (some make-ups may occur)
 - One-two additional weeks per semester, at instructor's discretion

Summer (June through Mid-August)

- KinderFlute group and private lessons will continue for 8 weeks in the summer (alternating every-other)
- No refunds will be given for missed private lessons in the summer. However, rescheduling or switching within my availability is fine when conflicts arise.
- Summer Enrollment **guarantees** Fall placement. Students wishing to step away for the summer will be considered “discontinued” and placement will be subject to availability should they return in the Fall.
- **Students** are strongly encouraged to enroll in the *maximum* number of summer lessons that your schedule allows. We will need regular interaction to get a solid start or prepare for Fall auditions.



Attendance

Absences

- Student absences for ANY reason are completely voluntary and will not affect monthly tuition.

Rescheduling/Switching/Make-Up Lessons

- Make an effort to attend your group and private lessons each week.
- **No make-ups are offered for group classes.** Please notify me if you cannot make it though. If too many students will be gone at the same time, I may cancel or reschedule the class if possible.
- Private lessons may *sometimes* be rescheduled or “switched” with another student when something unavoidable does come up. Please notify me as soon as possible, and include full details of student’s availability M-T-W-Th during the week of the conflict.
 - One of the following options will be offered:
 - Switch Lesson – Instructor will find another student who may switch lesson times with you for the week. Advance notice by Saturday before the week of the conflict is preferred.
 - Rescheduled Lesson – Per instructor’s discretion, an alternative date and/or time may be offered during the week of the conflict or during a subsequent week. Advance notice by Saturday before the week of the conflict is preferred.
 - Virtual Lesson – When advance notice is not possible (i.e., within 48 hours of the lesson), an online lesson may be a good choice. Make sure you get in touch with me first; do not assume it will work unless you hear back from me. Some examples of appropriate situations for a virtual lesson would be:
 - student illness, but student feels well enough to hold the lesson
 - student is out of town but able to attend a lesson virtually.
 - student is unexpectedly stuck at home with no transportation
 - Make-Ups – One missed lesson may be made up per semester. Make-Up Lessons will often be scheduled during a designated “make-up week” at the end of each semester. Make-Ups will at any other time will be subject to my discretion and schedule.



Attendance (cont'd)

No Instrument or Materials?

- In the event you have accidentally left your music books or flute at home or school, or your instrument is being repaired and you have no replacement, **PLEASE COME TO YOUR LESSON ANYWAY!** I have a spare flute and lots of flute music and resources, so we can still have a productive lesson. If you simply do not show up, the miss will be considered an absence.

Instructor Cancellation

- When the Instructor must cancel a lesson, a make-up lesson will be given OR a credit applied to the account.
- In case of **inclement weather**, the Instructor will base any decision to cancel or switch to virtual lessons on the decisions of local school districts, including Johnston, Urbandale, and Des Moines. I will communicate cancellations via text and e-mail. Any lessons canceled by the Instructor due to weather will be rescheduled. If the student chooses not to attend a lesson due to inclement weather when Instructor has not canceled, the miss will be considered an absence.

Reminders

- An automatic e-mail and/or text reminder will be sent 24 hours in advance of all lesson events.
- Be sure to provide at least one SMS-capable cell phone number so that you can receive text reminders.





Tuition & Fees

Annual Registration & Materials Fee

- Assessed in August to secure Fall enrollment **(\$50)**.
- Covers a variety of studio costs, such as Music Lab, Music Store incentives, studio resources, recital costs, subscriptions (e.g., Piano Maestro app), and more.

School Year KinderFlute Tuition (Sept.-May)

25-minute private lessons + 60-minute groups, every other week
\$120/month

- Billed monthly on the first, regardless of the number of lessons in the month.
- Pro-rated **ONLY** when a student begins/ends lessons in the middle of a month.
- Additional costs may occasionally be incurred for materials or other services, These amounts will be communicated via text or email prior to the invoice date.

Summer KinderFlute Tuition (June-August)

	3 lessons	4 lessons	5 lessons	6 lessons	7 lessons	8 lessons
30 min.	\$91.50	\$122	\$152.50	\$183	\$213.50	244

- Package will be chosen in May and lessons placed on the schedule.
- Billed as lump sum on June 1 or two equal installments on June 1 & July 1

Late Fee

- Overdue balance reminders are emailed on the 5th of the month, and a late fee of **\$30** will be posted if the account remains delinquent on the 10th.
- Lessons will be paused immediately for any account that remains delinquent more than 30 days. Tuition is *not* waived for the next month unless 30 days notice has been given. Lessons will resume as usual upon payment in full.



Auto -Pay

- All tuition is collected automatically via Stripe on a monthly basis.
- Multiple months can be paid in advance if you wish. There is no discount for paying in advance.
- Auto-Pay Invoices will be e-mailed on the first day of the month, which will automatically initiate payment processing.
- Upon enrollment for lessons, families must ensure they have one of these payment methods on file within the Parent Portal:
 - Automatic credit/debit card (incurs a 2.9% convenience fee)
 - ACH withdrawals (i.e., electronic check) - FREE **recommended**Lessons cannot be scheduled until *after* a payment method has been verified.
- Within the Portal, navigate to the “Account & Invoices” tab and click on the “Manage Payment Methods” button to add or delete payment methods. (Detailed instructions for how to get set up for Stripe billing within the portal can be provided upon request.)
- In the event an automatic check/credit/debit transaction fails, you will receive an email notice of the failure either immediately or within 5 business days. You may need to update your payment details within your Parent Portal (such as expiration date) or call your credit card company/bank to find out why the transaction was declined, then manually initiate a new payment to avoid late fees from Sarah’s Studio.
- Cash or paper checks will not be accepted, except in special circumstances at the Instructor’s discretion.
- If you ever notice an error or have a question of any kind about an invoice, please reach out directly to me so I can look into it and fix any problems!



Online Portal

- Access the Parent Portal by clicking the button at the top right of the header at www.sarahsstudiosm.com. You may want to bookmark my website so it is easy to find for future use.
- Additional parents/grandparents can be added to the family account and given portal access - just send me the name(s) and e-mail address(es) to add.
- Students may also request their own portal access if they have their own personal (non-school) e-mail account. I highly recommend you do this so students can use the calendar and other tools and features available inside the Portal (such as the Practice Log and Online Resources).
- A variety of useful information and tools is accessible any time in your Portal:
 - Calendar (sign up for studio events, view scheduled lessons and classes, notify me of an absence, etc.)
 - Studio News/Blog Posts
 - Manage Account, Invoices, and AutoPay (visible in Parent account only)
 - Attendance records
 - Online Resources (i.e., any audio or video files that I want to share with you)
 - Practice Log
- If you ever have trouble logging into your Portal, please let me know. I can re-send a login link (this resets your password) if you are unable to get in with the "forgot my password" feature.
- I encourage you to keep your login information handy and use this online tool frequently!





Termination

Voluntary Discontinuation

- Advance notice of **one month (four weeks)** is required in the event the student wishes to discontinue lessons. The student is not obligated to attend further lessons after notice is given, but certainly welcome to.
- An **exit interview** must be held prior to the last lesson to gain feedback and ensure all necessary communication has occurred. The student and a parent/guardian should be present. An in-person meeting is preferred.
- Upon notice of discontinuing, the current month's tuition must be paid in full, and an additional fee will be pro-rated per lesson, for up to four lessons, based on the number of lessons remaining in the current month.

Dismissal

- Dismissal is considered a last resort only after sufficient communication with the family and significant attempt to resolve the behavior has been made.
- The following situations constitute grounds for immediate dismissal from the studio, subject to the Instructor's discretion:
 - Excessive or repeated late payments
 - Long-term failure to maintain practice standards
 - Persistent absences or tardiness
 - Failure to honor studio policies
 - Repeated neglect to bring materials or refusal to follow instruction
 - Inappropriate or disrespectful behavior, theft, and/or repeated misbehavior
 - Intentional damage to studio property or personal property of Instructor or other students
- At the time of dismissal, the current month's tuition must be paid in full, and an additional fee will be pro-rated per lesson, for up to four lessons, based on the number of lessons remaining in the current month.



Agreement & Release

Revision and Agreement

- This handbook may be revised periodically to address the changing needs of the studio and its student enrollment. The instructor will provide at least two weeks' notice before any changes in Studio Policy take effect.
- The student's continuation of lessons beyond the enforcement date will be deemed affirmation of agreement with the handbook.

Liability Release/Hold Harmless

- If a dispute arises out of, or relates to, this handbook, the instructor, parent and/or student agree to try in good faith to settle the dispute by reasonable communication or, if necessary, non-binding third-party mediation. Legal action shall not be taken.
- Sarah's Studio and Sarah Richards shall be released and discharged from any liabilities, accidents or injuries, or damage to or loss of personal property that the enrolled student or their family members may incur due to participation in studio events.

Photo Release

- During studio events, instructor reserves the right to take photographs and video or audio recording of students for use in studio media. Photos/video taken by other individuals and provided to the instructor may also be used for studio purposes.
- First names may be used, but care will be taken to ensure safety and appropriateness of posts online.
- If you do not want your child's photos used in this manner, please provide a written request to Sarah Richards.