

# **The American Academy of Teachers of Singing Ethical Behavior within the Voice Teaching Profession 2021**

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing (AATS) was founded in 1922 for the purpose of advancing its profession “in ethics, knowledge, and fellow-feeling.” Standards of ethics necessarily evolve with societal understanding. Acknowledging the need to incorporate the progress made in that evolution, AATS offers this 2021 iteration of its code of ethics, reflecting the collective voice of the Academy.

Ethical behavior is constrained to be in compliance with prevailing legal statutes and within the construct of a free enterprise economy. While the Academy recognizes both the importance and limitations of this context, it believes that students’ best interests must ultimately guide the interactions and relationships of the profession. Because of the highly individualized nature of relationships in voice study, there are times when an ethical response exceeds the minimal requirements of law or marketplace. The Academy believes that the teacher, as the professional in these relationships, must strive in all cases to exhibit the highest level of ethical behavior.

## **Ethics of Global Human Behavior/Morals**

As members of the global human community, voice teachers are expected to honor and respect the overarching principles of ethical treatment of fellow humans regarding issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Ethical teachers are committed to the principles of fairness and equity regarding differences including but not limited to those of ethnicity, physical appearance, gender, sexual orientation, ableness, religion, cultural exposure, musical styles, economic resources, and access. These overarching principles are assumed to apply to all subsequent relational categories.

## **Ethical Behavior Between Teacher and Student**

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that ethical teachers:

1. Have the interests of students uppermost in their mind when dealing with every aspect of the profession.
2. Are candid and forthcoming with students during initial auditions about what needs to be done to help students become better singers, explain clearly the process they intend to use in teaching, present relevant studio policy, and answer questions students might have about voice study in the desired studio.
3. Seek to establish and encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect, openness, and candor within which any potential future concerns can be discussed freely and without fear.
4. Do not promise connections or professional advantages as the result of being in their studio and do not prematurely predict success or failure.
5. May correct misinformation and misconceptions but do not denigrate students’ former teachers.

6. Do not insist that their own method is the “only” way to make vocal progress, or guarantee success with their own instruction.
7. Are clear about all financial details up front and at every point in the teacher/student relationship.
8. Do not ask students to recruit for the studio or charge students a lower fee in exchange for the recruitment of new students to the studio.
9. Do not waste students’ time or investment in lessons with interruptions such as telephoning, texting, checking email, or eating.
10. Do not knowingly teach a student who is currently studying with another voice teacher without that teacher’s knowledge and agreement.
11. Allow appropriate lesson observations with the permission of all pertinent parties.
12. Allow students to record lessons.
13. Allow students who wish to leave the studio to do so without recrimination or bad feelings.
14. Promote independence in learning and are neither possessive nor controlling of their students.
15. Do not physically touch students without the student’s expressed permission, and then only to assist with clearly articulated technical objectives.

### **Ethical Behavior Between Student and Teacher**

1. Students have the right to expect teachers to accept graciously their decision to go to another studio. Students should inform the teacher directly of their decision. Students have an ethical responsibility to fulfill all financial obligations to the teacher before leaving.
2. Students have the right to expect teachers to ask their permission to touch them in the course of their instruction and to be informed of the specific technical objectives of such physical contact. They have the right to refuse that request without recrimination.
3. Students do not have the right to state or imply a professional relationship with a teacher on the basis of a master class, a workshop, or a brief period of study without clarifying the nature and extent of the relationship.
4. Students have the right to ask a question and receive a thoughtful and understandable response.

### **Ethical Behavior Between Voice Teachers and Colleagues**

1. Though legal, it is unethical for teachers to actively recruit students currently studying with other teachers, apart from those students who are preparing for specific training transitions such as high school to college, college to graduate school, and amateur to professional.

2. It is unethical for teachers to disparage the teaching of other teachers.
3. It is incumbent on the teacher to help students understand any seemingly conflicting information from the various coaches and directors with whom they work. It is important to respect the work of colleagues and confer with them directly if there are issues any of them feel are not in the student's best interest. It is unethical to put a student in the middle of a conflict between colleagues.
4. Ethical teachers support opportunities for and the mentoring of new teachers.

### **Continuing Education**

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that ethical teachers:

1. Continue to increase their knowledge of science-informed pedagogy so that new, possibly controversial theories, can be critically evaluated.
2. Endeavor to be life-long learners by various means such as attending conferences, reading journals, staying up to date with current practices, and remaining open to new ideas.

### **Ethical Behavior Between Voice Teachers and Institutions**

(colleges, universities, arts academies, community or private businesses, summer institutes, professional organizations)

#### **Profession to Profession**

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that ethical teachers:

1. Have a clear understanding of the boundaries of their profession and of their specific areas of expertise.
2. Have a clear understanding of when serving a student's needs warrants a referral to a colleague, a coach, or professional in another discipline such as laryngology, speech language pathology, physical therapy, or psychology.
3. Seek where possible to become part of a team of such professionals within which, with the student's permission, appropriate information can be shared.

#### **Expectations of Institutions**

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that ethical institutions:

1. Conduct searches ethically and fairly with the utmost professionalism, and expect the same of all members of their search committees.
2. Ensure that processes for advancement do not afford any single voice a position of power that can be wielded unfairly.
3. Communicate adequately with all applicants the status of searches at critical points in the process, especially at their conclusion.

4. Pay a fair wage for the services provided and clearly communicate contract terms, pay scales, and benefits in a timely manner.
5. Communicate changes in status or terms of employment due to shifting needs of the institution as expeditiously and transparently as possible.
6. Provide employees an appropriate voice in institutional policy based on their position at the institution.

### **Obligations of Teachers to Institutions and Professional Organizations**

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that ethical teachers:

1. Fulfill contractual or membership expectations of the institutions and organizations to which they belong.
2. Are collegial members of their institutional or organizational communities.
3. Support interdisciplinary relationships.
4. Participate collegially in conflict resolution.