



PATHWAYS 101

January 7, 2025

equityarc.org



Pathways 101: How To Launch A Pathways Program



Accelerando Inaugural Class, 2017

Walter Bitner

Walter Bitner

lifelong musician in multiple genres:

multi-instrumentalist, singer, conductor

keyboards, lutes, guitars, recorders, percussion

music educator:

K - 12 schools 1991 - 2014

general music, piano, choir, orchestra

writer: Off The Podium walterbitner.com



Walter Bitner

1991 - 2007 Elementary & Middle School music & performing arts teacher/director

Private schools in metropolitan NYC, Tampa, Nashville

alternative, progressive, college preparatory, religious/parochial schools

2008 - 2014 Public arts magnet high school piano, choir & youth orchestra director

Nashville School of the Arts, Music City Youth Orchestra

2014 - 2024 Symphony Orchestras: Director of Education & Community Engagement

Nashville Symphony, Richmond Symphony

Walter Bitner



Nashville School of the Arts Festival Choir & Music City Youth Orchestra, 2014

Nashville Symphony: **Accelerando** (2016 -)



Nashville Symphony Accelerando Ensemble, 2019

How To Launch A Pathways Program

Pathways Programs offer comprehensive support for precollege musicians from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Pathways Programs are all unique expressions of the community from which they come, and they are all different.

They also share many aspects in common as they have grown, built upon, and learned from one another's experiences, challenges, and successes.

Today we will explore many facets of how to start a Pathways Program drawn from examples across the field.

Who Will The Program Serve?

Pathways Programs offer comprehensive support for precollege musicians from historically underrepresented backgrounds.

It's important to start with developing clarity about who will be eligible to participate in the program, and the scope of comprehensive support that the program will provide.

- How will you identify the students? Where will they come from?
- What will the capacity of the program be?

It cost an average of \$9,085 to support one Pathways fellow per school year in 2023-24.

Roughly, \$9K per student, per year. (This estimate of expenses does not include PP staff.)

Pathways Programs Are Intensive

What does your pathway lead to?

Pathways Programs are intensive training programs intended to produce a specific result for all students: in most cases, this is preparation for a professional career, and therefore preparation to major in music performance at the college level.

A (less intensive) high quality music education program may also produce this result for some students! but may not necessarily be the goal or intention of the program for all students.

How Will You Identify and Recruit Students?

Pathways students come from a variety of backgrounds, but in nearly all cases will receive their initial exposure to music and their rudimentary music education from other programs.

- Public Schools
- Private Schools
- Home Schools
- Community Music Schools
- El Sistema inspired programs
- Church Music Programs
- Private Teachers

You will need to find friends in the community who will both identify potential students and assist you in recruiting them.

Engaging With Families

Generally speaking, successful Pathways students have three vital qualities:

- Native Talent
- Strong Motivation
- Strong Family Support

Your audition and selection process will seek students with these qualities, and you will need to engage with the families of your students from the beginning of their journey - as part of the audition and selection process - to establish relationships with those in your students' support systems.

Who Are Your Potential Music Education Allies?

- Individuals in your community
- K-12 Public School Districts
- K-12 Private Schools
- College & University Music Schools
- Conservatories
- Symphony Orchestras
- Nonprofits who work with underrepresented populations
- Churches and religious communities
- Local Philanthropists

Allies are necessary to provide:

- Access to potential students
- Potential resources for many aspects of your Pathways Program:
 - Host/Sponsor
 - Fiscal Administration
 - Facilities
 - Staff
 - Teachers & Facilitators
 - Financial and In Kind Resources
 - Potential Advisory Council or Steering Committee
 - Mutual Support

Most importantly, building a broad base of community support is crucial for your program's success.

Recruit & Develop Your “Team”

Your “Team” is the network of allies from throughout your community who will support your program in a variety of ways:

- Mentorship
- Providing program components
- Providing facilities
- Providing funding
- Providing community connections, network

Your Team is your core group of partners and advisors who have committed to joining you on this journey.

Where (Who?) is “Home”?

It is likely that if you already have a host or program sponsor in mind or already supporting the first steps of your journey, but this is a crucial step - although the leadership to launch a Pathways Program must come from individuals, in most cases a committed institution with a vested interest in developing opportunities for young musicians acts as the host or sponsor of the program.

Your “Home Base” provides support including initial inspiration for starting the program, funding, staff, social network in the community, and the ability to provide at least some components of your program.

Program Components

Once you have identified your host and identified and begun to develop allies in the community, it is important to consider the components that your program will provide.

Pathways Programs typically provide a suite of components that collectively prepare students for success in college and as professional musicians. These components provide a breadth of experiences usually beyond the capacity of a single organization to deliver.

Hence: allies and partners are crucial for your success!

Program Components

- College Prep Advising (94%)
- Mental Health and Wellness (61%)
- Mentorship (89%)
- Music Theory (89%)
- Music History (39%)
- Performance Opportunities (100%)
- Advisory Meetings/Support Plans/Individualized Curriculum (100%)
- Mock Auditions (78%)
- Juries/Performance Reviews (89%)

(% averages provided by eighteen 2023-24 Equity Arc Pathways Collective members)

Private Lesson Teachers

- The most crucial relationship for each student's experience
- Potentially, lifelong
- Each student's private teacher:
 - Provides a model of someone who has successfully been through the training and built a career
 - Provides consistent (weekly) attention to student progress in many components of the PP
 - Works alongside PP staff to align the focus of lessons with the overall plan for student success
- Primary for delivery or alignment of crucial PP components:
 - College Audition Preparation
 - Preparation for Ensemble Training
 - Mentorship & Professional Development
 - Music History (& Theory)

College Prep Advising

Winning auditions to study music in college is a primary goal of Pathways Programs for each student:

- Mock auditions
- College prep courses
- Meeting with families
- Financial support for applications & recordings
- Travel expenses for auditions



Mental Health & Wellness

Dedicated attention to this aspect of the musician's journey is part of about half of existing Pathways Programs - there is increasing awareness that strategies and practices for maintaining mental health and wellness are important for student success.



Mentorship

All Pathways Programs offer support for these aspects of career preparation, but differ in how they are delivered.

- Scheduled advisory meetings throughout the year
- Group presentations or classes
- Individual advisors/mentors provided for students who are not the student's private teacher



Music Theory

The level of accomplishment necessary to be prepared to study music in college requires a more intense and systematic delivery for music theory than can usually be provided through the student's private teacher alone.

In most cases, students take classes either through the program, at school, and/or through a partner.



Music History

Successful Pathways students have enough background in music history to give them appropriate context for understanding their training for performing the historical repertoire. This can come from a variety of sources including:

- Private lesson teacher
- Writing program notes
- Writing concert reports
- Classes, seminars, etc.



Performance Opportunities

Pathways students are preparing for a performance career! These experiences are crucial and provided by all Pathways Programs:

- Recitals
- Juries
- Masterclasses
- Ensemble Concerts



Advisory Meetings

Advisory meetings between program staff and students/students and parents take a variety of forms among programs, and are crucial for guiding each student's individualized preparation for college auditions. The purpose of these meetings is to prepare students for success by articulating clear expectations and following up on them, and include individualized curriculum, support plans, and if necessary, disciplinary measures.



Mock Auditions

Auditions - for ensemble participation and chair placement, for college acceptance and ultimately professional positions are a standard feature of the professional career. Mock auditions - all of the motions without the consequences - are a common preparatory activity employed by three quarters of all Pathways Programs to help their students get ready!



Juries/Performance Reviews

Juries or other forms of performance review are a standard component of music school at most levels and critical for preparing Pathways students for success, as well as evaluating their progress to ensure they remain on track for college auditions.



Program Components

Although all components are crucial, not *all* components are as necessary or needed as intensely at *all* stages of a student's journey through a Pathways Program. Generally speaking, the intensity and expenses for each student increase throughout their journey, with the most intensive and expensive seasons being a student's junior and senior years.

All components or nearly all are crucial to your students' success and the success of your program!

Financial Support

- Instrument Purchase/Funding (78%)
- Instrument Rentals (89%)
- Audition Travel Stipends (94%)
- Large Ensemble Tuition Assistance (89%)
- Chamber Music Tuition/ Coaching Fees (83%)
- Summer Study Funding (94%)
- Local Transportation Assistance (72%)
- Private Lesson Stipend (94%)

(% provided by current Equity Arc program members)

Financial Support - other potential expenses

- Administration and staff
- Background checks
- Marketing and promotion
- Concert tickets for students and families
- Food for family events - recitals, annual dinner, etc.

Funding Your Pathways Program

Funding for your program will most likely come from a variety of sources including:

- Sponsoring institution
- Individual donors
- Philanthropic foundations
- Religious organizations
- Community partners (in-kind donations)
- Government funding sources
 - Local
 - State
 - Federal



Determine Scale and Scope of Your Program

Once you have determined who your allies are, and their capacity to provide access to potential students and support for the components of your program, determine a target capacity (number of students in a full cohort) to recruit for, and a plan for scaling the growth of the program.

Example:

Target capacity 20 students, four year scaled launch:

- Year 1: Accept 6 students
- Year 2: Add 5 students (total 11)
- Year 3: Add 4 students (total 15)
- Year 4: Add 5 students (total 20)

(Maintain auditions each year to keep program at capacity, etc.)

Your Pathways Program Design

The design of your program is a plan for how you will:

- Identify, recruit, and select students
- Engage dedicated commitment from students and families
- Determine the components your program will provide and how they will be provided: where, when, by whom, etc.
- Gain funding to provide all of the above!
- Determine a Timeline to launch your Pathways Program!

Example: Accelerando Launch Timeline 2015 - 2022

Target capacity 24 students, five year scaled launch:

- 2016-17: Accept 6 students*
- 2017-18: Add 4 students (total 10)
- 2018-19: Add 5 students (total 15)
- 2019-20: Add 5 students (total 20)
- 2020-21: Add 5 students (total 24)

There will always be attrition, and auditions may not yield enough qualified students to participate in the program. Actual program capacity will change year by year due to many variables.

* “Ballpark” expense budget for 6 students @ \$9,085 each = \$54,510 + staff

Thank You!

Questions & Answers

Walter Bitner

Consulting Services

Email: walter.bitner@icloud.com

Website: **Off The Podium** walterbitner.com