

FBISD Piano Technician Program offers 'keys to success' for high school students

From baby grands to uprights, pianos require professional care to retain their beauty and stay in tune.

FBISD's Piano Technician Program offers a rare and remarkable opportunity that turns high school students into skilled piano technicians, mastering the delicate art of tuning, maintaining and restoring pianos - setting students up with the keys to success.

This innovative Program of Choice is housed at Marshall High School and is a collaboration between FBISD and the University of Houston's Moores School of Music.

After graduation, students can pursue opportunities for advanced training as a Master Piano Technician.

The program's instructor James Romig is in his third year of teaching in FBISD. He recognizes the growing demand for skilled technicians.

"Not many people know about this as a career opportunity," Romig said. "There is a massive need out there for repair work, not just for pianos but for every instrument. Fort Bend ISD is the first school district to create a piano technician program."

Currently, there are 30 students in the program.

Two of the students - Celeste and Jose - have been working on aural tuning, developing the ability to distinguish beats and fine-tune pianos by ear.

"I did orchestra all of my years in middle school and my mom started me on an instrument pretty young, so that definitely helps me with my sense of pitch and figuring out intervals," Celeste said. "Mr. Romig has helped me with the specifics."

"My proudest moment was when I completed my first ever full piano tuning," Jose said.

Romig provides opportunities for critical thinking and hands-on learning for his students. They rotate through workstations focused on restringing, hammer repair and ear training. Students also construct fully functioning, mini action models that take about three weeks to complete.

"This work requires a lot of patience and is very detailed," Romig said.

The pianos used for learning are donated by Steinway and area churches or they come from the district. Students also utilize full-size action models that allow them to see what a piano looks like on the inside and how it works. First, they learn the various parts of a piano and then they learn how to manipulate and regulate the pieces. Romig describes it as a "chiropractic adjustment of the piano."

"The piano gets played and played, things wear out over time, and then you need to readjust everything to get it back in fighting shape," he said.

Romig is a proud recipient of the Fort Bend Education Foundation's Founders Grant - \$20,000 to outfit his classroom with the necessary equipment for his students' success.

He was able to purchase three regulation stations that teach students how to adjust key depth and hammer height, additional action models from Steinway, as well as a tool chest that includes strings and professional tuning levers.

"Without the proper tools, this program wouldn't be possible," Romig said.

Former student London Washington said he wasn't quite sure what he would do after high school.

"The idea of working on pianos interested me," he said. "After I took the class for a year, I was still curious as to what the field had to offer. By my second year, I was fully committed to being a piano tech."

Washington recalls an especially proud moment while in the program.

"Mr. Romig had a chart where he would give stars to individual students for each lesson we mastered or sufficiently learned," he said. "I was proud to have gained so many stars on that chart. It showed how far I had come as a technician."

Now, an intern at the University of Houston, Washington continues to explore new

opportunities in the field, all thanks to the foundation he built in FBISD's Piano Technician Program.

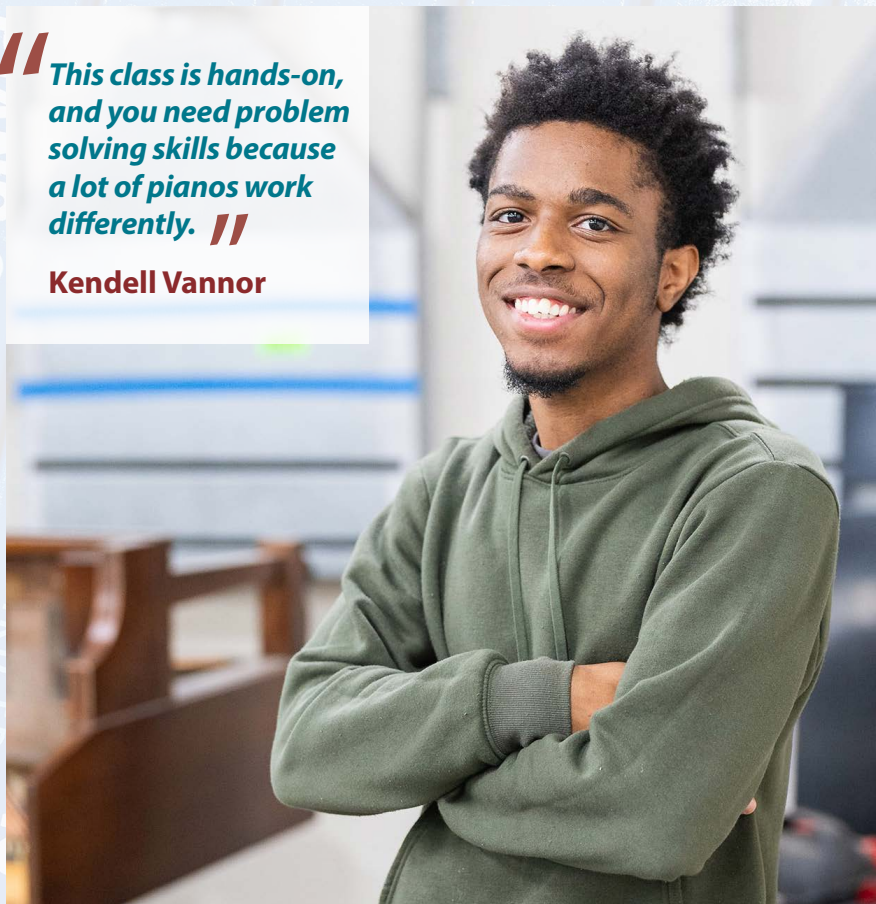
To learn more about the program, visit the [Piano Technician Program website](#).





"This class is hands-on, and you need problem solving skills because a lot of pianos work differently. "

Kendell Vannor



"When the opportunity came to join piano tech, I took the chance and found a new special skill and hobby. "

Elijah Mitchell



"The most valuable lesson I learned from the program is to push through struggles. "

Jeremiah Pierson



Program Instructor James Romig