Stan Flanders is an Athens, GA–based musician, educator, and instrument repair technician. He currently serves as an adjunct instructor of clarinet and saxophone at Young Harris College and Truett McConnell University.

As a music educator and lecturer, Dr. Flanders regularly presents masterclasses throughout Georgia. His students have consistently earned placements in district and all-state bands, honor ensembles, and have received awards such as the Governor's Honors Award and the Classic Center Cultural Foundation Scholarship, along with being highly recruited by colleges in and out of state.

A versatile performer across multiple musical genres, Dr. Flanders has performed with the Asheville, Athens, and Augusta Symphonies, as well as the Symphony of the Mountains. He has also presented at NASA regional and national conferences and collaborated with artists including Big Star Third, Jason Scheff (Chicago), Mike Mills (R.E.M.), The Temptations, and Narayanan Muralikrishnan. As a founding member of the experimental ensemble :lovesongs, he has opened for acts such as Primus and Sunn O))).

Committed to community engagement, Dr. Flanders served as a servant leadership scholar during his undergraduate studies and continues to give back through HEART Music, a non-profit dedicated to providing students with high-quality music education. He has previously served as teacher representative and currently serves as treasurer, helping to support music programs through donations and grants.

Dr. Flanders holds a Bachelor of Music from Columbus State University and both a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Georgia.

1) What do you like about private teaching versus large ensemble teaching?

Every student is a puzzle, and the one-on-one environment allows me to get to know them as individuals—musically and personally. Beyond the obvious embouchure, air, and technical topics, I enjoy learning what motivates them, how they learn, and how they interpret music. That deeper personal connection is something I can't fully achieve in a large ensemble setting.

2) How do you structure lessons? What advice do you have for structuring lessons for high school and middle school students versus collegiate students?

I generally structure lessons in the order I want students to practice, while also addressing individual needs. A typical format looks like this:

1. Warm-up

- College students are expected to arrive warmed up, though I guide them through routines during their first few semesters.
- Middle and high school students spend the first 10–15 minutes warming up so they understand its importance.

2. Long tones

- Always with a tuner and metronome.
- Often in the key of their etude or repertoire.

- Variations may include air-attack to articulation, shaped long tones, intervallic long tones, and metronome-guided vibrato practice (quarter, eighth, triplet, sixteenth).
- Jazz students use long tones over backing tracks, moving stepwise between changes.

3. Overtones

- Introduced as early as 7th grade once a solid embouchure is established.
- More advanced players add front-finger/altissimo exercises.

4. Scales and patterns

- A given—always included.

5. Articulation exercises

6. Etudes

7. Repertoire

8. Sight-reading

- Depending on level, this could include counting aloud, isolating a rhythm of the day, or for advanced students, reading duets.

Advice:

Younger students benefit from structured routines and developing consistency. Collegiate students need increasing autonomy, with lessons focused more on refinement, interpretation, and individual artistry.

3) Who influenced you to become a performer and educator?

For me, it was a series of moments rather than a single person. In middle school I discovered my parents' vinyl records, and hearing the saxophone solos on Steely Dan albums was a turning point—I knew the saxophone was going to be part of my life.

In high school, attending JanFest and hearing my first saxophone quartet perform the Desenclos Quartet opened a new world. Around the same time, Dr. Kenneth Fischer gave me my first classical saxophone CD. I played Heiden's *Diversion* nonstop. That led me to my first real saxophone teacher, Jason Wallace, and I made regular drives to Georgia College and State University for lessons. During that time I heard Taimur Sullivan perform a guest artist concert—mostly on baritone sax—and that truly cemented my goals while weirding out the concert hall of blue hairs.

Today, inspiration never stops. Old friends, colleagues, and musicians I meet randomly on gigs or in classrooms continue to teach me. I'm just a small part of a constantly growing musical community.

4) What's your favorite success story about a student?

It's difficult to choose, because many of my students have accomplished great things both with and without me. But one story stands out.

I began working with a student in 2020 through the non-profit HEART Music. They were a sixth-grade saxophonist navigating the challenges of remote learning during the pandemic. Despite the limitations of virtual instruction, this student showed clear musical promise along with a strong work ethic. Thanks to HEART Music's grant support and partnerships with local schools, we were able to maintain consistent, high-quality instruction during that time.

Throughout middle school, we built a solid foundation—focusing on technique, practice habits, and confidence. When the student transitioned into high school, our lessons ended, but the foundation remained.

In fall 2024, I returned to their high school to help prepare saxophone students for District Honor Band auditions. Due to scheduling limitations, I only had a few weeks to work with them. This former student arrived prepared and focused, and although we made some refinements—particularly in musical ornamentation—they approached the work with maturity and independence.

Soon after, we learned that the student earned first chair tenor saxophone for the 9/10 District Honor Band in a highly competitive district for saxophone.

The best part of this story is that they didn't need me by that point. Once the foundation was set, they knew exactly how to continue growing on their own.

5) How do you balance collegiate teaching, secondary teaching, and performing?

With a calendar—and a prayer. 🙏

Organization and flexibility are essential, but so is knowing when to breathe.

6) What advice do you have for music education students who want to start a private studio or become a professor?

Get out there. Meet people. Observe great teachers, abandon your ego, and enjoy performing with any and everyone. Relationships open doors—both for teaching and for performing—and they help you build a reputation.

Practice your instrument and model the level of discipline you expect from your students. "I'm too busy to practice" is an excuse I hear too often. If you don't make time to practice, how can you expect your students to take it seriously?

7) What practice techniques do you give your students that others can use with their own students or personal practice?

I emphasize self-evaluation. When I'm not there, students must become their own teacher. Or as I say: "Check yo self before you wreck yo self."

Some essentials:

- Actively listen to recordings with the score or your part in front of you.
- Record yourself often and use that to plan your practice.
- Use a mirror to monitor embouchure and finger movement (and stop fixing your hair!).

I also teach three "magic hat-tricks" ⚽ for self-evaluation:

1. Business Card Trick

Place a business card between the reed and mouthpiece; draw a line where they meet. Place your thumbnail on that line and bring the mouthpiece in until your bottom lip reaches the thumb. Not exact, but it gives a helpful reference point for mouthpiece placement.

2. Top Teeth Pressure Trick

Many students avoid putting their top teeth fully on the mouthpiece. With your embouchure set (but top teeth not yet engaged), gently wiggle the neck while gradually lowering the top teeth until the movement stops. This also helps reduce excessive biting.

3. Top Lip Levitation

For high-school-level and above:

Play a middle B without your top lip touching the mouthpiece. Students usually look ridiculous, and we all laugh—but it reveals issues like:

- top teeth not engaging,
- too little mouthpiece, or
- corners/lower-lip muscles not supporting

This exercise helps students feel the correct muscular engagement needed for a stable saxophone embouchure.