



# VOICE STUDIOS IN THE MODERN ERA: CREATING SAFE AND DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Presented by Victoria Vargas, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities,  
and André Chiang, D.M.A., University of Nevada, Las Vegas



## ABSTRACT AND PURPOSE

For many students, their first one-on-one interactions with a teacher are in private lessons. Voice teachers are given the opportunity and responsibility to nurture students' development in a more direct and intimate way. However, instead of creating an environment where students can seek information, have a safe space to experiment, and discuss their progress openly, many are confined solely to their teacher's perceptions of their voice and career track. Countless stories have been told of abuses in the studio and how lessons are not student centric. These experiences range from assigning repertoire that does not resonate with a student to offering unsolicited advice on a student's appearance. These practices do not provide a safe environment for student growth and do not serve the greater art form. **The paradigm of "the teacher is never wrong" must change to a dynamic learning experience for students centered on their most successful methods of learning.**

The voice teacher is a growing career. Trajectories into the field are not formulaic, and voice teachers can be as diverse in their range of experience as their students. Voice studio practices and structures often rely on traditions acquired through the teacher's own experience with their teacher, which can lead to problematic practices. This poster examines how we can evolve these practices and create more inclusive and safe environments for all students. Teachers must endeavor to increase our knowledge of progressive practices, representative repertoire, and safe spaces.

The specific aspects we discuss in this poster include:

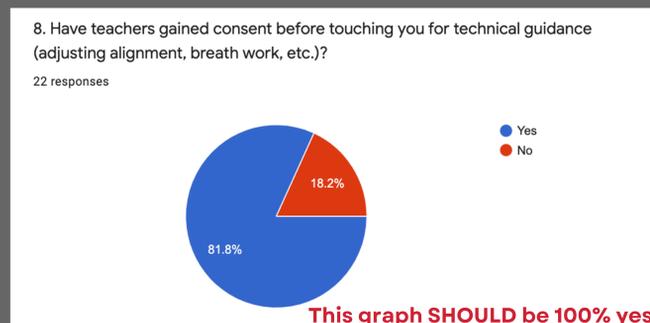
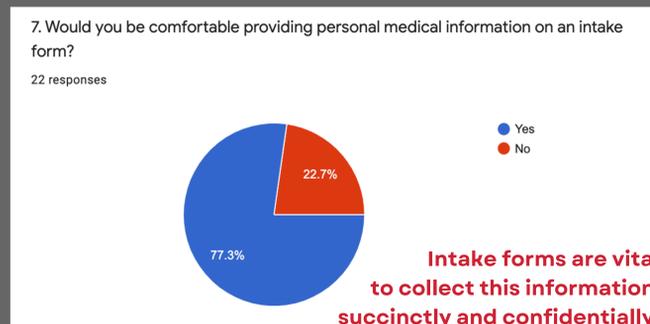
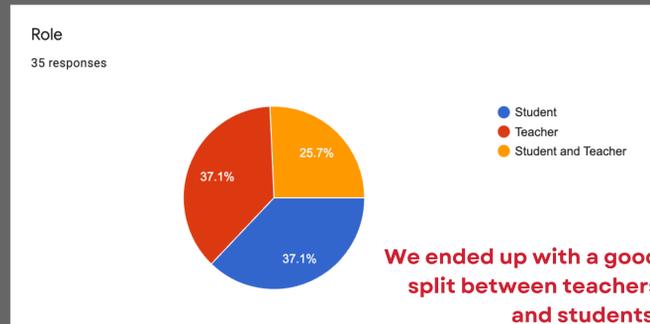
- Data driven needs about consent
- Information gathering for instruction
- Delineating diversity and inclusion within the studio

Our goal is to curate and provide current best practices for an inclusive studio. **Our suggested resources include questions for inclusive intake/consent forms, safe space training, lesson communication and management practices, and the benefits of inclusivity for both teachers and students.** These resources are useful for both Institutional and private studios.

**SCAN FOR DIGITAL MATERIALS:  
INTAKE FORM QUESTIONS AND LINKS  
FOR BEST PRACTICES RESOURCES**

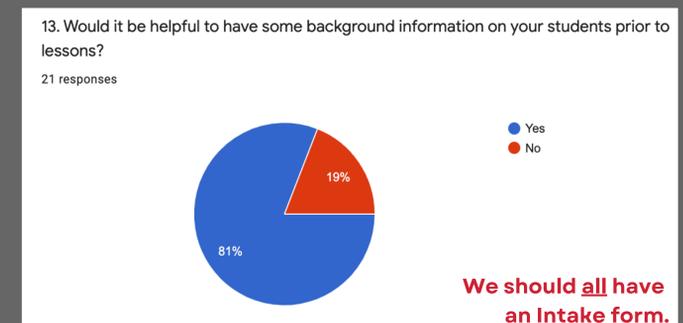
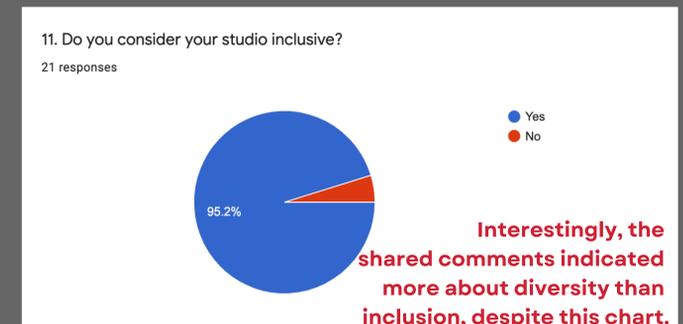
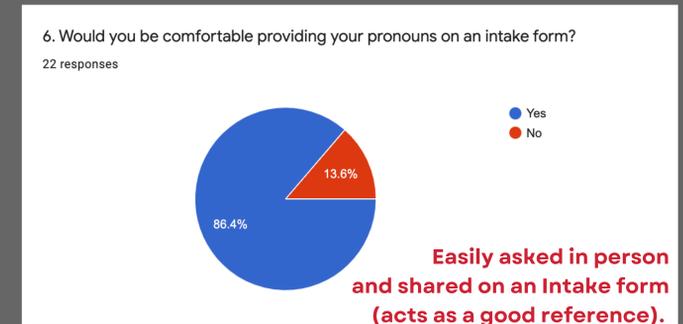


## DATA



A survey was sent to voice teachers and students from across the country. Questions on the survey included comfort with sharing medical information, pronouns, consent for physical touch in lessons, and approaches to create an inclusive space. In total 35 responses were received.

Through collection, curation, and dissemination, best practices for a safe and inclusive studio emerge. We also understand that best practices change regularly so we want this work to be living and changeable.



## CONCLUSIONS

In looking at materials and taking notes from our survey data, we have determined that **intake forms are an incredibly useful tool** for both students and teachers and that generally more information is better for student-teacher interactions. **Pronouns and identity are important** in the studio and for the purposes of growth in singing different genres and technical facilities. Seeing the response to providing medical information was enlightening. Despite not being medical professionals, knowing some personal information can inform how we teach and how students respond to our teaching. Anecdotes spoke of revelations happening when certain conditions were shared between student and teacher. **Consent for touch, while sitting at 81%, should be at 100%.** Even with familiarity, students will enter our space in different head spaces and physical conditions which necessitate consent. A final conclusion comes with the word and idea of inclusivity. We found that inclusivity and diversity were often used interchangeably, and we want to make sure the ideas have necessary separation. Inclusivity deals with diversity but with an emphasis on access given to diverse groups. They work in tandem, but we need to endeavor to both diversify and give increased access in the studio. These are first steps for realizing safe, accepting spaces.