



Greenville Independent School District
Suzuki Strings Program

Student/Parent Handbook

2018 – 2019

School Year

Greenville ISD's Suzuki Strings Program

History of Greenville Suzuki Strings Program

The Greenville Independent School District and the Greenville Suzuki Strings Association make one of the most dynamic collaborations in the Suzuki world today. No other town Greenville's size can boast of a Suzuki program offered completely free to its students in addition to a yearly Spring Workshop. A model of success!

The Greenville Suzuki Strings Association was formed in 1997, dedicating itself to encouraging and supporting a Suzuki Strings program for the children and adults of our community. Suzuki instruction made its debut in Greenville, Texas in the fall of 2002 with violin lessons for the four year old Hunt County Head Start students. Today, the program has two violin teachers and a cello instructor who split their time between Bowie Elementary, Carver Elementary, Crockett Elementary, Lamar Elementary, Travis Elementary, the Sixth Grade Center, Greenville Middle School and Greenville High School. Today, our students perform throughout the community and at events such as the Threadgill Concert Series; the Bob Wills Fiddle Festival and Contest; and GISD's Veteran's Day Program.

GSSA is focused primarily on raising funds for instruments for the GISD students and sponsoring the annual Spring Suzuki Workshop. The GSSA has been able to purchase instruments for all of the children taking cello, viola and violin lessons in GISD at this time. The need to acquire instruments continues as our students grow into larger instruments and new students join the program.

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki

Shinichi Suzuki, the man who developed the Suzuki Method, was born on October 17, 1898, in Nagoya, Japan. He was one of twelve children and his father owned a violin factory. Shinichi and his brothers and sisters played near the factory and saw instruments being made, but the children never realized what beautiful sounds could come from a violin. When he was seventeen, Shinichi heard a recording of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, played by a famous violinist named Mischa Elman. He was amazed that a violin could make such a beautiful tone because he had thought it was just a toy!

The Suzuki Method (from the Suzuki Association of the Americas)

Every Child Can Learn

More than fifty years ago, Japanese violinist **Shinichi Suzuki** realized the implications of the fact that children the world over learn to speak their native language with ease. He began to apply the basic principles of language acquisition to the learning of music, and called his method the **mother-tongue approach**. The ideas of parent responsibility, loving encouragement, constant repetition, etc., are some of the special features of the Suzuki approach.

Parent Involvement

As when a child learns to talk, parents are involved in the musical learning of their child. They attend lessons with the child and serve as “home teachers” during the week. One parent often learns to play before the child, so that s/he understands what the child is expected to do. Parents work with the teacher to create an enjoyable learning environment.

Early Beginning

The early years are crucial for developing mental processes and muscle coordination. Listening to music should begin at birth; formal training may begin at age three or four, but it is never too late to begin.

Listening

Children learn words after hearing them spoken hundreds of times by others. Listening to music every day is important, especially listening to pieces in the Suzuki repertoire so the child knows them immediately.

Repetition

Constant repetition is essential in learning to play an instrument. Children do not learn a word or piece of music and then discard it. They add it to their vocabulary or repertoire, gradually using it in new and more sophisticated ways.

Encouragement

As with language, the child’s effort to learn an instrument should be met with sincere praise and encouragement. Each child learns at his/her own rate, building on small steps so that each one can be mastered. Children are also encouraged to support each other’s efforts, fostering an attitude of generosity and cooperation.

Learning with Other Children

In addition to private lessons, children participate in regular group lessons and performance at which they learn from and are motivated by each other.

Graded Repertoire

Children do not practice exercises to learn to talk, but use language for its natural purpose of communication and self-expression. Pieces in the Suzuki repertoire are designed to present technical problems to be learned in the context of the music rather than through dry technical exercises.

Delayed Reading

Children learn to read after their ability to talk has been well established. In the same way, children should develop basic technical competence on their instruments before being taught to read music.

Suzuki Violin Method

Principles of Study and Guidance

Four Essential Points for Teachers and Parents

1. The child should listen to the reference recordings every day at home to develop musical sensitivity. Rapid progress depends on this listening.
2. Tonalization, or the production of a beautiful tone, should be stressed in the lesson and at home.
3. Constant attention should be given to accurate information, correct posture, and the proper bow hold.
4. Parents and teachers should strive to motivate the child so he/she will enjoy practicing correctly at home.

Greenville ISD's Program

Master Classes

Individual lessons are given once a week. These Master Classes will begin when the parent has completed the parent class. Each week the child will have approximately 25 minutes of lesson time with the teacher and 25 minutes of observation time. For these Master Classes, the two students and their parents will be in attendance for the entire 55 minute class period. While one student and parent are working with the teacher, the other student and parent are observing. Each student/parent pair receives an individual lesson and an observation lesson during the class period each week. The importance of the observation lesson cannot be overstated. As much or more can be learned by student and parent during the observation lesson as is learned during their individual instruction half of the class.

Group Lessons

Group lessons could take place before or after school.

Instruments

Sizing of instruments; Box Violins; Instrument Care; and Instrument Loan Agreement will be reviewed by instructors.

Attendance

Attendance is expected at all lessons, group lessons, concerts and rehearsals except in case of illness.

Re-Enrollment

Returning parents will have one week to respond to the lesson schedule offer via email, phone call, Remind or in person.

Parent Responsibilities

New families must attend the Parent Education sessions provided at the beginning of the year. These sessions will help you in understanding the Suzuki philosophy, method and approach; how to practice at home with your child; and expectations within the program. It will also provide you with a chance to meet new families that are pursuing the same for their children.

More Parent Education sessions on various topics are provided for new and current families throughout the year. Being a Suzuki parent requires that you pursue ongoing parent education, as this helps you in becoming a better home teacher to your child.

At least one parent of a K-5 student is **required** to attend their child's weekly lesson. This same parent must also be the one who oversees the home practice, as they will be the one more privy to details that need to be fixed and in following through on what the teacher has assigned. We understand that circumstances arise in which the lesson parent cannot attend, with the other parent or a relative filling in their place. This is fine here and there, but can become a real problem if the child's "home teacher" is changing constantly.

For students that are in grades 6-12, it is recommended that parents attend at least 4 of their student's lessons throughout the year. Depending upon the student, the parent may be asked to attend every lesson.

Each lesson, the Suzuki teacher will emphasize a specific task or goal to work on during the week. In order to be successful, it is very important to practice every single day. Several short sessions with the parental guidance are more beneficial than a long "catch up" session after a week of no practice. A good beginner's goal would be to spend at least as many minutes each day as actual instructional time received at each lesson. Practice time increases with advancement.

Make up Lessons

Make up lessons are not provided by any teacher in the Suzuki Program.

PERFORMANCES

As the students progress on their instruments, they have the opportunity to share their music with others through performances.

Rising Stars

This ensemble is geared toward students that are in the Early Book 1 through Mid-Book 2 levels. Students must demonstrate the following in order to be considered eligible:

- Maintains good posture, with correct violin placement on the shoulder
- Able to make a bow hold without assistance or correction and maintains a correct bow hold while playing through any piece
- Plays with beautiful tone, drawing straight bow strokes across the string
- Maintains correct left hand set up and plays notes in tune consistently
- Must be attending group class on a regular basis to maintain ensemble playing skills
- Demonstrates proper performance etiquette and behavior, pays attention, and follows the leader when performing pieces
- Able to perform all Twinkle variations and theme; and Lightly Row or French Folk Song in polished form for cellists

*Please note that these same indicators are used to determine a student's readiness to begin music reading.

**Student readiness is ultimately determined by the teacher. Failure to fulfill any of the above requirements will affect the performance quality of the entire group itself.

Suzuki Strings Ensemble

This advanced ensemble is for students that are Mid-Book 2 and upward. Performers further strengthen and develop their ensemble and music reading skills in addition to performing standard Suzuki repertoire. Students must demonstrate the following in order to be considered eligible:

- Maintains good technique, posture, and set up
- Maintains Suzuki review pieces, always having them performance ready
- Demonstrates strong music reading skills
- Demonstrates proper performance etiquette and behavior, pays attention, and follows the leader when performing pieces
- Attends weekly rehearsals on a consistent basis
- Prepares and practices their own individual part in between rehearsals

- Students and Parents will also be asked to follow written expectations of all ensemble members and that such expectations will be understood and followed through

**Student readiness is ultimately determined by the teacher.

Rehearsals

Regular rehearsals will take place during the school year.

UIL Contests and Competitions

Participation is greatly encouraged for UIL competitions and contests. Participation is left to the discretion of the Suzuki Strings instructors. Greenville ISD sets travel policies that we are required to follow. All UIL competition participants are required to attend with Suzuki Strings instructors as they are legally responsible for the students from the moment they get together until the moment the students are dismissed at the end of the event. If a student must ride with a parent, there must be arrangements made so that the school and instructors know in advance that this will occur.

Concert Dress

In order that the Suzuki Program may be viewed as outstanding, we must look and act outstanding.

General Rules:

- Dress as if it were a special occasion
- Black round-toe, ballet flat style shoes are the most preferable
- Heels must not be more 2-3 inches
- No clothing item is allowed that exposes your knees
- Shirts must be tucked in

Informal:

- Red shirt, polo shirt preferably (solid color, no stripes)
- Boys - Black pants
- Girls – Black skirt – knee length or longer

Formal:

- Boys – Black slacks or suit; white collared, button-down shirt; red accents – tie, bowtie, cummerbund
- Girls – Black slacks or black dress skirt; knee length or lower; white blouse, white collared button-down shirt; red accents – hair accessories, scarves, jewelry

Uniform dress is strictly enforced.

Summer Lessons

It is highly recommended that all students in the program sign up for summer lessons. Summer is a good time that a student can make a great deal of progress and learn 2-3 new pieces in that time frame, thus allowing them to “hit the ground running” once the new year begins. Summer lesson fees and tuition are determined by each individual teacher.

Annual Greenville Suzuki Strings Workshop

The annual Greenville Suzuki Strings Workshop is usually held in February in Greenville, Texas. Friday night and all day Saturday are packed with fun and learning! We have teachers for students of all ages and levels as well as a class for those who may not have even begun their Suzuki training! Courses are offered for violin, viola, and cello. We also offer orchestra, fiddling, an early childhood class and enrichment courses.

Greenville Suzuki Strings Parent Club

The booster club is an organization for parents of Suzuki students. Members sponsor activities that contribute to the growth and development of the Suzuki Program at the schools in Greenville ISD. It is a requirement for parents to volunteer at least two times each year at a performance or Suzuki Strings event, such as working the concession stand at concerts. The concession sales are for the financial benefit of everyone in the Suzuki Program as profits provide instruments for our students. Participation by all parents is critical.

Greenville Independent School District's Suzuki

Program's Home Teacher and Parent

Education Agreement

The home-teacher can be a mother/father, aunt/uncle, grandparent or guardian- as long as the home-teacher is one and the same person for the following role:

Before the child begins lessons, the home-teacher attends 2-4 sessions of Parent Education (1 hour sessions). No children attend this meeting as it is private for the home-teacher and private teacher to work together.

Sessions of Parent Education will cover: Suzuki Philosophy, Assigned Reading (handouts and books), Impact on family lifestyle, Teacher/Parent/Child roles and goals, Parent learns to play Twinkle on an instrument (daily home practice), Parent becomes Home-Teacher, Home-practice: motivation and organization.

Before the child begins lessons, the home teacher discusses certain lifestyle issues discussed in parent education with their spouse and children such as: prioritizing the family schedule and paring down commitments in order to make a commitment to:

1. Weekly private lessons during the weekdays
2. Weekly group classes on designated days
3. When signed up, performances and/or occasional community outreach events
4. Parent Volunteer commitments of two minimum per year for the GISD Suzuki Program.
5. Further family discussions include: setting the tone for a respectful/supportive environment that honors the importance of daily practice with the home-teacher and daily listening to classical music (Suzuki CD, Pandora, NPR, CDs, DVDs, live concerts).
6. As it is the home-teacher's job to create the nurturing environment for their child, it is the home-teacher's job to be the one in charge of "pushing Play" on the radio, CD, DVD player (no iPods or anything that uses headphones/ear buds).

The home-teacher comes with the child and attends all lessons and group classes while taking notes and making careful observations.

The home-teacher practices the given assignment at home with the child on a daily basis.

The home-teacher uses a "positive approach" and "one step at a time" teaching concept along with parent education tips and other tips from weekly lessons and group classes. Positive approach is strongly emphasized.

The home-teacher creates a distraction-free/quiet/interruption-free/private area for practicing with the child.

It is the intention of the private teacher to nurture and develop the working relationship between teacher-parent-child over many years through all the developmental years. The teacher is dedicated to supporting and problem solving with the parent to improve home-practice.

The teacher is dedicated to identifying different learning styles of the child and adapting their teaching style and strategies for the success of the child. Therefore, it is important that the parent maintain good communication and frequent updates (in private, not in front of the child) regarding practicing as practicing will go through a natural cycle of "ups and downs as well as plateaus".

Get a head start with parent education and begin reading:

NURTURED BY LOVE by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (Required Reading)

ABILITY DEVELOPMENT FROM AGE ZERO by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki

SHINICHI SUZUKI: THE MAN and HIS PHILOSOPHY by Evelyn Hermann

* Your teacher may have additional reading resources to recommend.

Please sign and date to indicate that you have read the above information and agree to uphold the Suzuki method standard in order to have a successful and productive experience in the GISD Suzuki program.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____