

SUZUKI PHILOSOPHY

Shinichi Suzuki was a famous Japanese violin teacher who believed that all children possess musical talent, and that it can be developed if started at a young age. He taught thousands of children and teachers during his nearly 100 years of life. In fact, a 1961 performance by a group of 400 Suzuki students is what inspired the famous cellist Pablo Casals to say:

“Perhaps it is music that will save the world.”

PHILOSOPHY: Suzuki saw that all children learned their native language, and his approach is based on that. Children learn language by listening to it, by parents and friends reinforcing what they have learned, and by repeating it many times. Children also learn language at their own pace. So learning the violin involves listening to recordings of the music they will play, positive reinforcement for each skill learned, parental involvement, playing violin with friends, and lots of repetition. In a true Suzuki setting, children would take a private lesson each week and also have a group lesson each week, and parents would supervise their daily practice.

LESSONS: We will give our first graders as much of this model as our school setting affords. We will have two classes every week, with two aims. The 12:15 p.m. classes are “lesson classes” (our best equivalent of a “private lesson”) and will have about 13 children per class. Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe these classes: bring a notebook and sit quietly in the back of the classroom! The 1:15 p.m. classes are “group classes” with about 26 children per class. The group classes are where skills learned in the lesson classes will be reinforced with fun activities. Attached you can find when your child's classes will take place, according to their first-grade teacher.

LISTENING: An important part of the Suzuki approach is listening. We will listen to recordings of the Suzuki music in class, and I also will be giving a copy of these recordings to first grade teachers to play in class at their discretion (during clean-up time, etc.) Parents are encouraged to purchase a recording of “Suzuki Violin School Book 1” from Old Town Music (626-793-4730), Dr. Music in Eagle Rock (323-258-9010) at sharmusic.com or swstrings.com. You can listen to this recording while eating, driving in the car, etc. Also, you are encouraged to listen to all different kinds of violin music!

PRACTICE: When children asked him how much they should practice, Shinichi Suzuki always said, “Only on the days you eat!” It is true, children will make the most progress if they practice **every day**, for about 15 minutes, at this age. Even before they start playing on “real” violins, the children will have songs and other activities to practice. I will send home a weekly practice assignment. The minimum practicing requirement for our program is 15 minutes, three times a week. They will receive a practice chart to fill out starting next week. Please return the practice chart every week for the 12:15 p.m. class; children will receive a sticker on a chart for practicing 15 minutes, three times a week, or more. I will keep track of how much each child practices. Please bring the chart so your child is not left out!

PACE: “Start young, go slow, and don't stop!” is another of Suzuki's sayings. In other words: be patient! Your child is young, and we will be learning a lot more than how to play songs. We will work on the proper position, on respect for the instrument, listening, and also playing. It will be a while before we play anything you recognize; please praise your child for every small step. Thank you!