

FAQ for Prospective Suzuki Parents

1. What is the Suzuki Method?

The Suzuki method is based on the philosophy of Japanese violin teacher Shin'ichi Suzuki, who believed that "every child can be educated". He realized that if all children learn their mother tongue, all children can learn to play music, and based the method on the way we learn language: through exposure, imitation, encouragement, repetition, addition, and refinement. Parents are involved at every step of the way, working with the teachers to create a successful learning environment, and more importantly, Suzuki believed that "Music Polishes the Heart". Read Suzuki's book Nurtured by Love, read our handouts, and visit the Suzuki Association of the America's website for more information. www.SuzukiAssociation.org

2. What if I'm not musical or can't hold a tune?

Most of the parents in our program have never played an instrument. Many people claim to have no musical ability, but we believe that all humans are musically gifted, when provided the proper environment! Music is a gift that everyone can give their children.

3. How can I have a successful experience in Suzuki?

We require three things from parents that will ensure a successful experience: 1) Listen to your Suzuki CD every day (the musical vocabulary); 2) Practice every day with your child; 3) Attend all classes and take good notes.

4. What if my child doesn't like it? What if my child decides they don't want to play anymore?

In the Suzuki philosophy, we refer back to the language learning analogy. Did you ever wonder whether your child would be able & interested in learning to speak? Of course not! We have an expectation of success from the very start. If parents fulfill their three responsibilities listed above, we can virtually guarantee your child will have a positive, successful experience. Your commitment sends a strong message of support to your child.

5. How much practicing is required?

Suzuki said, "Only practice on the days you eat." We also say that five minutes a day leads to ten minutes a day, and then gradually we build up the ability to focus for 30 mins or more as the child grows.

6. What are the steps I should take to enroll?

Parents must attend an Orientation first. After that, read Nurtured By Love, observe some classes, and attend an intake interview.

7. Does the program fill up quickly?

Yes! Space is limited, and popular instruments fill up quickly. Register for an Orientation early for the best chance at your first choice instrument.

8. How do I know when my child is ready? What happens in the intake interview?

At the intake interview, one child and one parent meet for about 10 minutes with one teacher. We accept children who are willing to interact with a teacher, who are ready to follow directions, who are potty trained, and whose families are able to bring the child on time. It is not a musical evaluation. If children are not ready, we invite families to begin the process again the following year, and in the meantime, those families are invited to join our early childhood classes.

9. How is it decided what instrument the child will take?

Also at the intake interview, the various instruments we offer are demonstrated, and the child indicates which instrument he/she is most interested in learning. If you do not have space for a real piano, let the director know, and we won't present that instrument.

10. Do I need to get a real piano?

Yes! Please read our piano FAQ for more information.

11. How can I find an inexpensive instrument?

Children will be most successful if they start on an instrument that functions properly and has a beautiful sound. Many inexpensive instruments found on ebay, etc. have ill-fitting parts, and it is impossible to play well if the instrument doesn't function well. Refer to our handout *Basic Instrument Information* for reputable dealers.

12. Should I buy an instrument now?

Please don't buy a violin, guitar, or cello for your child until you have met with your teacher. Habits learned first are learned best. Correct sizing & quality is very important, and we must wait until the child is ready – usually not until November or December! Your teacher will advise you.

13. What are the classes I will attend? What will my schedule be?

Parents' Class, Group, Theory, and Private Lesson are all included in your tuition, and attendance is required at all classes. Alterations to this schedule are not possible. BKCM holds classes on weekends from 9 – 5 and weekday afternoons. We try to schedule classes for younger children earlier in the day. Specific schedules are not available until late in the spring semester, around May or June. We cannot accommodate individual requests for changes to class times, and families must be willing to accept the schedule given to them.

14. Why do parents attend the first six weeks without the child?

In the Suzuki philosophy, we believe that success starts from the child's environment. If parents know how to do something, they are better equipped to help their children learn. We teach all the parents how to play the instrument first! Further, children love to do what the people around them do, so when children see their parents learning to play, they will ask to play too!

15. Wait! I need to learn how to play the instrument?

Yes! All of our parents learn how to play the instrument. This also means parents will need their own full-sized instrument for the first semester. Guitar parents will need a classical guitar with nylon strings. More information for all families is available upon request. We require a real piano, not keyboard, for our piano students.

16. Do you have financial aid available?

Limited scholarships based on demonstrated need and dedication may be available to second year families & those with consistent SECE attendance only.

17. Will my child learn how to read music?

Yes! Reading is taught in parallel, as a separate skill. We learn to speak before we learn to write. So, we teach the children to play before we teach them to play from the score. Children take music literacy class starting in the first semester, and once they can play, the two skills are put together.

18. Can I send my caregiver in my place?

No. The Suzuki Method is designed for parents and their children. Caregivers simply do not have the time or long-term commitment that parents do. For the rare emergency, a caregiver can bring the child to the lesson, but this must be kept to an absolute minimum, and the caregiver must be adequately prepared for his/her role.

19. What if we go out of town every weekend?

Once schedules are available, choose an instrument which meets during the week. Schedules change from year to year, however, and there is no guarantee that the chosen instrument will continue to meet only on weekdays. Another option is to join another Suzuki program offering weekday classes on the instrument of your choice.

20. Can both parents take turns bringing the child to lessons & classes?

One parent must take the responsibility of being the "Suzuki Parent". Sharing is only possible if both parents are extremely committed, and both attend all the classes. Otherwise, major gaps in information will severely limit the child's progress.

21. What if I can't attend parent's class?

The parent education component of our program is the most important element. If you cannot attend Parent's Class, then unfortunately, our program is not right for your family.

22. My child isn't ready yet, but we want to prepare. What can we do to get ready?

Listen to recordings, go to child-friendly concerts, attend SECE, and observe Suzuki classes as often as you'd like!

23. When does my child grow out of Suzuki?

Suzuki is a long-term commitment. Plan to be involved for at least five years. But, we hope your child will continue with our program through high-school! By that time, he or she may have graduated from the Suzuki repertoire (there are 10 books in violin), but the program has lots to offer for teenagers as well as the little ones.