

Dear Parent,

I am happy that you have chosen Sherwood as your school for Suzuki lessons. I am hoping that this list of FAQ's will help clarify questions you may have about the Suzuki Method, as well as inform you about its main features and expectations involved in registering for Suzuki instruction.

Who was Shinichi Suzuki?

Shinichi Suzuki, born in Nagoya, Japan in 1898, was a violinist and educator who founded what is now known as the Suzuki Method. His father owned and operated a violin factory, where his twelve children often played with discarded instruments as toys. Shinichi taught himself how to play the instrument. In 1921, Shinichi made his way to Germany to study at the Berlin Conservatory, and became very good friends with Albert Einstein during the 8 years he spent there. It was during this time, that Shinichi realized how musical training can sharpen one's perception in any area of learning. It was also during this time, that he reflected on the great difficulty he had in learning German as an adult, versus the relative ease with which German children learned their "mother-tongue". In 1929, he returned to Japan and began developing his method to teach young children how to learn to play the violin, in the same way they learned their own "mother-tongue". After the destruction in Japan following WWII, Suzuki dedicated his life to teaching the children of Japan, using his newly formed method. He passed away in 1998, in Matsumoto Japan.

What is the Suzuki Method and its goals?

The Suzuki Method stems from the fundamental principal that Every Child Can Learn. Just as every child learns his own language, every child can learn to play an instrument. Suzuki trained teachers to break down larger concepts, such as "How to hold the violin", into smaller easily learned exercises. Each exercise is carefully thought out and sequenced so that over the course of a few lessons, the child learns the entire task of "How to hold the violin". We often refer to this as planting a seed of knowledge that grows with each lesson. Suzuki Trained teachers use positive reinforcement to encourage a fertile learning environment, while maintaining high standards of execution. Suzuki teachers use the One-Point Focus approach, asking the child to perfect one task at a time, before moving on to the next concept, minimizing confusion and frustration for the student and the parent. Parents are an integral part of each lesson and form part of the Suzuki Lesson Triangle, serving as the at-home teacher. The Suzuki Method is tailored to teach very young children, as young as 3 years old. The goals of the Suzuki Method are to enrich the lives of children by playing a musical instrument and to give each child the satisfaction that comes from the ability to do something well. The philosophy of the method teaches the child discipline, memory, focus, self-esteem and confidence, among other skills.

Where is the Suzuki Method active today?

The Suzuki method is a worldwide educational movement. There are five Suzuki Association governing bodies around the world, as well as hundreds of smaller chapters in communities around the world. Suzuki Summer Institutes are one week intensive summer camps that take place around the country, and they are a great way to get involved in the larger Suzuki Community. The Suzuki

Association of the Americas has a very helpful website, full of parent and teacher articles to help support the learning process.

What instruments can my child learn, using the Suzuki Method at Sherwood Community Music School? How young can my child start instruction?

Sherwood offers Suzuki instruction in many instruments for young children. Violin, Viola and Cello instruction is offered to students as young as three years old, pending the instructor's approval. Piano, Flute, Guitar and Harp is offered to students as young as four years old.

What books and materials will I need to buy?

As soon as you enroll in Suzuki instruction, you should purchase Suzuki Book One in your chosen instrument. Please only purchase the new edition book with the CD included, as the new editions have different markings and supplementary technique exercises for the student's use. Please consult with your instructor if you are unsure about which book to buy. In addition to the Suzuki book, you will need to rent an instrument. Please consult with your teacher regarding where to rent or purchase an instrument.

How do private lessons work?

The success of the Suzuki Method depends on the cooperation and participation of the parent, as well as the student. There is a learning triangle, Teacher-Student-Parent, in which each participant has a clearly defined role. The Teacher administers the lesson material and trains both the student and the parent on how to accomplish each task, assigning practice homework to follow up with *daily*, in between lessons. The Student is an active participant in the lesson and is expected to behave well and try their best. The Parent takes notes at each lesson, so that they can be the at-home teacher and recreate the lesson activities and assignments during their practice time.

What is my role as a parent?

The Suzuki Method requires a committed and involved parent in each lesson. *One parent must take on the responsibility of being the at-home teacher and must attend each private lesson with their child.* If a parent is not actively present at each lesson, then the student will practice poorly between lessons and make slow progress. This slow progress is frustrating for the student, the parent and the teacher. The effort put into lessons by the parent and student will produce a reciprocal effect, meaning that whatever you put into your lessons is what you will get back. Parents must take notes, take pictures or video of lesson activities, and ask questions whenever appropriate, to ensure their child makes adequate progress.

How do Group lessons work?

Group lessons are a crucial part of the learning process. During the group lesson, the students play games and musical activities to reinforce and supplement the private lesson material. Students review Suzuki songs and learn new techniques and ideas about music. This experience allows the student the pleasure of making music in a group, and also lets them socialize with other

students, bolstering their motivation to continue study, and strengthening the Suzuki community. Both students and parents should attend every group lesson.

How do we practice at home?

Practice is the most important part of the learning process. The teacher only sees their student for 30-60 minutes a week, whereas the parent, or the at-home-teacher, sees the child daily. The parent must strive to recreate the lesson activities and follow the practice instructions exactly. Find a time of day that is conducive for productive practice, and make this part of the child's routine. Keep the tone of the practice session positive, to avoid frustration for all parties. *Focus on the quality of the practice, rather than the quantity of time spent.* If necessary, break up the practice session into several chunks throughout the day. Eventually, the student should practice for the amount of time that corresponds to their lesson, i.e. a student taking 45 minute lessons should practice for 45 minutes. Ask your teacher questions about how to improve the quality of your at-home practice if you have concerns.

What is the Suzuki CD for? How often and why do we listen to the CD?

The "mother-tongue" method, known as the Suzuki Method, is based on the students' ability to aurally learn their pieces. The students learn their songs by listening to them routinely, similar to how a child learns language by listening to their parents speak. Students should passively listen to the entire CD daily and this should be integrated into their routine. The teacher may assign additional listening assignments, specific to the song they are preparing. I recommend that students have two listening spots; one passive spot (like the car) where a child can listen routinely, and another active spot (the living room stereo) where the child can interact with the recording by clapping, singing or playing along.

When will my child learn to read music?

One of the many benefits of the Suzuki Method, is that by delaying the note reading process, the teacher is able to fully focus on the students' posture and technique during the initial months of instruction. Since the student is learning their songs "by ear", the child does not need to focus on both their posture and reading notes at the same time. At some point in your child's instruction, the teacher will decide that they are ready to learn how to read notes. The teacher will suggest a note reading book that is appropriate for the student's age and ability and may instruct the parent on how to read notes, so they can assist the child at home

How does the student learn a song?

The student must begin their listening routine as soon as they start lessons, even if they are not yet playing on their instrument. The more time a student spends listening, the quicker they will learn their songs when it is time. The teacher will use many different techniques to teach a song, sometimes playing small chunks and having them imitate, other time giving very specific verbal instructions. Many times, a teacher will choose to "preview" a difficult or musically important section of the song and assign this section as practice homework, before learning the rest of the song. Once the student starts learning a song, it becomes their "working piece". When all of the

notes and rhythms are properly learned, then a song transitions from being a “working piece” to a “polished piece”, through the process of review. During the review process, the child deepens their knowledge of the piece and integrates all of the necessary techniques and musical concepts associated with the song. When a student is able to easily and consistently play through a song, utilizing the appropriate techniques and conveying all of the musical ideas, then this piece is “polished” and ready for a performance. *Students should only perform polished pieces, so that they increase their chance of a positive performance experience and maintain high standards of execution.*

Why do we review all of our songs?

One of the reasons Suzuki students love to play the violin, is that they quickly start playing songs, as opposed to many traditional methods that have the student play only scales and etudes until their technique and note reading is developed enough to handle songs. Each song in the Suzuki Method has a technique the child must learn, developing the same skills that the etudes and scales do in traditional methods. Teachers use review songs to further develop these techniques, as well as to teach new techniques. Without having a full repertoire of review songs, the teacher is restrained in their ability to teach technique. Additionally, group lesson curriculum and performances are based around students’ review songs, and if a student is not fully versed in their review repertoire, this will affect their performance and enjoyment of group lessons. As a student continues to polish these review songs, their affinity for the repertoire increases, as does their dedication to learning the instrument.

When will my student perform?

The teacher is the best authority on when your child is ready to perform a piece. Many teachers will celebrate the small successes and encourage their students to perform even simple songs or tasks in group lessons or performance classes. Suzuki students tend to perform early and often, to reduce the anxiety that can accompany performance situations. Students who are learning Suzuki songs should only perform pieces from their polished review repertoire, to increase their chance of a positive performance experience and maintain high performance standards.

How do concerts work? Do we have to stay for the entire performance?

Performing is the culmination of months or years of study, and an opportunity to share the student’s progress with the community. When your child participates in a recital, they are expected to dress and behave appropriately. Performers should not wear athletic shoes or beach shoes and should avoid jeans. Students must show respect for their fellow performers by remaining quiet during the performance, and applauding after each performer. It is rude to disrupt a performance by arriving late or leaving early. I strongly recommend that you schedule your other activities around your child’s performance dates and times.

Are there additional books and materials that I can read, to have a better understanding of the Suzuki Method?

Parents may choose to further their understanding of the Suzuki Method, by purchasing one of the following books & materials:

- Suzuki, Shinichi. *Nurtured by Love: A New Approach to Education*.
- Suzuki, Shinichi. *Where Love is Deep*.
- Suzuki, Shinichi. *Ability from Age Zero*.
- Suzuki Association of the Americas: www.suzukiassociation.org
- Sprunger, Edmund. *Helping Parents Practice: Ideas for Making it Easier (Vol. 1)*
- Starr, William and Constance. *To Learn with Love: A Companion for Suzuki Parents*.
- Richards, Cynthia. *How to Get Your Child to Practice...Without resorting to Violence!!*
- *Parents as Partners*. Dir. Suzuki Association of the Americas.

I am ready to enroll. What next?

If you are ready to enroll in lessons, please contact the Suzuki Coordinator, Tamara Gonzalez (tgonzalez@colum.edu or 312-369-3156), to select an instrument and answer any additional questions you may have. The Coordinator will also go over specific information like class scheduling and instrument rentals. If your child is age four or younger, she may recommend an in person interview to assess the readiness of the child for Suzuki instruction. After you have determined your instrument of choice, John Uth, Sherwood's Student Services Manager (juth@colum.edu or 312-369-3103), will contact you to finish the registration process.