



NEW PARENT INFORMATION

Is my child ready to begin music lessons?

One of the first questions we often get asked is “how do I know if my child is ready to begin music lessons?” While the readiness of the child may be a concern, the real question is “Are *you* ready for your child to begin music lessons?” The philosophy of the Suzuki Method is that with good teaching and support from their family, EVERY child can learn to play an instrument and the earlier that they begin study the more beneficial it can be. The method is often referred to as the “Mother Tongue” method because we teach music in the same way that children learn language; through listening, imitation and repetition. As with learning language, the role of the parent is vital in learning to play a musical instrument. Depending on the age of your child, you will be putting as much time and effort into your child’s music education as your child will. A three or four (or even seven) year old beginner will not practice on their own without adult guidance. You will be the “home teacher” and in that role you will be responsible for taking notes at the lesson, learning the fundamentals of the instrument and initiating and monitoring your child’s regular practice. It is important to take this into consideration when signing your child up for music lessons. It takes a bit of work but like anything that is worthwhile, the payoff can be great. Even if you’ve never had a music lesson in your life, have always considered yourself tone deaf, and you are full of self doubt, I promise you can do this! I can’t think of a more wonderful way to interact with your child than through music.

How do I determine which instrument is right for my child?

Often students coming to the CCSA gravitate toward the violin because that is the instrument that is the most well known, but the CCSA also provides instruction on viola, cello and piano. I would recommend playing some recordings or videos of these instruments for your child. You can also observe CCSA lessons, group classes or recitals so that your child can see other children playing these instruments. If you would like to audit a lesson or group class, please call the CCSA office. Our calendar which lists all of our recitals and community performances can be found on the website. If you are not sure which instrument is right for your child, please call the CCSA office and we can assist you in making that decision.

Can we give this a few weeks try to see how this works?

The short answer is no. The long answer is that you must commit yourself and your child to one full year of instruction and practice, unless there is an extended illness or you move from the community. This is for the protection of your child. Children have infinite diligence in repetitive, slow, steady development; adults are more easily bored and impatient. It is our experience that when parents complain that their child is becoming bored, it’s often the *parent* who is becoming bored and this feeling is easily absorbed by the child. Your year of commitment to this program will insure your child of receiving every possible opportunity for success.

What about older beginners?

Some of you may think that because the Suzuki Method places so much emphasis on beginning as early as possible that your 10 or 12 year old is too old to begin studying an instrument. This is not the case. While it is best to begin early, the Suzuki approach to music education can be applied to a beginner of any age. Everybody can benefit from learning this way. Even though it is a “method” of music instruction, the Suzuki approach is not a “one-size-fits” all style of education. Every person does not learn in exactly the same way and we can’t assume that what works for one person will work for another. Our instructors have many years of experience working with students of all ages and abilities and will tailor their instruction so that the student’s needs are best served. We encourage beginners of all ages to consider the Copper Country Suzuki Association. We have students in our program that range in age from three to seventy!

What is the Suzuki Method?

The Suzuki approach deals with much more than teaching the child how to play an instrument; we seek to develop the whole child, to help unfold their natural potential to learn and become good and happy people. The purpose of this method is not to produce great artists, but to help every child find the joy that comes through music making. Dr. Suzuki developed this method of music education based on the way that a child learns language, through listening, imitation and repetition. If you think about how incredible it is that a child can learn an *entire* language in the first five years of life and how if that same model of learning can be applied to music how much you and your child can accomplish. The Suzuki Method differs from other methods of instruction because it involves the student at a very early age, thus necessitating much participation on the part of the parent who takes on that role of “home teacher”.

Some of the basic principles of the Suzuki approach are:

- Begin as early as possible, formal training may be started by age three.
- Move in small steps so that the child can master material with a total sense of success.
- The parent attends all lessons so that they understand the learning process and can feel secure working with the child as the home teacher.
- Daily listening to recordings of the Suzuki repertoire. The more the student listens to the recordings, the more quickly they learn.
- Delaying music reading until the child’s aural and instrument skills are well established. This is in the same way that we teach children to read a language only after they learn to speak. *The Suzuki Method does require that all children learn to read music!* We just delay it until the child is ready.
- Follow the Suzuki repertoire sequence so that each piece becomes a building block for careful development of technique.
- Review, review, review. Once a student has mastered a piece they will continue to review that piece to keep their skills current.
- Create in lessons and home practice an enjoyable learning environment so that the child’s motivation comes from enthusiasm for learning.
- Group lessons, in addition to private lessons, and watching other students perform are valuable aids in motivation.
- Foster an attitude of cooperation, not competition.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Getting Started

The first step is to read through the CCSA Policies and Procedures on our website. It is important that each family is familiar with and is willing to follow our policies, especially regarding attendance, missed lessons, and make-ups. Please understand that you are not just registering for private lessons, but becoming part of a music program which is much more than just a weekly lesson. If you are in agreement with these policies, you can download a registration form from the website. To enroll your child in lessons you need to send in your completed registration form along with a \$75.00 deposit to the address at the bottom of the form. **It is recommended that you call the CCSA office at 906/487-3606 to confirm that there is space available before sending in your form. If there is no space available, you can choose to be placed on our waiting list.**

How long will my child's lesson be and how often will they meet?

All private lessons meet once a week: 3 and 4 year old beginners should register for the "Pre-Twinkle Group Class. If there are not younger beginners than the child will be enrolled for a 30-minute private lesson. A beginning student who is 5 years old and older would have a 30-minute lesson. Moving to a longer lesson is determined by the instructor and is based upon the child's progress and ability to focus for a longer period of time.

Group Classes

In addition to the private lesson, each child should plan on being involved in one of our group classes, orchestras or chamber ensembles. Group participation is at the core of the Suzuki Method and it is very important that your child takes part in a group activity *in addition* to their private lesson. *Students who participate in group classes must also be registered for private lessons.* Beginning students will be placed in a group class with students of similar age and ability. As your child advances they will be placed into one of our orchestras or chamber ensembles. Your private instructor will inform you when and where your child's specific group class will meet. The cost for group classes is included in the lesson fee; orchestras and chamber music require an additional fee.

Scheduling and lesson location

Lesson days and times are scheduled with each private instructor. After we receive your registration form and deposit, you will be assigned to a private instructor who will contact you to set up a lesson time. Each of our instructors has a studio in a different location; your instructor will provide directions to their specific location.

What does it cost?

All of our fees are listed on our website. 30 minute and 45 minute lessons are based on an hourly rate of \$46.00/hour. One-hour lessons are \$45.00/hour. The cost for a 30-minute lesson for a 10-week term is \$225.00. In addition, there is an annual registration fee of \$25.00 per family. If you start in the middle of the term you are only billed for the lessons that you take once you start. New students will also be billed for a beginner's pack which includes all of the supplies they will need for their particular instrument including the Suzuki book and CD, rosin and other supplies. The cost for the beginners pack is \$30-\$35 depending on which instrument you choose.

Scholarships may be available! The CCSA is committed to providing affordable music instruction to *all* families in the Copper Country regardless of their financial situation. If you need a scholarship, please fill out the scholarship form available on the website and send it in with your registration form.

Instrument Rental

The CCSA rents instruments to students enrolled in lessons for a nominal fee; much less than violin shops in larger cities. The cost for rental for a 10 week session is \$29.00 for a violin or viola and \$37.00 for a cello. This fee includes \$4.00 for insurance which covers damage and theft. You will be given a copy of our rental contact when you receive your instrument. *Beginning students who are under the age of six years old do not begin with a real instrument but are given a pretend instrument to practice on for the first few weeks or months of study.* You will not be charged for rental until you receive your “real” instrument. It is up to the private instructor to determine when a child is ready to receive their “real” violin, viola or cello. This is determined by how well the child can focus in the lesson and how well the child is able to take care of their pretend instrument.

Parent responsibilities/Time commitment

Attendance by a parent or guardian is a requirement at all lessons and rehearsals for pre-teen students and is recommended for all students. It is generally best if the parent who is going to be the “home teacher” is also the parent who attends the lessons. In this way, you can take notes for your child and learn along with them. In the beginning, parents will receive as much instruction as the child. The time commitment at home can vary, but the general recommendation for practice is every day for same amount of time as the weekly lesson. If a child has a 30 minute lesson, they should practice 30 minutes per day. Remember that you will only get out of this as much as you put into it. It is important from the beginning to set good practice habits and to have realistic expectations. A child that only plays once a week at their lesson cannot be expected to progress quickly (or at all) and this can lead to frustration and disappointment to both the child and the parent.

Recitals and Community Performances

The CCSA presents at least five solo recitals, two orchestra concerts and two large group concerts during the school year. Students should plan on performing on two solo recitals per year. *Every student in the CCSA is required to play on both the winter and spring large group recitals.* In addition to our “home” concerts, we also provide roughly 20 performances throughout the community each year. Once a student has learned enough repertoire to participate they should plan on taking part in at least 3 community performances each year. Each family will receive a calendar listing all of our recitals and community performances so you can decide in which performances you would like to take part. Community performances generally require about a forty five minute time commitment.